PROJECT BACKGROUND
Over the last decade, the Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research has conducted pioneer research on the American Rising Electorate (ARE)—unmarried women, youth (18-29), African Americans, and Latinos—in the political process. This population now represents the majority of eligible adult voters at 52 percent—a new reality in the canon of American politics, planning, and policy. Once considered the minority vote this demographic is expected to continue to rise; therefore, aspiring new opportunities for American society and democracy. Clearly, this pattern differs once we shift from the national to the state, county, city, or precinct level.

The goal of this GIS final project is to provide the quantitative and spatial distribution of the Massachusetts Rising Electorate at the precinct level between 2002 and 2012. The project focuses on three central questions:

- How does one define the MRE using Census demographic data (e.g., White, Hispanic, Non-Hispanic White, Asian, and Black) and other partisan targeting indicators (e.g., income, age, or sex)?
- Based on the spatial distribution of the MRE, what voter density patterns, if any, do we observe?
- How much has this population grown between 2002 and 2012?

METHODOLOGY
For this project, I used statewide voting precinct shape files for 2002 and 2012 that included 2000 and 2010 US Census Data. The precinct shape files include all individual voting precincts in all 351 cities and towns in the state. For the 2002 precinct shape file I defined the MRE as total population over 18 minus the total White population over 18. Then, for the 2012 precinct shape file I defined the MRE as total population over 18 minus total Non-Hispanic over 18. This lack of uniformity in the MRE definition is due to data limitations related to Census and race data. Moreover, due to time limitation, I limited my analysis to Boston, Lynn, Worcester, Springfield, and Holyoke. I also excluded a voter regression analysis, which would have allowed us to add other indicators to the MRE definition to improve its accuracy and precision.

DATA LIMITATION
Most political geographic research uses aggregate level data and survey tools as the preferred instrument of choice for this type of analysis because of the methodological inaccuracy and inconsistency related to voter and voter history data collection. Generally speaking, Massachusetts has a high voter registration rate but experiences low voter participation rates overall and even more so in this electorate. This problem is made worse due to annual local census counts in many urban municipalities that leads to high numbers of voters categorized as inactive, which exceeds the active voter precinct list. That is why originally, I wanted to also compare the eligible voter population analysis with actual voter turnout rates of this target electorate at the precinct level. Moreover, I developed a strategic voter history query using the voter history software Voter Activation Network (VAN): (1) People who voted in the 2008 election but missed the 2010 US Senate Special Election; (2) 2010 Governor’s race, plus (3) People who voted in 2006 Governor’s Race, 2007/2009/2011 Municipal Elections (4) Everyone who registered since 2008 and missed 2 elections; (5) Exclude those who were registered before 2008 and have never voted that would have kept us from over-stating the role of this electorate. But since every individual city and town maintains their own information it would take a great deal of time to complete this analysis. The Census also has its own limitations: (1) it counts non-citizens and those incarcerated as eligible voters; (2) lacks consistent measure for races, particularly Hispanic. Therefore, the MRE analysis of 2002 overstates the amount of Hispanics. Although the 2012 Census accounts for this through the Non-White Hispanic category; race as uniform measurement is illusive due to self-reporting.

ANALYSIS & CONCLUSION
The main conclusion from this analysis is that with over 1,000,000 registered and unregistered voters the MRE is spatially concentrated in urban cities and towns through the Commonwealth. Secondly, this electorate is growing at dramatic rate experiencing over 164 percent growth in the last ten years. At all scales of analysis the MRE doubles in growth. Third, in 2002 approximately 41% of this electorate lived in Boston, Lynn, Worcester, Springfield, and Holyoke and now only 36 percent reside in these cities. Fourth, if one selects precincts with over 500 MRE residents, we observe the deep geographic concentration of this electorate has experienced in the last 10 years. Moreover, the geography indicates a growth in suburban cities of this population. Overall, these observations support the goals of this project and the potential impact that the MRE can play in the electoral and policy making process as this community is expected to continue its growth. Lastly, as further research is continued on this subject it is critical that we integrate voter history and voter regression models to this research. In doing so we can build an electoral power building map that can begin to rebuild a new Commonwealth and America, one household, one vote at a time.

PROJECT:
The Spatial Distribution of the Massachusetts Rising Electorate (MRE)

DATA:
2002 MRE Voting Precincts

2012 MRE Voting Precincts

ANALYSIS:

2002 Holyoke

2012 Holyoke

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Cartographer: Wilnelia Rivera, UEP 232 Spring 2012
Sources: 2010-2011 Massachusetts Redistricting Committee

MASSGIS
US Census Bureau (2000 Census & 2010 Census)