

14TH ANNUAL

GATEWAY CITIES INNOVATION SUMMIT

GATEWAYS TO THE MIDDLE CLASS

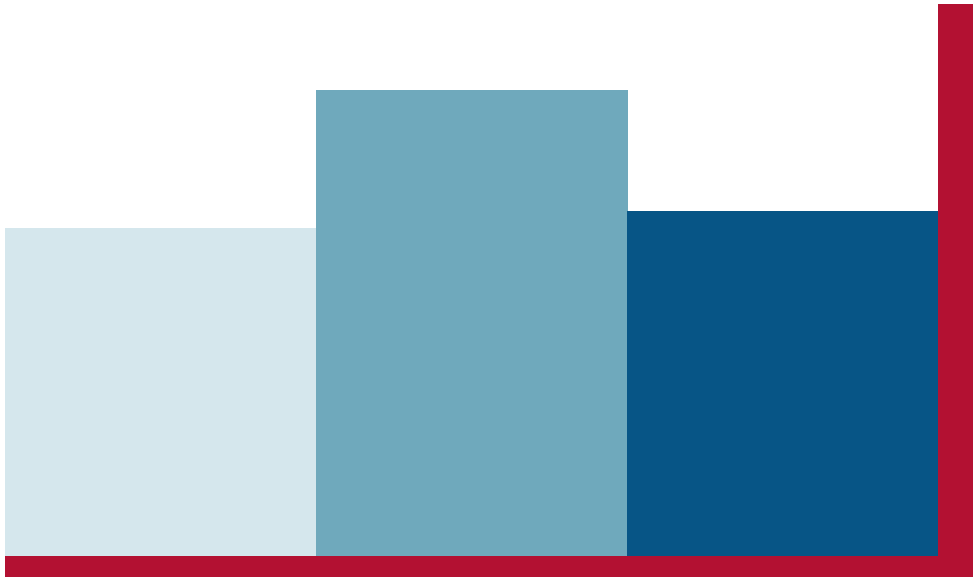
NOVEMBER 18, 2026 | 8:30 AM-2:30 PM

HOGAN CENTER AT THE COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS | WORCESTER, MA

MassINC
Gateway Cities
Innovation Institute

2026 Successes & 2027 Agenda

November 18, 2026



Our policy agenda at a glance

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Expand HDIP

02

Downtown & Main Street Program

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Gateway Cities definition

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Redevelopment Authorities

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Regional economic development

06

School-centered neighborhoods

07

Next-gen housing strategies

08

Regional rail

HDIP is already a major housing engine

~20%

of new housing in Gateway Cities is produced with HDIP

1,000

units per year

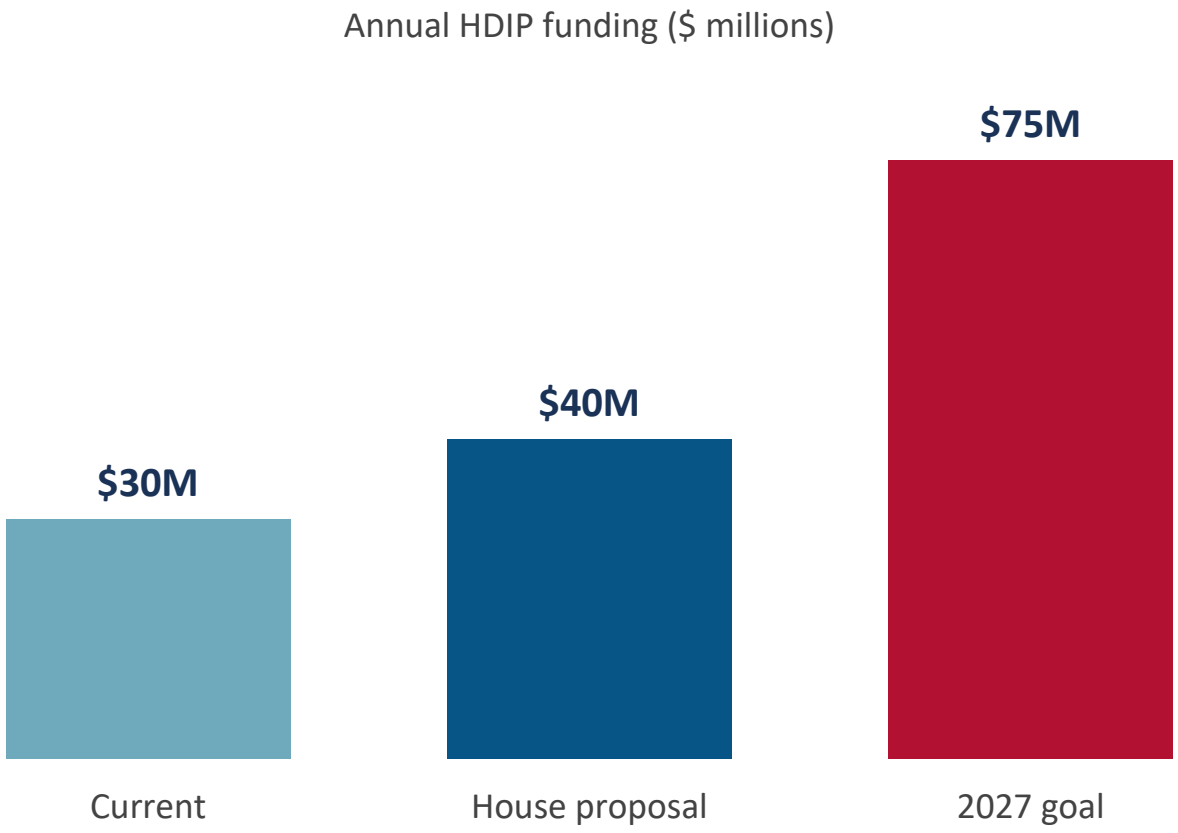
Mass Wins Act

Economic Development Bond Bill

House proposed increasing HDIP from $30M to $40M annually.

In conference committee

Our goal: $75M a year for HDIP



FUTURE IMPACT

2,500+

new homes each year in Gateway Cities

across 30+ projects

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Shaping the expansion

Opportunity Zones

With a significant annual increase, Opportunity Zones across the state could be made eligible for a portion of the program.

Homeownership

There is also interest in an HDIP-style program for homeownership projects.

2027 MassINC research

Review the performance and impact of state housing programs.

2026 wins for downtowns

$600K

Mass Downtown Initiative (MDI) funding restored in the FY27 budget for technical assistance grants

$4.9M

MDI Capital program established; Healey administration awarded funds across 42 projects

$25M+

to strengthen downtowns in the Mass Wins Act (Economic Development Bond Bill)

In conference

$25M+

for cultural economic development in the Mass Wins Act

In conference

Next: seed new business improvement districts

FY28 BUDGET GOAL

$3M

in seed funding for new business improvement districts (BIDs)

+ pass modest reforms to improve the BID statute

Cities currently engaged in BID formation

- Pittsfield
- Holyoke
- Lowell
- New Bedford

…and other communities are building toward BIDs over the next few years.

Put downtowns on par with other sector strategies

Goal: make revitalizing downtowns and main streets a core part of the administration's next four-year economic development plan. This could include:



A strategic plan



A dedicated office in the administration



Executive orders



Enabling legislation



An advisory council

Create a $50M+ annual Downtown Vitality Fund

PROPOSED FUNDING SOURCE

5%

Revenue equal to 5% of online sales tax receipts, reinvested in our small business districts

Umbrella support for downtown programs statewide

- Business improvement districts
- TDI
- Cultural districts
- Placemaking
- Branding & marketing
- Main street strategies

The need to update the Gateway Cities definition

Clarity & predictability

Provide clarity and predictability to municipalities about the criteria for Gateway City designation. Sensitively handle incorporating any new communities and whether others should “graduate”.

Targeted investment

Direct state investment to mid-sized cities that could support more housing and jobs but face structural challenges. Update policies to create jobs and drive economic growth.

Faster growth

Accelerating economic and population growth in Gateway Cities will result in a more sustainable and equitable Commonwealth.

What's next in 2027

Gateway Cities 2.0

2027 MassINC research marking the 20th anniversary of the original report

- How are Gateways doing now?
- Has the state invested effectively, and what has been the impact?

January: file a placeholder bill with a broader definition

Beyond population, income and higher education levels…

…also count local assets:

- **Anchor institutions**
- **Zoning**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Downtowns**
- **Social services**
- **Transportation**

Modernize Redevelopment Authorities

2026 success

A statewide network of RAs, anchored in Gateway Cities

- Developing legislation
- Sharing research & best practices
- Offering mutual support

2027 goals

Strengthen RAs' ability to contribute to:

- Housing production
- Revitalization strategies
- Climate resilience

Improve RAs' management and the toolkit available to them

Build stronger regional economic strategies

Sector strategies

Goal: articulate and support effective sector strategies for each region of the state.

Coordinated programs

Goal: design coordinated state economic development programs that better serve Gateway Cities.

Partner with the REDOs

Work with the state's regional economic development organizations to strengthen and expand the program in service of clear regional strategies.

The ENOUGH Act is in play

Modeled on the successful Maryland legislation, this initiative would combat intergenerational and child poverty through community-led, place-based strategies. Maryland leveraged more than $100M in national philanthropy with a $20M state investment.

Senate bond bill

ENOUGH Act included

Conference committee

We are here

Final bond bill

Next step

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Funding & programs

Neighborhood stabilization

Expand funding for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP).

Historic tax credit

Reform the state historic tax credit program.

Homeownership

Increase the share of state funds supporting homeownership projects.

Modular construction

Support the development of the modular construction industry.

Codes & rules

The “30% Rule”

Align accessibility requirements with international building code standards to ease renovation costs and paperwork.

Single-stair buildings

Allow modest single-stair buildings and other building code reforms.

Infill housing & pocket neighborhoods

Ease infill housing rules adapting ballot Question 7. Promote “pocket neighborhood” legislation encouraging small home clustering.

Vacant property

Ensure that municipalities have the power to foreclosure on properties with large unpaid liens.

Keeping regional rail on track

MassINC and TransitMatters research partnership

Dec. 2025

Harnessing the Full Potential of Regional Rail with Variable Pricing and Equitable Fare Policies

with TransitMatters

June 2026

Harnessing the Full Potential of Regional Rail with a No Regrets Capital Investment Strategy

with TransitMatters

Spring 2027

Transit-oriented development report

programmed

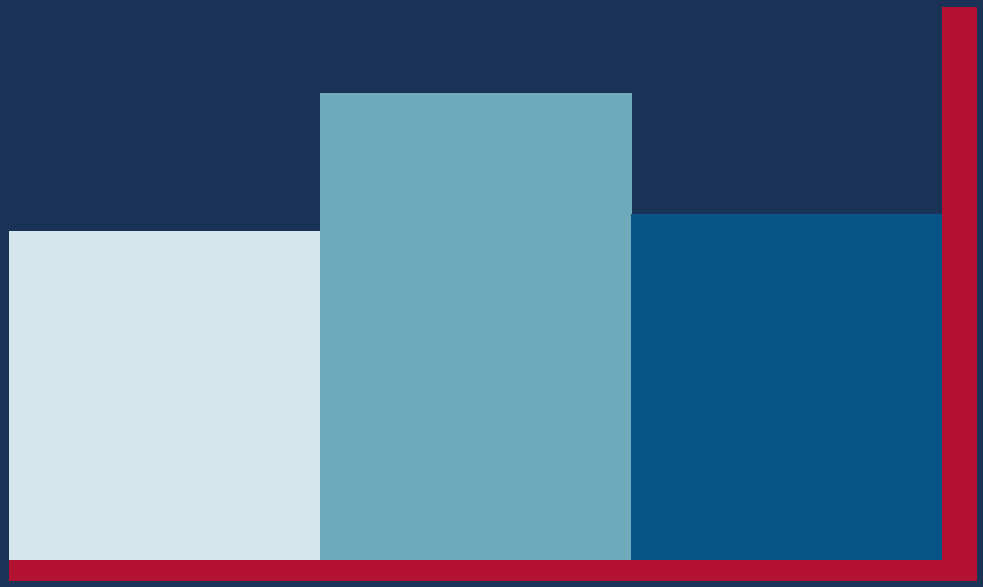
GOAL

Accelerate implementation of RailVision

working with municipalities, advocates and the administration

Feedback: Contact Andre Leroux
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