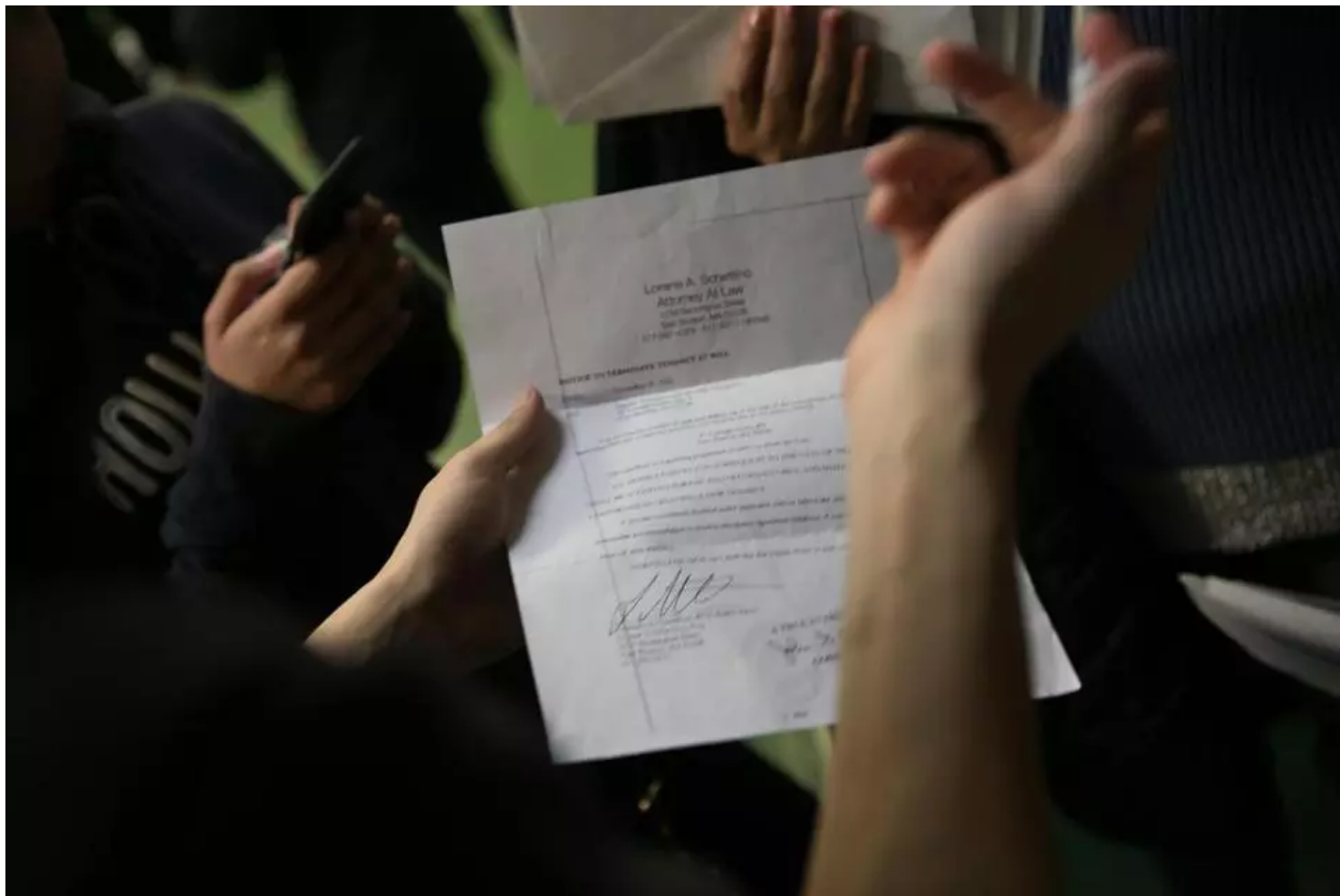




Comments  
Globe Live. All New. All True. All Live.

# How many evictions are there in Boston? No one really knows.

29



KATHERINE TAYLOR FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

**An eviction notice was held at a community meeting in East Boston in February.**

By [Tim Logan](#) | GLOBE STAFF DECEMBER 11, 2016

As Boston officials ramp up efforts to combat evictions, they're running into a problem: No

Twitter Share 29

City officials and housing advocates have long complained there is no comprehensive data on evictions collected in Boston; what few numbers that are available usually come from contested evictions that end up in Housing Court. And even getting those requires an arduous counting of individual cases. The results are usually old and incomplete.

Moreover, those figures vastly undercount the extent of displacement in the city, since most evictions don't even end up in court. So while rising rents and anecdotes of mass evictions from fast-changing neighborhoods such as East Boston have pushed displacement to the fore of the city's agenda, there's no clear way to measure just how much of a problem this has become. In a City Hall that is increasingly data-driven, that has become a frustrating challenge.

In legislation he filed earlier in December to add protections for renters, Mayor Martin Walsh also proposed requiring landlords to notify the city when they move to evict a tenant. That will give officials a paper trail to document eviction activity in real-time.

---

Get **Talking Points** in your inbox:

An afternoon recap of the day's most important business news, delivered weekdays.

Enter email address

**Sign Up**

"We want to get information as it's happening, so we can reach out to people and get tenants the help they need," said Sheila Dillon, Boston's housing chief. "We can use that data in all sorts of ways."

The data could be used to pinpoint eviction hotspots, allowing city officials to direct

Twitter Share 29

they might be addressed.

Comments

Walsh has also created a new Office of Housing Stability, which would use the notices filed by landlords to provide tenants facing eviction with information about their rights and counseling resources. Such interventions may head off more evictions before they start, said Lydia Edwards, who heads up the new office.

“About 80 percent of evictions are people who don’t ever go to court,” Edwards said. “We’d be able to finally know about all of these people and get them information to help.”

Eviction information is a major missing component from the growing portfolio of data that the Walsh administration collects on city services and public issues. Department heads, staffers, and even Walsh can track everything from burned-out streetlights to library usage across the city nearly in real-time, in some cases via digital dashboards in their office.

But to get a handle on evictions, Walsh officials are sending interns to Housing Court to comb through case files and build Excel files one entry at a time, to track where and why they’re happening. As 2016 draws to a close, they are almost done collecting case numbers — for 2015.

For now, the best available data is a recent report compiled by three local community groups — Project Hope, HomeStart, and Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative — that found there were 1,635 court-ordered evictions in 2014. That was down from 2,068 in 2011, even though the number of eviction requests by landlords has remained largely unchanged.

Comments



WENDY MAEDA/GLOBE STAFF

**Renters in building at 64 Lubec Street (on right) in East Boston were evicted in 2015.**

The community groups hired a half-dozen law school graduates who are studying for the bar to work part-time compiling and analyzing eviction cases in Housing Court by hand. Just gathering the data took eight months, said Christine Dixon, who runs the effort for Project Hope. They can only do it once every few years.

Their findings, though, suggest that counseling and legal aid available to renters facing eviction is having the desired effect, Dixon said.

“You hope that shows that some of the work being put into eviction prevention is paying off,” Dixon said.

Twitter Share

29

City officials have been trying to get more systematic records, wrangling with court officials for access to bulk data on eviction filings. But court officials have declined, noting that any bulk data they provide the city must also be made available to the public, including firms that screen tenants for landlords. A spokeswoman for Housing Court noted it was standard policy not to release bulk data, in order to protect victims and litigants from “unwarranted harm.” She noted that recent upgrades to the courts website make it easier to track individual cases online.

Some tenant advocates were among those arguing against the court’s giving out bulk data in recent hearings on public access.

Mac McCreight, lead attorney for housing at Greater Boston Legal Services, which represents renters who face eviction, cautioned that aggregated court data is not always accurate or up-to-date. Moreover he worries some landlords might use it to “blacklist” tenants who have had a case filed against them, even if the eviction never wound up happening.

“Someone looking at an online system might make conclusions that are not accurate,” McCreight said. “And we hear reports about landlords who’ll say, ‘If I see someone’s name on the list, that’s it. I’m not going to rent to them.’”

Dillon and Edwards said the city understands those concerns, and its proposal to collect eviction filings from landlords would specifically exempt information on the tenants from state Public Records Law. The point, Edwards said, is really just to wrap their arms around the situation.

“We’re just trying to see what’s going on,” she said. “Then we can figure out how to respond appropriately.”

Tim Logan can be reached at [tim.logan@globe.com](mailto:tim.logan@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter at [@bytimlogan](https://twitter.com/bytimlogan).

### Renting in Boston

Boston Housing Court data shows that although the total number of eviction cases filed in the city has remained steady, fewer tenants are ultimately being evicted.



Comments

SHOW 29 COMMENTS

## Most Popular In Business



### Lack of Oxford comma costs Maine company millions in overtime dispute

A class-action lawsuit about overtime pay for truck drivers hinged entirely on a debate that has bitterly divided many: The Oxford comma. [MORE...](#)



### Greg Thomajan, the dashing haberdasher behind Zareh, is calling it quits

After 84 years in business, the menswear store will close at the end of the year. [MORE...](#)



### A remarkable turnaround at Regis College

Once on the verge of closing, the Weston school has launched a \$75 million campus upgrade. [MORE...](#)



### Vertex to get new investment from Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

The company will receive an upfront payment of \$75 million toward the development of new cystic fibrosis medicines. [MORE...](#)

## Top largest employers

This year, the Globe invited 2,021 companies to participate in the Top Places to Work survey, 332 went all the way through the process. More than 70,000 employees rated them on things like direction, execution, connection, management, work, pay, and benefits. Winners are declared in four categories: small companies (50 to 99 workers); medium (100 to 249); large (250 to 999); and largest (1,000 or more). Companies marked “new” may have appeared in a different size category on last year’s list. [MORE...](#)

Twitter Share

29



## Comments When Google silences dissent, it bodes poorly for the rest of us

Now we know what you're not allowed to say if you work at Google. Next question: What are the rest of us allowed to say on the Internet? [MORE...](#)

---



## 20 percent tip? Easier math makes paying the bill a snap

Figuring tips and paying the bill with a minimum of fuss is essential for business meals. [MORE...](#)

---



## City takes another stab at moving forward plans for harborfront tower

A new zoning plan would allow developer Don Chiofaro build a 600-foot tower, but would require more open space at street level. [MORE...](#)

---



## Think Boston housing is expensive now? Wait five years

A new report from Standard & Poors estimates that home values here will climb 29 percent over the next five years. [MORE...](#)

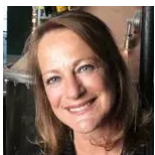
---



## New complex unites Vertex employees

The company's \$800 million South Boston waterfront headquarters brings together its 1,200 employees for the first time. [MORE...](#)

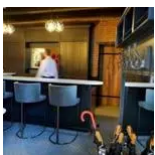
---



## Spirits rising in a new Dorchester distillery

With artisanal products booming, entrepreneur Rhonda Kallman is moving from beer to whiskey. [MORE...](#)

---



## A hidden bar lies behind the walls of Red Hat's new Fort Point office

The North Carolina-based software firm has relocated its worldwide executive briefing center to A Street in the Fort Point section of South Boston. [MORE...](#)



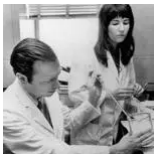
## A look at the world's biggest passenger plane

This massive A380 is so big, Massport spent \$30 million renovating a Logan Airport terminal to accommodate it. [MORE...](#)



## Be an outsider: L.L. Bean wants to be part of your outdoor fun

L.L. Bean has done some soul-searching. The century-old brand known for Yankee durability is putting a renewed focus on the fun of being outside as it tries to invigorate sales in a fast-changing marketplace. [MORE...](#)



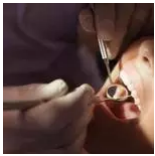
## Dispute over HIV treatment featured in movie sparks lawsuit

The lawsuit revolves around researchers who developed a drug that was featured in the film “Dallas Buyers Club.” [MORE...](#)



## How a biofuel dream turned into a nightmare

The failure of Bedford’s Joule Unlimited again shows how tough it is to produce a cheap and sustainable product. [MORE...](#)



## Delta Dental wants to lower reimbursements. Dentists have a different solution

Dentists say the company should be looking elsewhere for savings — specifically, at executives’ pay. [MORE...](#)



## 5 things you should know about John Fawcett

Fawcett is the cofounder and chief executive of Quantopian, which uses crowdsourcing to develop trading algorithms. [MORE...](#)



## Unlimited time off? No thanks, some workers say

Although a growing number of companies are offering the perk, many workers are taking the

Top 10 Trending Articles

Comments

Most Viewed	Most Commented	Most Shared
‘Potentially catastrophic’ Hurricane Irma makes landfall in Caribbean islands		
Downpours with up to 2 inches of rain per hour possible today		
All aboard the Red Line. May God have mercy on your souls		
New stepmother feels attention deficit		
Hurricane Irma has entered a class all its own		
Lowell at a crossroads		
Alex Speier: Everything you need to know about sign-stealing		
Dentists to poor people: Drop dead		
New York tabloids have a field day with Red Sox’ sign-stealing case		
8 things you need to know about Hurricane Irma		

My Account

- Manage my Account
- Mobile Customer Service
- Sign Up For Newsletters

Contact

- Help
- FAQs
- Globe newsroom
- Advertise

Social

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Google+

More

- ePaper
- News in Education
- Archives