The Location Affordability Portal

Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Sustainable Housing and Communities
“Many homeowners and renters have traded relatively high housing costs for high transportation costs in their search of affordable housing...while housing costs in distant suburban locations may be lower, transportation costs are higher, and the combination of housing and transportation costs now averages 57 percent of income for working families in metropolitan areas.”

- HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan
Testimony before the Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
March 18, 2009
The need: more information on the cost of living

- The lack of a reliable, standardized source of information on transportation costs distorts the housing market
  - Second-biggest HH budget line (and exceeds housing costs for many lower-income and rural families)
  - Inverse relationship with housing costs, both tied to location and demographic characteristics
  - The lack data inhibits consumer decision-making
The need: more information on the cost of living

- Consequences of undervaluing transportation costs
  - People choose to move farther from urban cores in search of less expensive housing but may not achieve more affordability because of high transportation costs; leads to sprawl in the aggregate
  - Government programs and policies that attempt to address housing affordability do not take transportation costs into account
Site Objectives

- HUD and DOT are seeking to bridge the information gap in order to
  - Help consumers, planners, policymakers and developers make more-informed decisions about where to live, work, and invest by providing access to a user-friendly, comprehensible source of information on combined housing and transportation costs
  - Lower the barrier to entry for municipalities, planning organizations, and researchers to access and use this data for planning and research applications
Development

- Builds on work by the Brookings Institution, the Center for Housing Policy, the Center for Neighborhood Technology, and ULI’s Terwilliger Center for Housing
Development

- Significant collaboration with Federal partners
  - Partnership with DOT – included elements from OSEC, FTA, FHWA, and Bureau of Transportation Statistics; lent transportation planning expertise and credibility
  - Agency Advisory Workgroup – includes technical and program staff from HUD as well as staff from DOT, EPA, and Treasury (due to relevance to LIHTC)
Site Demo

Location Affordability Portal Version 1
Understanding the Combined Cost of Housing and Transportation

Housing and transportation costs continue to take up almost half of the average household's budget. While housing expenditures are usually easy to determine, transportation costs are much less transparent. The Location Affordability Portal seeks to bridge this information gap in order to help consumers, researchers, and policymakers better understand the impact of transportation costs on affordability.

Households and Realtors

My Transportation Cost Calculator generates transportation cost estimates based on user-entered information: providing household, realtor, and housing counselor customized, apples-to-apples comparisons of housing and transportation costs in different communities.

Go to My Transportation Cost Calculator

Planners, Policy Makers & Developers

Developers, planners, and policymakers can use the Location Affordability Index to make data-driven decisions about local and regional planning and investment. They can also use maps and data tools to help communicate with the public about different development scenarios.

Go to the Location Affordability Index

Researchers

Researchers can readily access housing and transportation cost estimate data at the Census block-group level for all 414 MSAs covered by the Index.

How much does housing and transportation cost your family?
Advances over previous resources

- Expanded to 942 metro and micropolitan areas covering 94% of the U.S. population
- More recent data and more advanced analysis and modeling techniques
- Easily navigable website that displays affordability levels for 8 different household profiles
- Includes a Cost Calculator produced customized cost estimates
- All data available for download and thorough documentation
Project status

- Refining communications plan and public information materials to be released in conjunction with site launch
- Moving toward a late-September launch event with both secretaries
- Post-launch activities
  - Continue to inform the public on the value and uses of the site
  - Explore possible uses for the data that advance the goal of increasing access to sustainable, affordable communities free from discrimination
Contact information

General Questions/Be notified of launch
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