

STYLIZED FACTS ON HOUSING IN THE REGION

- Nearly half of all renters (47.4%) in greater Boston are considered cost-burdened (spending more than 30% of their income on rent).

- Two parents working full-time at the minimum wage would not be able to afford the fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in most towns on the North Shore.

- Local regulations prevent the housing supply from catching up with demand.

- Massachusetts has the 7th highest housing deficit in the country.

- Common policies that raise the cost of housing include prohibitions on multi-family housing, large minimum lot sizes, excessive parking requirements, and discretionary approval processes. Reforms that tackle these policies make housing more affordable.

- The adoption of local Affordable Housing Trusts and Community Preservation Act provide crucial funding to finance affordable (subsidized) housing for families and seniors.

HOUSING ADVOCACY 101: WRITING FOR YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

What are op-eds and letters to the editor?

Op-eds (opposite the editorial page) are longer (600-700 words) opinion pieces written by members of the community with the aim providing readers with new insight on important issues. Letters to the Editor are shorter (150-250 words) opinion pieces written in response to specific articles recently published in the newspaper.

Why should I spend time writing one?

Research demonstrates that a well-written op-ed or letter to the editor can change the minds of policymakers and the broader public on issues important to you. This is particularly important in housing advocacy, where the voices of a small group of opponents often drown out the quieter voices of residents who support more housing in the community.



What makes for an effective message?

Your goal is to persuade your readers and the way you do this is by clearly and concisely presenting your argument and supporting evidence to them. Rules to remember include:

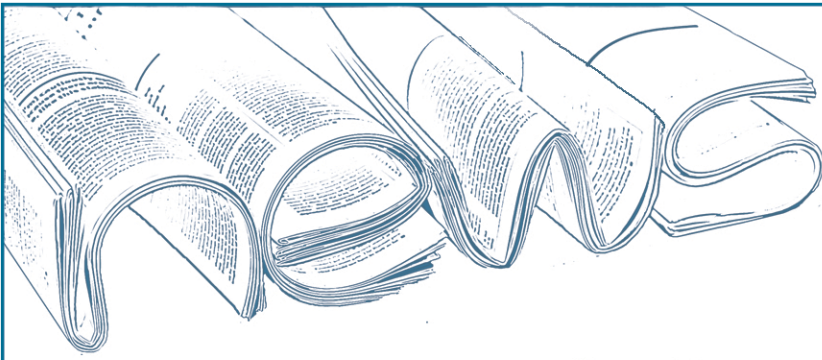
One letter/op-ed, one message. There might be a dozen reasons why you think policymakers need to address an issue or why your neighbors should vote for a reform in town meeting. Choose one and stay focused on supporting it with the best available argument and evidence.

Write to persuade your target audience. Remember, you're not preaching to the choir. You're trying to convince a good faith skeptic to come around to your view. Think about what they value or their concerns and frame your writing accordingly.

Start at the beginning. Op-eds should start with basic introduction to issue. Letters should begin with explicit reference to article on which it will comment. Once you have familiarized the reader with the basics, then you can dive into your argument and supporting evidence. Don't forget to conclude with next steps for the reader.

Big trends and human faces. Referencing research and statistics will help convince your audience that a problem exists, and your reform is a good solution, but don't forget to remind them that you're talking about your community and neighbors. Make sure you illustrate who is hurt or helped by particular policies.

Over →



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Op-ed/Letter to the editor checklist (before submission)

- Directed at sensible reader unfamiliar with specifics of the issue at hand.
- Includes only essential information needed to make one main point.
- Sentences are short, precise, and readable.
- Paragraphs are cohesive so discussion flows logically.
- No jargon, contentious rhetoric, and personal attacks.
- No spelling or grammatical errors.
- Stays within strict word limits (under 250 words for letters; under 700 words for op-eds)
- Includes your name, address, and contact information so editors can get in touch with you to verify everything. Only your name and city/town will be published.

Which newspaper serves my community?

There are three major daily newspapers on the North Shore.



www.salemnews.com

The Salem News serves Beverly, Boxford, Danvers, Hamilton, Ipswich, Peabody, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Marblehead, Middleton, Salem, Swampscott, Topsfield, and Wenham

- Letters to the editors can be submitted via an online form and should be fewer than 250 words.
https://www.salemnews.com/site/forms/online_services/letter/
- A longer op-ed (600-700 words), if warranted, can be submitted to **David Olson**, editor, via email dolson@salemnews.com



Gloucester Daily Times

www.gloucestertimes.com

Gloucester Daily Times serves Essex, Gloucester, Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Rockport

- Letters to the editors can be submitted via an online form and should be fewer than 250 words.
https://www.gloucestertimes.com/site/forms/online_services/letter/
- A longer op-ed (600-700 words), if warranted, can be submitted to **David Olson**, editor, via email dolson@gloucestertimes.com

The Daily Item

www.itemlive.com

The Daily Item serves Lynn, Lynnfield, Marblehead, Nahant, Peabody, Saugus, Revere, and Swampscott

- Letters to the editors can be submitted via email and should be fewer than 250 words.
letterstoeditor@itemlive.com
- A longer op-ed (600-700 words), if warranted, can be submitted to **Thor Jourgenen**, editor, via email tjourgenen@itemlive.com