

# BOSTON'S VANISHING GAY BARS

## Gentrification & Loss of Queer Space

### Introduction

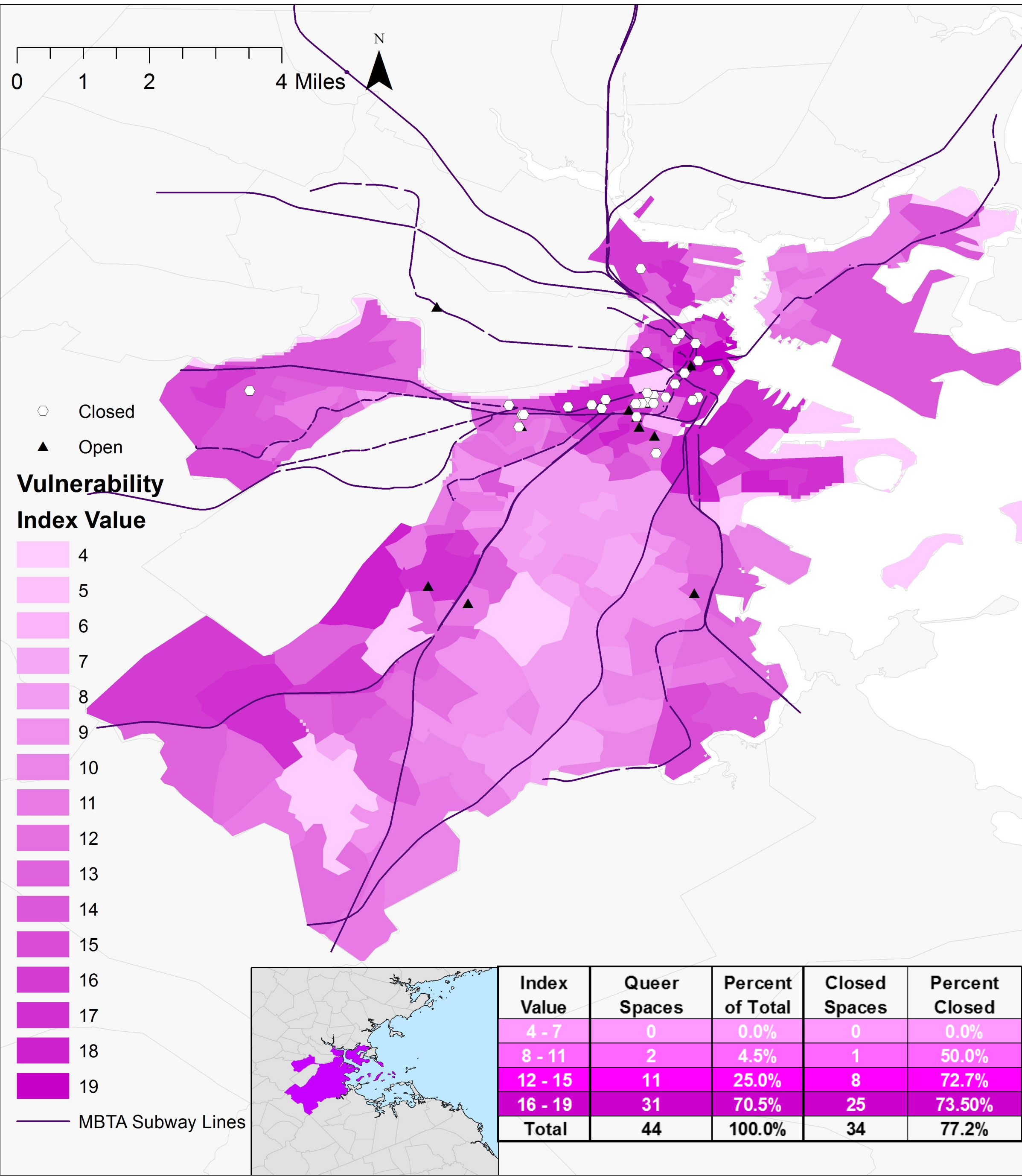
In June of 2016, President Obama announced the designation of Stonewall National Monument, the first national monument to LGBT rights. Three months later in Lynn, Massachusetts, Fran's Place, the state's first LGBT club with a more than 75 year history, closed its doors permanently to make way for commercial space and luxury housing. This process is not contained to Massachusetts and can be seen in an amplified way within large American cities. I used Boston as a case study to examine how closures of queer bars and spaces align with common gentrifying forces. I examined where current LGBT spaces exist in Boston to use as a comparison for where similar spaces have been forced to close in the past and where common gentrifying forces are the strongest in the city.

### Research Questions & Methodology

I was interested in representing how queer spaces have been negatively affected by a common phenomenon of gentrification despite generally growing acceptance of LGBT and queer communities in mainstream culture. I did online archival research to locate where historically queer spaces were located in Boston, geocoded their addresses, and joined ACS data to census tracts to find trends in closures of queer spaces.

To represent gentrifying forces in Boston's census tracts, I used four criteria: median household income, percentage of white residents, median gross rent, and median value of owner-occupied homes. Though these qualities do not represent the entire process of gentrification, they are common factors in the gentrification of many cities. In each representation, I used darker shades of purple to highlight census tracts where these factors have the most ability to push out vulnerable residents and businesses. The gentrification index to the right is a summation of the four factors below meant to highlight census tracts where marginalized communities and the spaces meant to serve them are most vulnerable.

### Gentrification Index



### Results & Conclusion

The gentrification index values shown in the central map show that the Boston neighborhoods most affected by the examined gentrifying forces and most susceptible to the closure of queer spaces historically are Back Bay, Bay Village, the South End, Downtown, and Beacon Hill. The locations of queer spaces currently in operation suggest a more spread out queer community with more distant travel needs and a more dispersed existence. The clustering of closed spaces easily accessible by subway point to a once close knit community. Gentrification is not the only force behind this phenomenon, but the data suggest it is a strong factor.

One limitation to this study was a lack of a comprehensive database of information on the topic. I compiled the most comprehensive data I could find, but exact addresses were not always available and much of the information found was confined to central Boston. In one case, I used the same address for three LGBT clubs that were all documented in Scollay Square, which was demolished in 1962 to create Government Center.

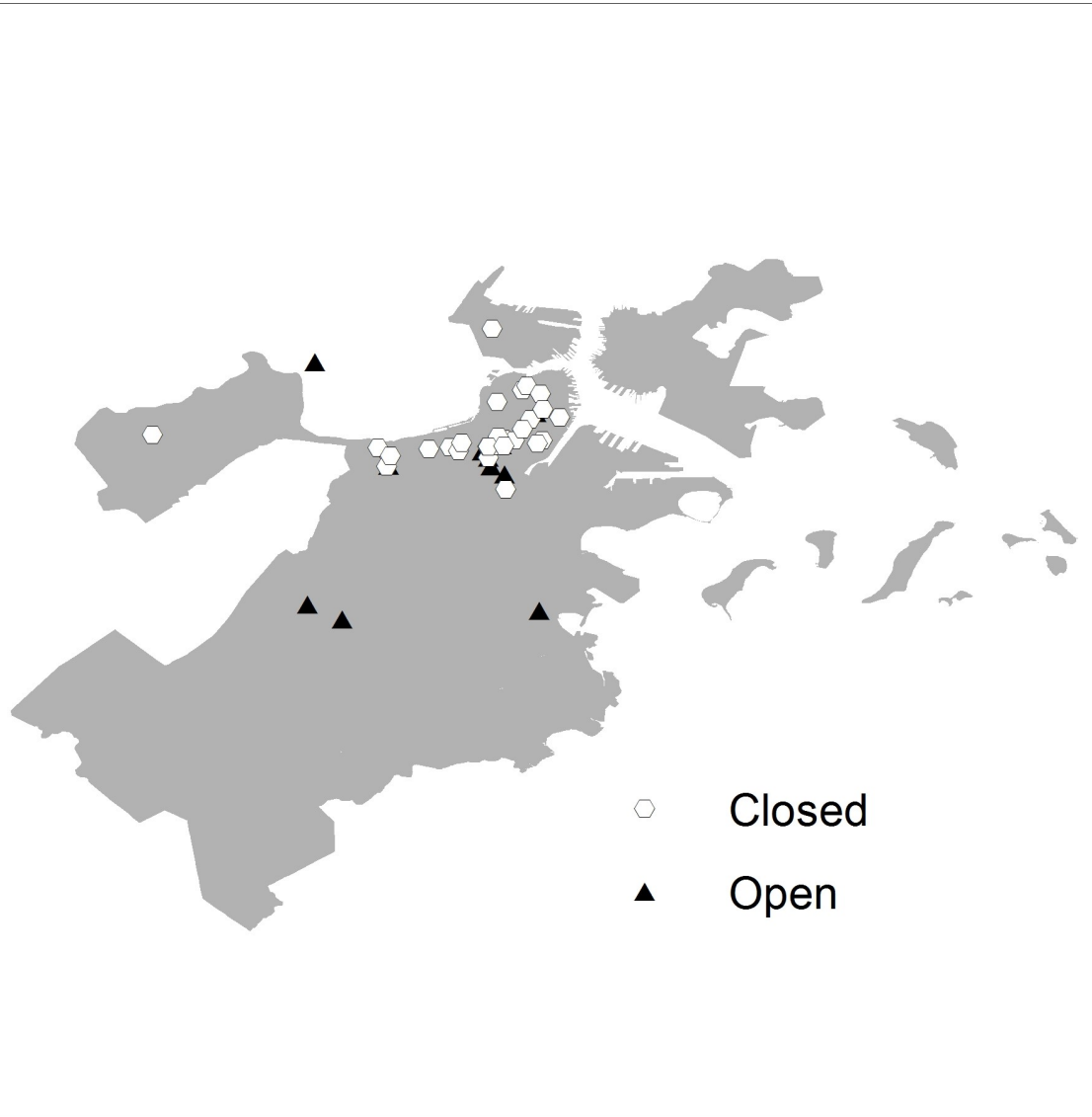
Of the 44 locations used for this research, 34 (77.2%) have closed. Of those closed LGBT spaces, 73.5% of them would have been located in census tracts shown to be in the most vulnerable range to the examined factors of displacement.

### References

Sasson, Eric. "Is Gentrification Killing the Gay Bar?" 16 April 2018. *GOOD Magazine*. <https://www.good.is/features/disappearing-gay-bars>.

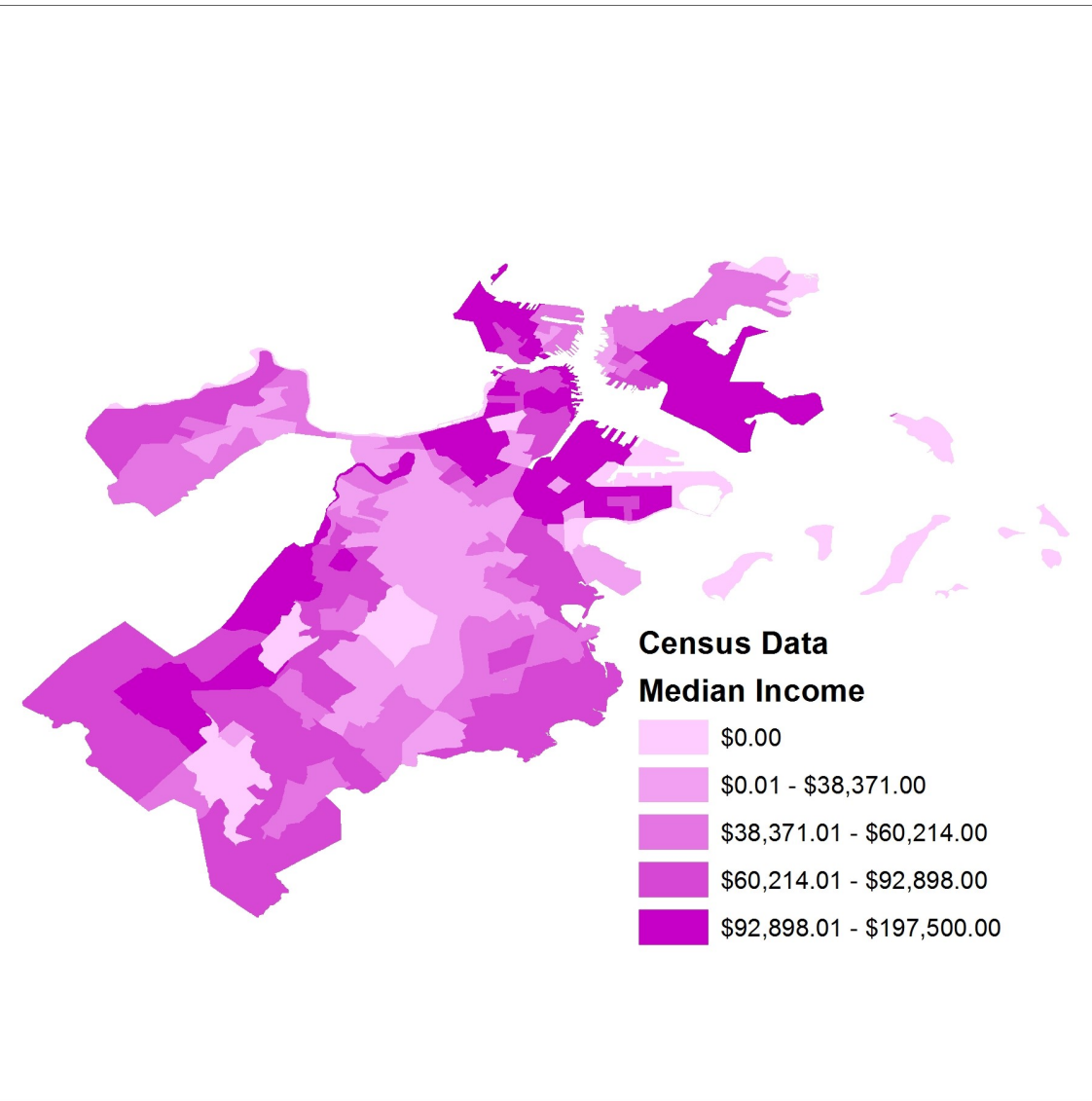
Doan, Petra & Harrison Higgins. "The Demise of Queer Space? Resurgent Gentrification and the Assimilation of LGBT Neighborhoods." 2010.

### Queer Spaces

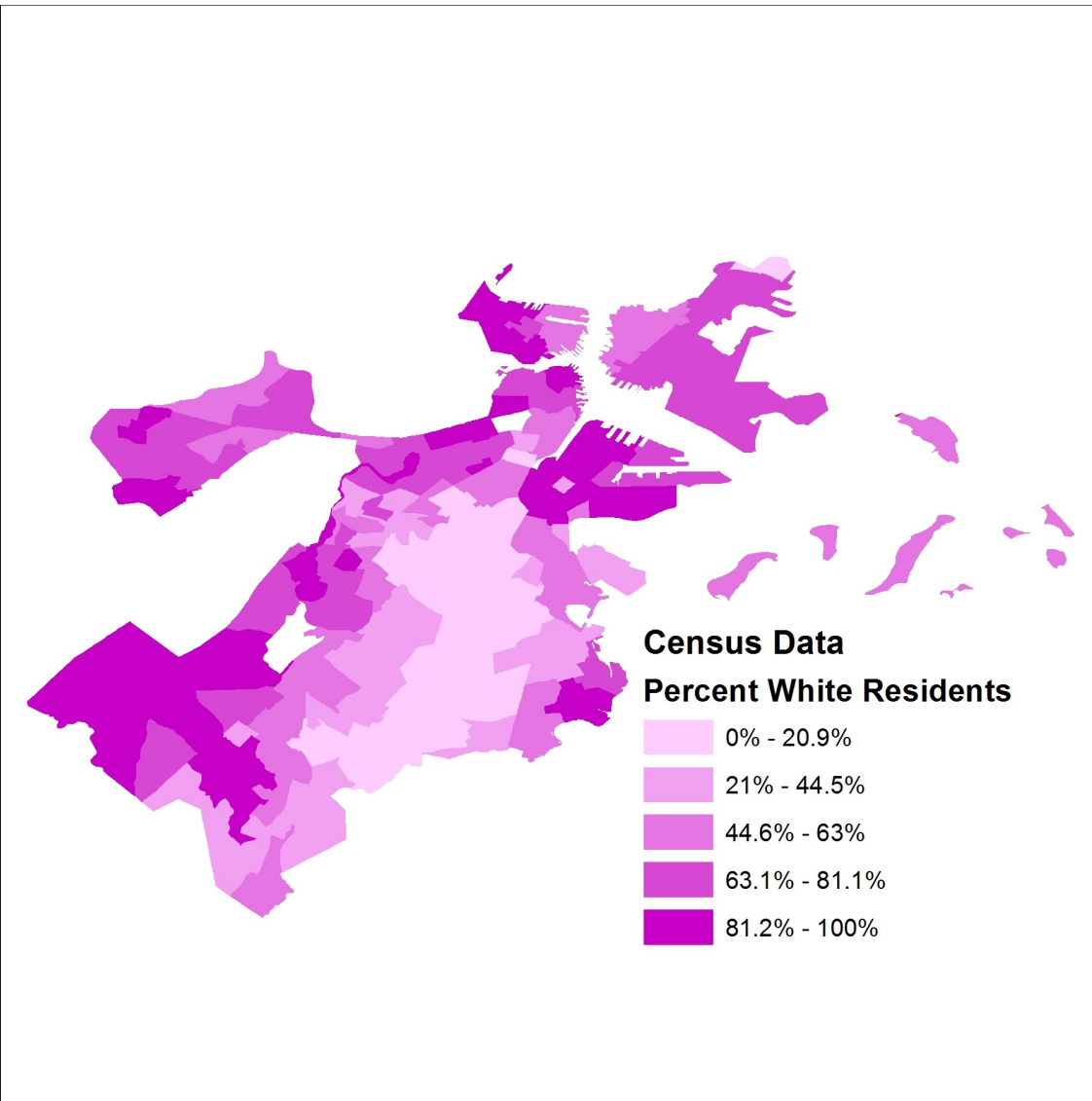


### Criteria for Gentrification Index

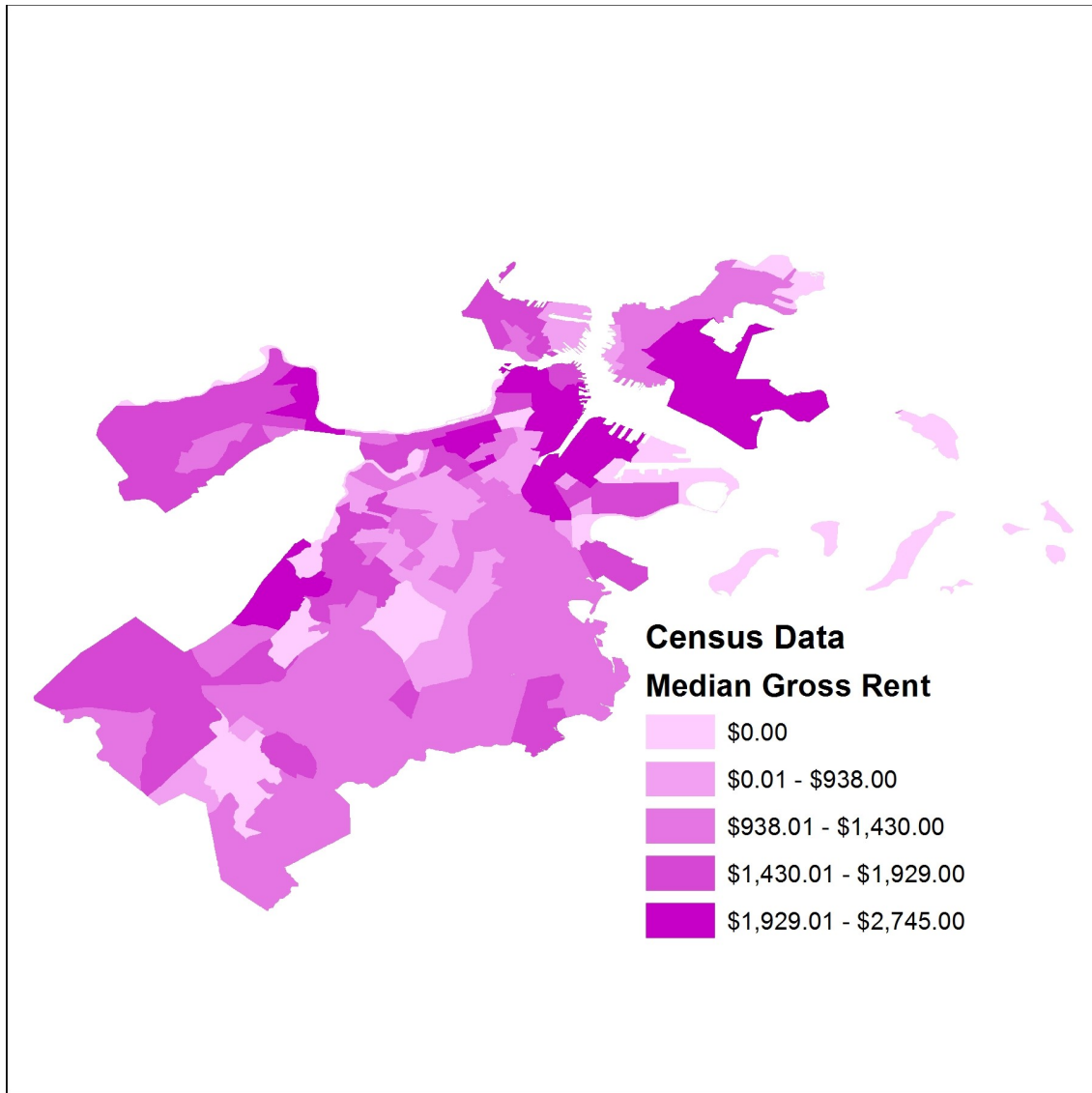
#### Median Income



#### Percent White Residents



#### Median Gross Rent



#### Owner Occupied Values

