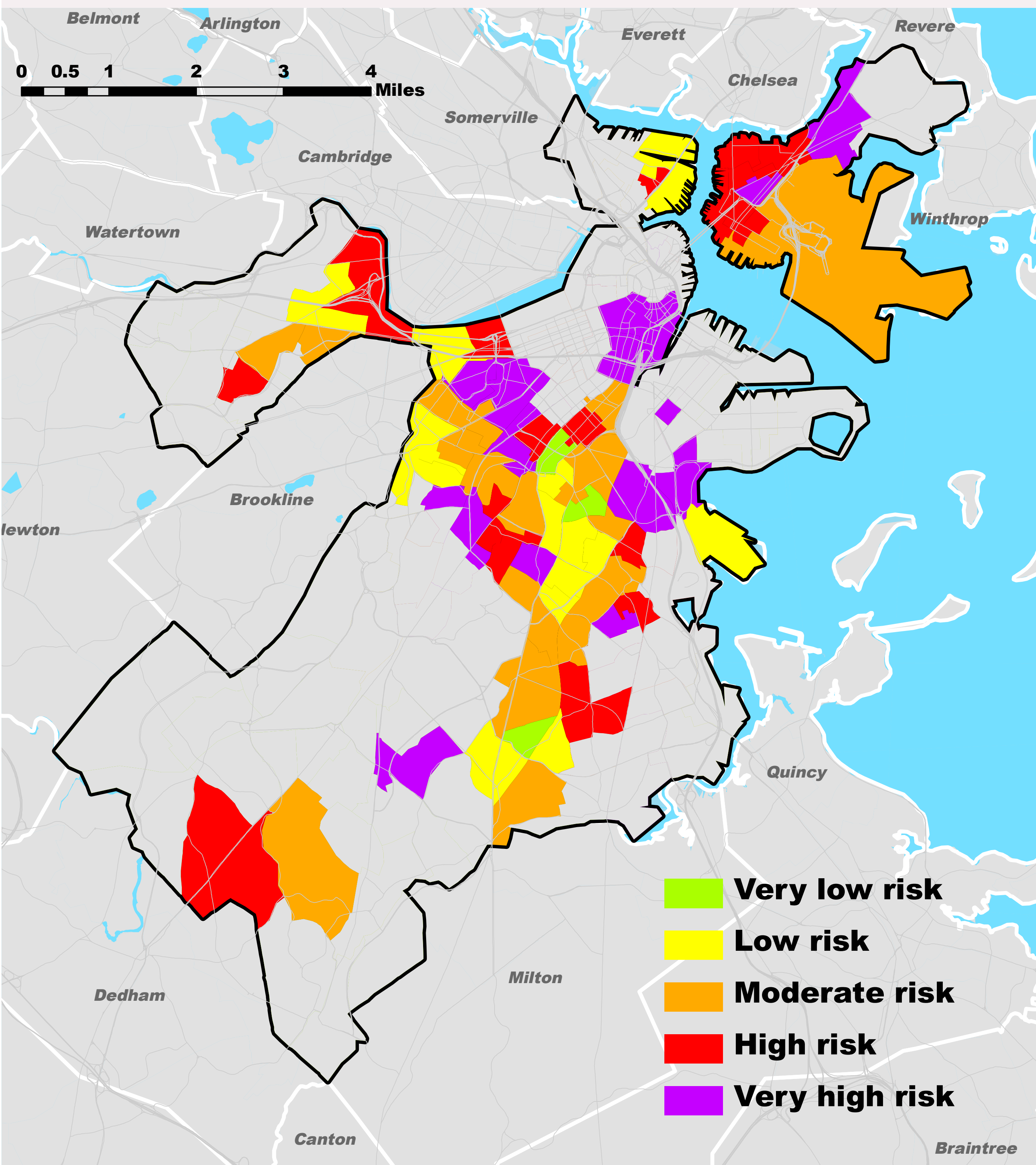


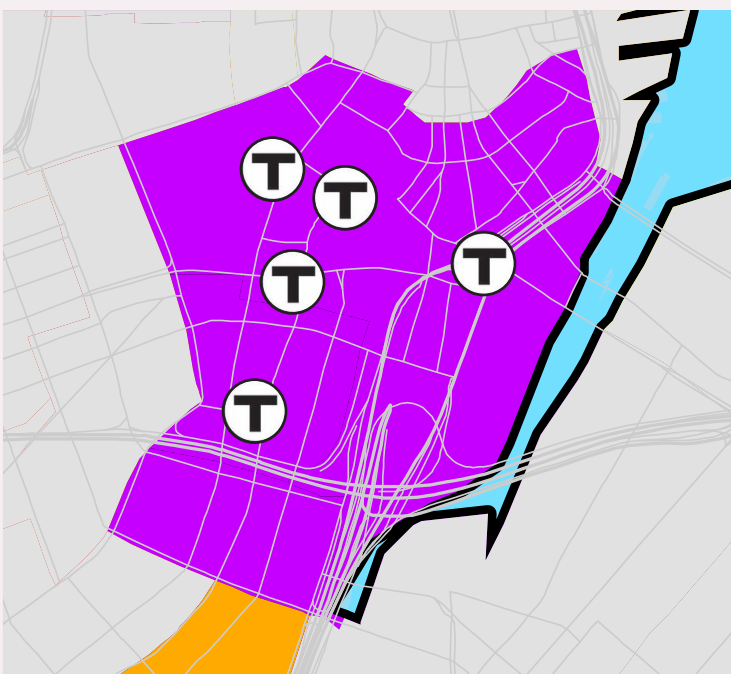
Assessing the risk of gentrification across Boston

Overall risk of gentrification



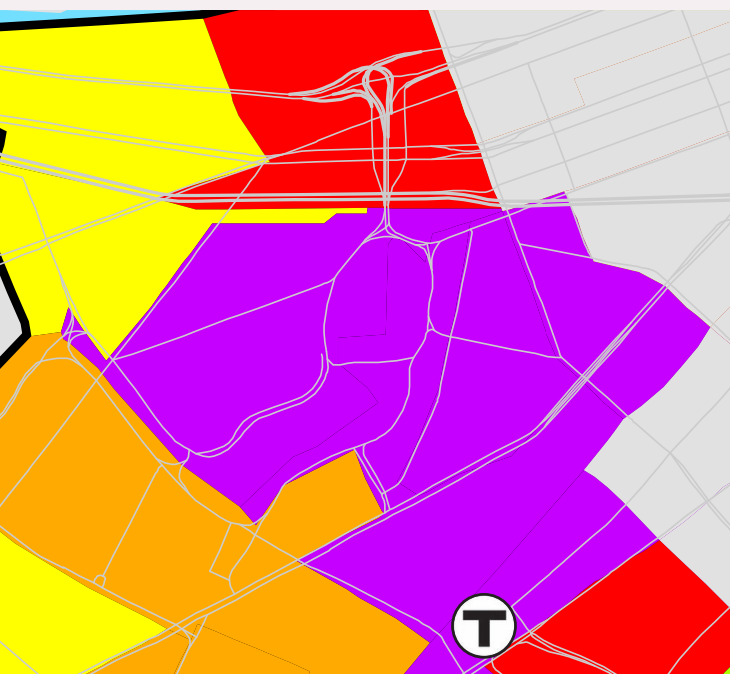
Neighborhoods most at risk

Chinatown/ Downtown Crossing



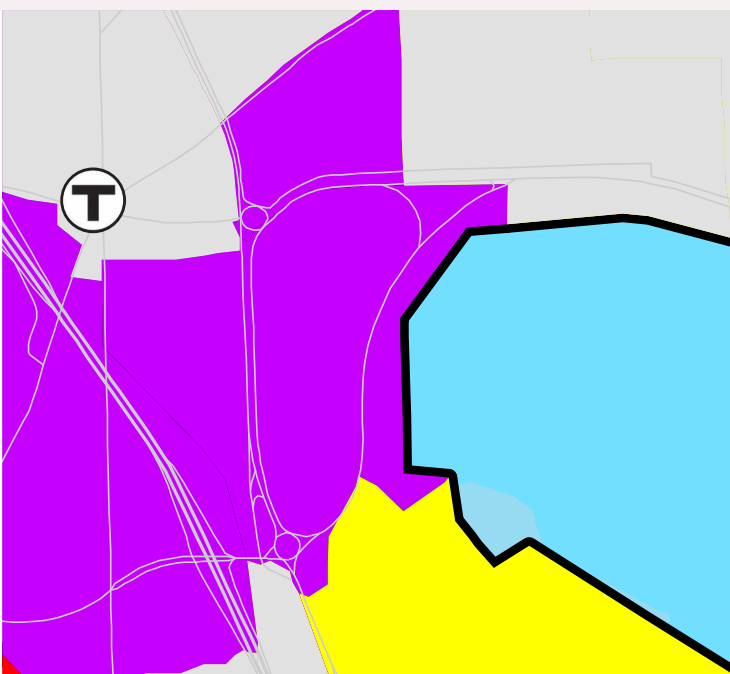
Number of tracts: 3
Average risk score: 9.9
Key factors: Extremely accessible by several subway lines; 83.6% of residential units are for rent; 7.9% of its housing units are at risk of losing a subsidy by 2012; borders several very high income tracts.

The Fens



Number of tracts: 4
Average risk score: 9.5
Key factors: Borders high (South End) and very high (Back Bay) income tracts; high percentage of residential units are for rent; high concentration of older housing (47%); somewhat near Ruggles subway stop.

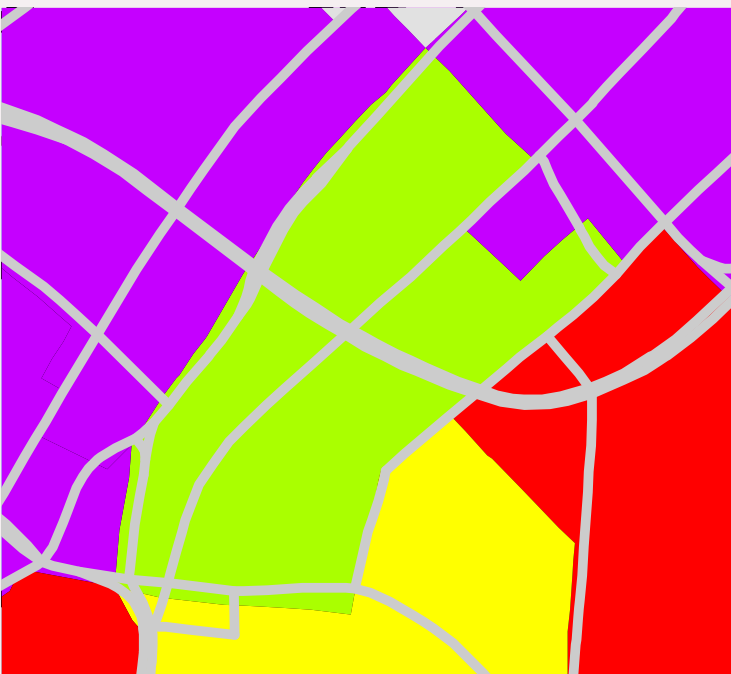
Columbus Park



Number of tracts: 2
Average risk score: 8.8
Key factors: Very high concentration of older housing; 84.2% of residential units are for rent; somewhat near Andrews subway stop; borders high income tracts (South Boston).

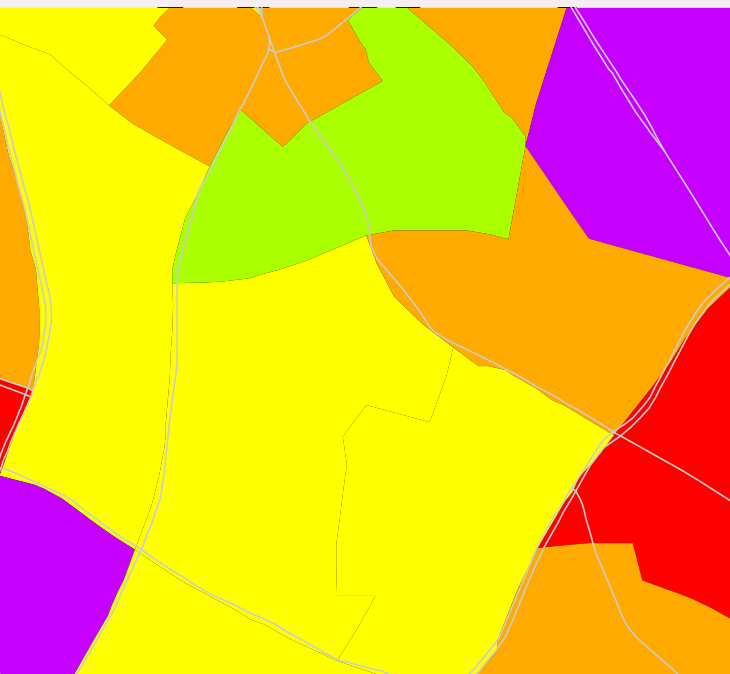
Neighborhoods least at risk

Lower Roxbury (East)



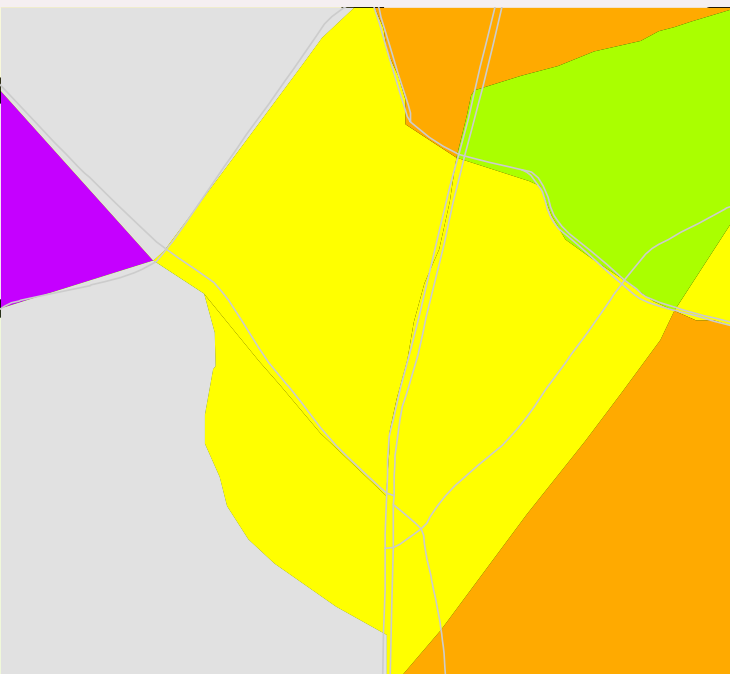
Number of tracts: 1
Average risk score: 4.3
Key factors: Low concentration of housing built before 1939 (11%); very small residential units; not next to many higher income tracts; relatively high proportion of homeowners.

Dudley/Brunswick King



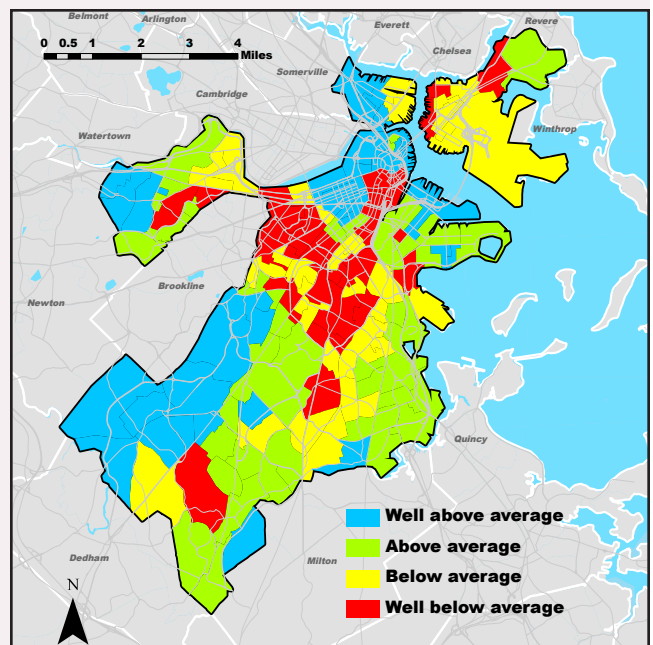
Number of tracts: 3
Average risk score: 5.0
Key factors: Not near a subway; not next to many higher income tracts; proportion of homeowners at about the Boston average (30.4%).

Wellington Hill

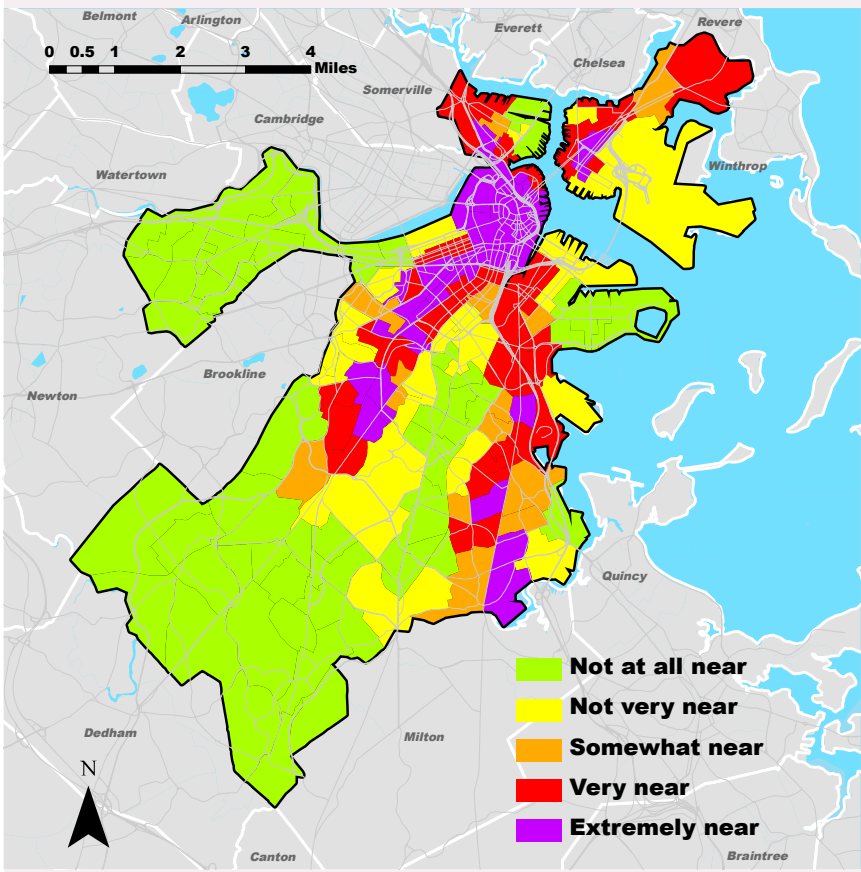


Number of tracts: 2
Average risk score: 5.2
Key factors: Not near a subway; not next to many higher income tracts; proportion of homeowners at about the Boston average (31.5%).

Income by Census Tract

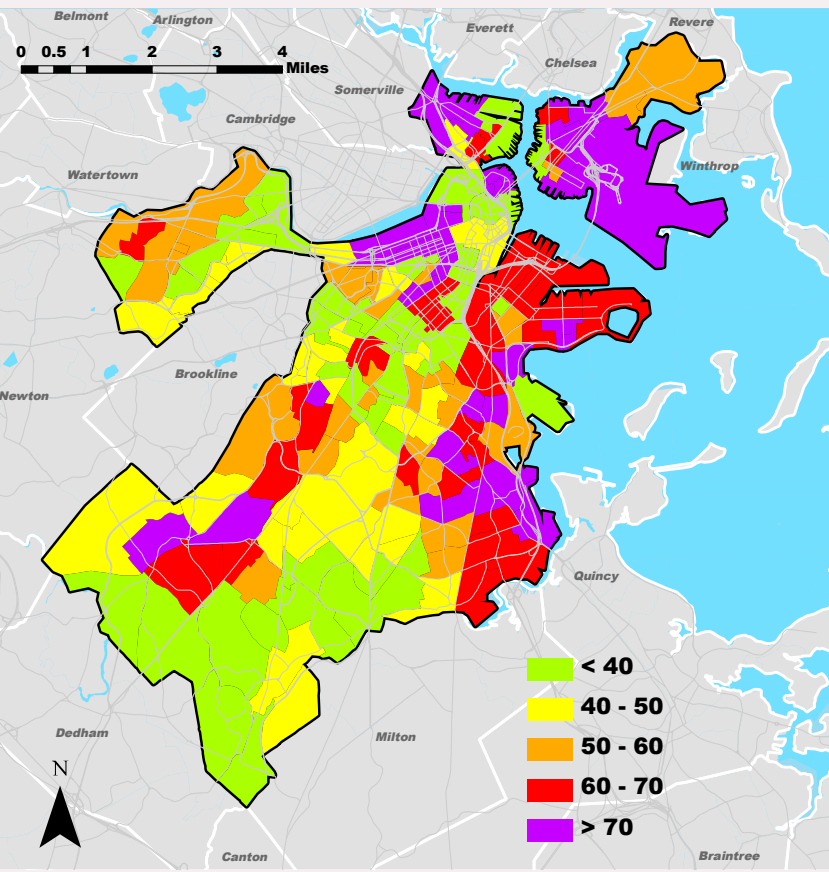


Average distance to subway stops



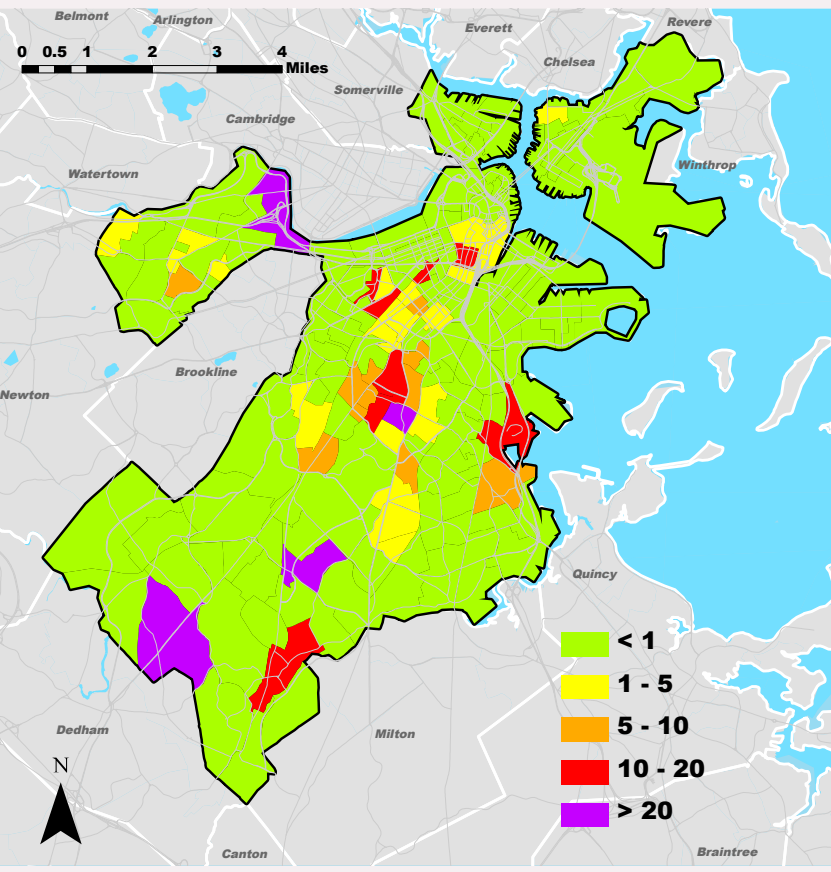
Weight: 3
Each point was given value based on its distance to the nearest MBTA subway stop (Green Line excluded). Points further than 3/4 mile from a subway stop were given a zero value. Tracts considered "not at all near" are comprised entirely of zero values.

Percentage of residential buildings built before 1939



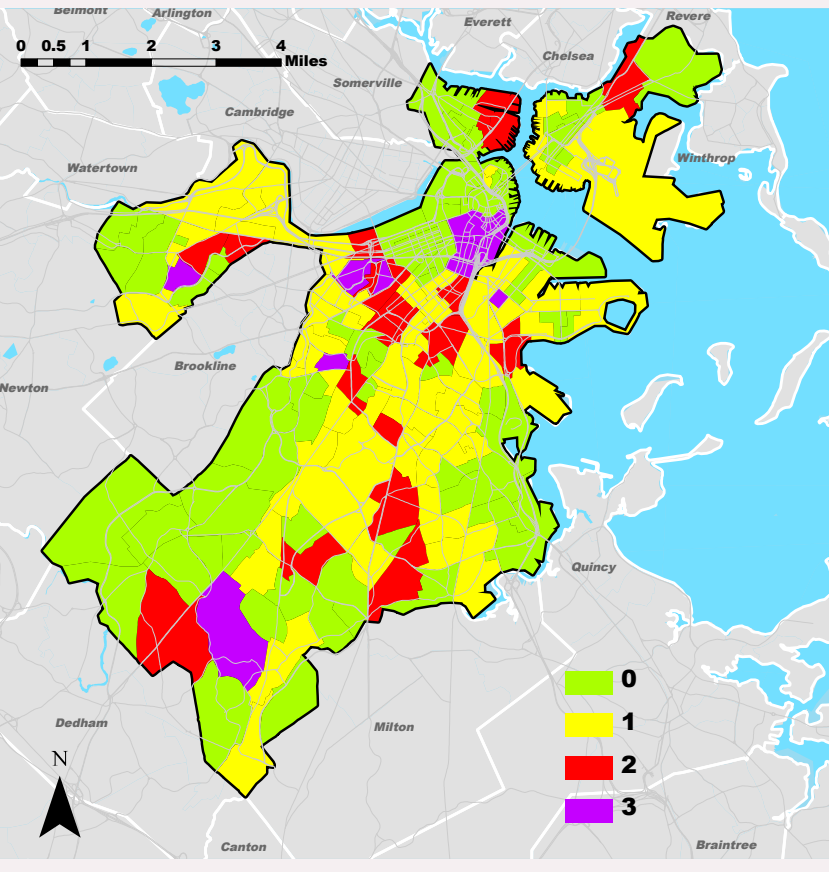
Weight: 3
This is a rough estimation of "architectural merit"; Turner and Snow included a similar measure when they predicted gentrification across Washington, D.C. (see sidebar).

Percent of residential units potentially losing subsidy by 2012



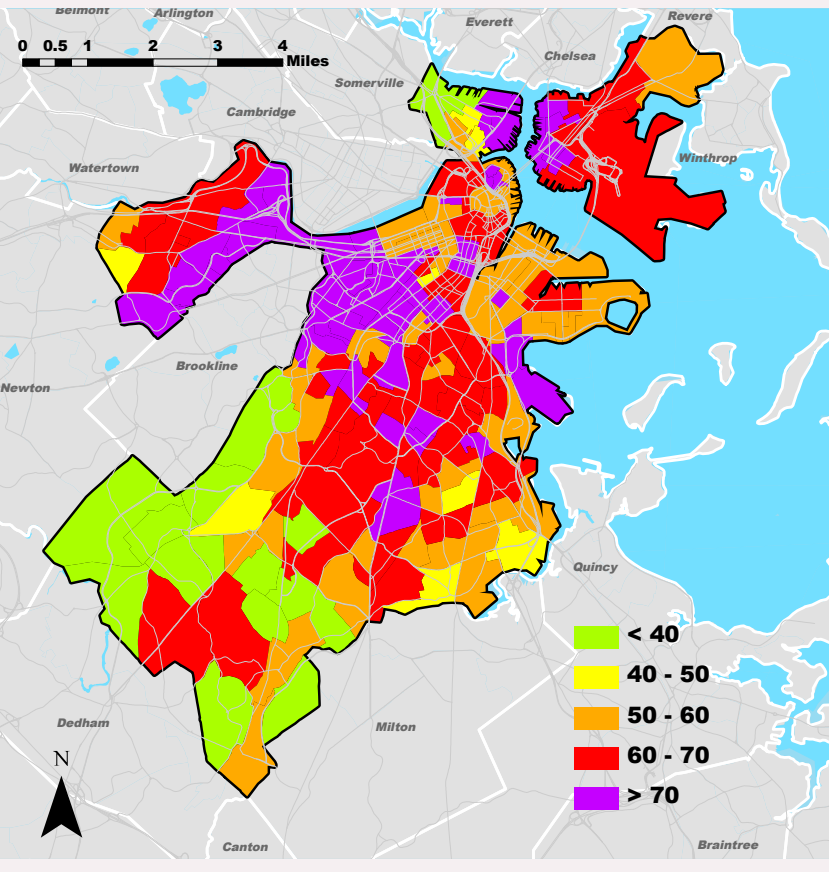
Weight: 3
Not all subsidized affordable housing is guaranteed to remain subsidized forever - Section 8 contracts expire and are not renewed all the time. Some Boston neighborhoods stand to be hit harder than others over the next three years by "expiring uses" that may not be renewed.

Maximum adjacent tract income difference



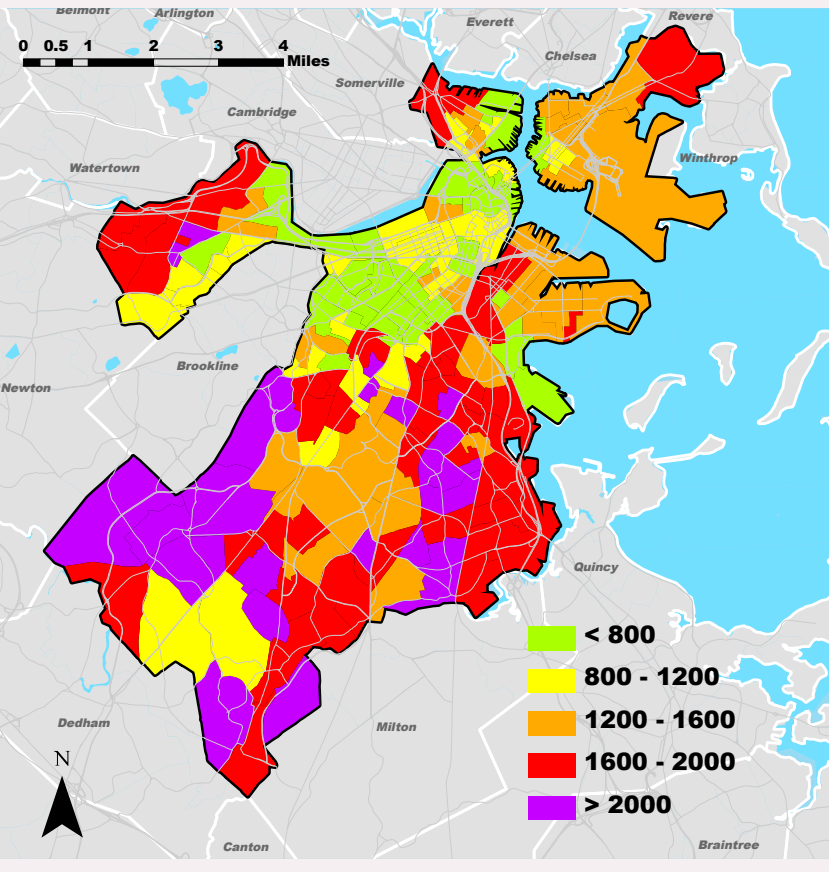
Weight: 3
3 = Very low income tract next to very high income tract
2 = Very low income tract next to high income tract or low income tract next to very high income tract
1 = Low income tract next to high income tract
0 = All others

Percentage of rental residential units



Weight: 3
Renters are much more vulnerable to fluctuations in the marketplace than are homeowners.

Average size of housing units (sq. ft.)



Weight: 1
Turner and Snow included home size in their analysis of Washington D.C. (see sidebar) because large homes are often considered desirable. However, generally speaking, the larger the home, the more expensive it is - thus the diminished weight of this variable here.

What is gentrification?

The term can mean many different things to many different people. For the purposes of this project, gentrification means the gradual displacement of low income residents due to economic hardships related to increasing housing costs.

This project

Many community leaders and scholars have suggested variables that might increase a neighborhood's risk of gentrification. For instance, in a 2002 article for *Race, Poverty & the Environment*, Kalima Rose, a Senior Associate at PolicyLink, highlighted some "specific community attributes" which increase vulnerability to displacement, including a high proportion of renters, ease of access to job centers, low housing values, and housing with "architectural merit".¹

However, attempts to apply such factors to cities in order to assess the potential for displacement are few and far between. One exception was a presentation given at the 2001 D.C. Policy Forum by Margery Austin Turner and Christopher Snow of the Urban Institute - they identified five "leading indicators for the location of future gentrification" which focus exclusively on low-priced areas, including those adjacent to high-priced areas; those with good metro access; those with historic architecture; those with large housing units; and those with recent appreciation. Turner and Snow then used GIS to apply these factors to Washington, D.C. in order to predict future gentrification in that city.²

This analysis considers the suggestions of Rose, Turner, Snow and others to assess the risk of gentrification in neighborhoods across Boston. Because gentrification is defined here as the displacement of low income residents, it focuses exclusively on low income communities (see map, right). It also adds one variable not yet referenced here: the percentage of total housing units with an expiring use subsidy that may expire by 2012 - these units have the potential to be rented or sold at market rates very soon, displacing those who depend on government assistance to remain in their present housing. The six factors chosen are aggregated by Census tract, as a Census tract is about the size of the smallest identifiable Boston neighborhoods. Five of the six factors are weighted equally; the six is weighted one-third (see maps along the bottom). The maximum resulting gentrification risk score is 16.

Results

This analysis finds that the risk of gentrification is not concentrated in any particular region of Boston, but rather remarkably spread among low income communities throughout the city. However, by far the most at-risk residents are those living in the Census tracts containing Chinatown and Downtown Crossing.

Who cares?

While no doubt an imperfect science, attempts to predict gentrification at such a micro level can be a useful exercise for local elected officials who need to assess their priorities, residents anxious about the stability of their neighborhoods, community development corporations and other nonprofits who must decide in which neighborhoods to target their resources, and city planners concerned about the potential displacement that could result from their decisionmaking.

1. <http://www.urbanhabitat.org/node/919>
2. <http://www.urban.org/publications/900461.html>