



THE EVICTION PREVENTION COHORT:
Highlights from the Five-City Pilot



CENTER FOR CITY SOLUTIONS

About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the voice of America’s cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people. NLC works to strengthen local leadership, influence federal policy and drive innovative solutions.

NLC’s Center for City Solutions provides research and analysis on key topics and trends important to cities, creative solutions to improve the quality of life in communities, inspiration and ideas for local officials to use in tackling tough issues, and opportunities for city leaders to connect with peers, share experiences and learn about innovative approaches in cities.

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About the Stanford Legal Design Lab

The Legal Design Lab is a public interest research and development group at Stanford Law School and the School of Design (the d.school). The Design Lab works on improving access to justice and legal reform, through user research, developing new technology and service interventions, and evaluating pilots of new initiatives. It partners with legal aid groups, courts, government agencies, and other civic groups to develop and test interventions that can improve how people find and use legal help, to have better outcomes for their housing, finance, and families.

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Introduction

The Eviction Crisis Faced by America's Cities

Approximately one out of every **40** renter households experienced eviction between 2000 and 2016

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 25 percent of all renters, and 71 percent of extremely low-income renters, were paying more than half of their income on housing, leaving too many households one emergency away from facing an eviction.¹ According to data from the Princeton Eviction Lab, an estimated 3.7 million eviction cases were filed nationwide in 2016, with approximately one out of every 40 renter households experiencing eviction between 2000 and 2016.² The impacts of evictions are profoundly long lasting and detrimental, causing families to lose their homes and possessions, limiting future housing opportunities, and potentially affecting their mental health.³ Evictions are not just a symptom of poverty, but a root cause of it.

According to 2020 Census Bureau estimates on rental rates, Black households and Hispanic households rent at approximately twice the rate of Non-Hispanic, White Households.⁴ With higher rates of renting — and lower-rates of homeownership — Black and Latinx households are significantly more likely to face evictions. According to pre-pandemic statistics, one out of every 20 renters faced an eviction each year; for Black renters, that statistic is one out of every 11.⁵ These disproportionate rates are reflective of the history and legacy of redlining, racial covenants, and predatory lending, which continue to have a pervasive and pernicious impact on low-income and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) households.

The pandemic has grossly highlighted the legacy of systemic racism in our institutions and policies — Black and Latinx households not only face higher rates of infection and mortality from COVID-19, but also bear more of the negative economic burden. With less wealth and income to cushion the economic blow, Black and Latinx individuals are at a much higher risk for eviction, especially considering the current shortage of seven million units of affordable rental homes.⁶ Without proper protections in place, the long-term impacts of evictions — including on someone's credit score or likelihood of approval for housing in the future — will continue to fall disproportionately on communities of color, and on Black women in particular.

According to pre-pandemic statistics, one out of every 20 renters faced an eviction each year; for Black renters, that statistic is **1 out of every 11**

While some combination of direct stimulus dollars and local, state, and federal eviction moratoria staved off mass evictions since March 2020, renters are still largely responsible for payment once the moratoria are lifted.⁷ At the federal level, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a temporary halt on residential evictions until January 31, 2021, but it applies only to a subset of renters meeting specific criteria. The order did not relieve households of rent payment and its lack of legal clarity left many renters vulnerable.⁸

For too long the status quo has been reactive rather than proactive to evictions. In 2020, there came a new sense of urgency — amidst public health, economic, and racial justice crises — around the need for robust, just and fair anti-eviction strategies. With cities often on the front lines of these intersecting crises, many now look to disrupt patterns of systemic housing inequity, address key factors leading to evictions, find paths forward for households facing eviction, and foster long-term housing stability.

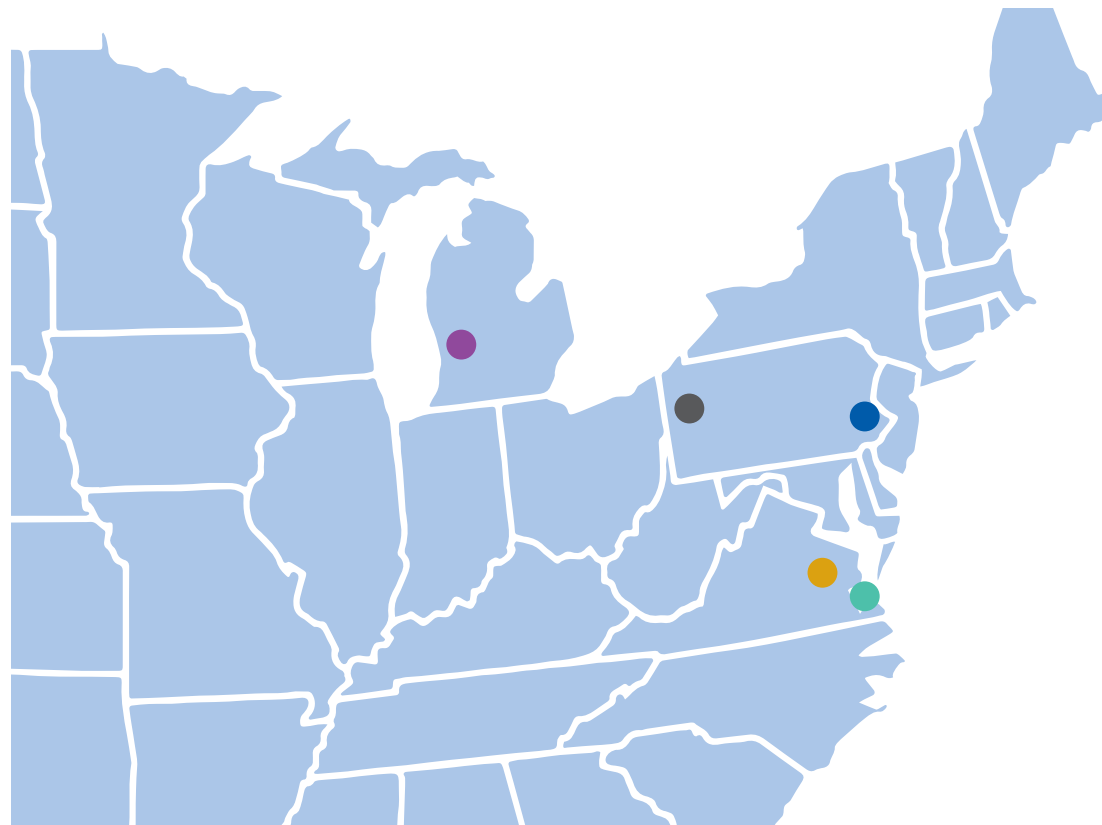
The National League of Cities (“NLC”) and Stanford Legal Design Lab (“the Lab”) have been honored to work with five cities as part of the inaugural Eviction Prevention Cohort (“the Cohort”) during this global public health crisis and pandemic. The Cohort aimed to consider the long-term impacts of mass evictions — particularly on low-income and BIPOC households — and to design, implement, and institutionalize effective policies and programs to combat the eviction crisis at its root. This report details those efforts and the progress achieved by the five city teams that comprised the pilot Cohort.

Launching the Eviction Prevention Cohort

Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, cities across the country faced a crisis in high eviction rates and affordable housing. The National League of Cities and the Stanford Legal Design Lab responded by launching the Eviction Prevention Cohort in March 2020. The timing of the Cohort at the onset of the pandemic enabled cities to share lessons and brainstorm innovations that responded directly to the escalating eviction crisis. Aiming to support and connect cities as they developed, implemented and scaled policy solutions addressing eviction, the NLC-Stanford program organizers convened a five-city Cohort comprised of interagency teams of staff and partner organizations from the following cities:

- Grand Rapids, MI
- Philadelphia, PA
- Norfolk, VA
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Richmond, VA

EVICTION PREVENTION COHORT CITIES



The Cohort initially launched with an educational seminar and a hands-on technical assistance convening at the NLC Congressional City Conference in early March 2020. Following a brief interruption as the cities conducted rapid response to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, Cohort programming resumed in late June 2020 through early December 2020 with regular meetings and learning sessions.

Components of the Eviction Prevention Cohort, including the programmatic elements and processes, are described at length in this report. The City Snapshot section offers a closer look at individual cities' priorities and progress over the course of the six month Cohort engagement.

ESTABLISHING THE PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP

The mission, programs and expertise of the Legal Design Lab, paired with NLC's deep connections to cities and knowledge of housing policy, made them natural partners for operating the Eviction Prevention Cohort. The Lab, created in 2016, has long focused on local solutions and the role of local actors to develop site-specific, user-friendly interventions to some of the greatest challenges in the eviction cycle. Teams of academic professionals, together with law and policy students, have built a body of knowledge through targeted work in places like Lansing, Michigan and Alameda County, California; they have developed resources such as visual guides to court procedures and an interactive web portal (evictioninnovation.org) about eviction and rent protections.

Meanwhile, NLC has expanded its research and initiatives related to housing instability and homelessness, positioning it well to provide direct technical assistance to cities. This partnership initiative builds on NLC's 2018 launch of the Task Force on Housing — a national task force comprised of 18 elected city leaders addressing how communities can better respond to the growing challenge of housing availability, affordability, investment and quality — as well as on NLC's research on topics related to housing and community development.

Leveraging these areas of expertise, the Legal Design Lab and NLC embarked on a joint initiative organized as a cohort model that would not only advance the Lab's first-hand knowledge of individual city operations, but that would also expose a new corps of municipal professionals to the resources and extra capacity available through NLC and Stanford.

UTILIZING A COHORT MODEL

The cohort model was selected in order to create a community of peers with a built-in support network to learn, discuss and reflect on shared findings, opportunities and barriers. This group model allows for each city to receive tailored technical assistance from NLC and the Lab, in addition to benefiting from connections to individuals operating in different cities while pursuing similar goals. The smaller group also provided a setting in which city staff and their partners could ask challenging questions, brainstorm ideas, and learn from one another. The Cohort was organized with peer teams from the same states — Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, PA, as well as Richmond and Norfolk, VA — along with Grand Rapids, MI. This close coordination became key given the highly regionalized nature of eviction challenges and the coordination of COVID-19 response among city, state and federal agencies, along with regional community organizations.

PROGRAM GOALS

At the onset of the Eviction Prevention Cohort, NLC and the Stanford Legal Design Lab identified four key objectives for the initiative:

- 1 Catalyze and strengthen the development and implementation of viable pilot solutions to address the eviction crisis, including tools, policies, and programs.
- 2 Bridge the gap between cities, service providers and legal resources by facilitating coordination and shared learning.
- 3 Inspire more cities to consider and create policy and programmatic solutions to address the eviction crisis.
- 4 Serve as an example for further state-wide reforms related to housing and eviction.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic downturn, city staff and their partners faced unprecedented challenges as they coordinated their responses to the public health crisis. Cities rapidly rolled out assistance programs to meet sudden increases in demand and the changing needs of both tenants and landlords, all while adapting to a remote work environment and, in some instances, new responsibilities as colleagues were furloughed.

Similarly, NLC and the Lab teams also had to adjust to working in a remote setting while assessing the impact of the pandemic on both the Cohort and the larger eviction crisis. Following the official launch of the Cohort in mid-March 2020 at the National League of Cities' Congressional City Conference, the program team decided to pause the Cohort as city leaders responded to the pandemic in real time. The Cohort then re-launched in June, beginning with a reevaluation of city goals, needs, status quos and priorities in light of COVID-19.

During the pause, the United States Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act (signed into law March 27, 2020). The Act gave Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars to cities with populations exceeding 500,000, and to all 50 States, the District of Columbia, U.S. Territories and Tribal governments. Entitlement cities also received additional Community Development Block Grants (CDBG-CV). As a result, all cities within the cohort received federal Coronavirus relief funding. Federal, state and local governments also enacted eviction moratoriums, resulting in a fragmented policy landscape over the course of the pandemic. State and local efforts to halt evictions were ultimately supplemented by a federal moratorium on evictions. However, a lack of legal clarity, gaps in applicability, and the failure to institute rent forgiveness or repayment options left many tenants still at risk of eviction.

As a result, the pandemic made the work of this Cohort and its city teams more timely than ever. Even with the end of the Cohort, cities are faced with budget shortages due to the lack of additional federal aid and residents will experience housing instability as long as the pandemic, housing market conditions, and economic shortfalls make a full recovery impossible.

COMPONENTS OF COHORT PARTICIPATION & TRACKING CITY PROGRESS

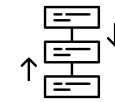


Cohort Admission Process & Pre-Work

Cohort member cities were recruited and selected based on their commitment and momentum to address eviction practices and policies in their city. Cities joined the Cohort on the basis that they were actively engaged in addressing evictions in some way, including by:

- Having started initial conversations about addressing evictions, to having already developed and implemented policies, programs, and practices;
- Connecting with a network of interested cross-sector partners from different institutions involved in the work;
- Committing to the implementation of a pilot solution (or solutions) with an identified champion or set of key actors in the locality; and
- Being willing to collaborate with the Cohort cities and share tools, and to more broadly inform others of the implementation and results of projects and pilots.

Selected cities were then required to complete pre-work in advance of joining the initial in-person Cohort kick-off at NLC's Congressional City Conference. Intended to be completed by each city team, this required members of the Cohort to establish a vision for how their eviction policies fit into the larger vision of their community, to define the aspects of the eviction crisis that they looked to address through the Cohort, to identify key stakeholders, and to describe existing hurdles and state-level activities. This pre-work set the stage for the launch of the Cohort, in addition to charting a path for each city moving forward.



City Action Plans

Following the hiatus prompted by COVID-19, each city team was asked to reassess their policy priorities and intervention strategies in light of the advances made in response to the pandemic. With many cities having made great strides in initiating new programs, it became critical to reevaluate each communities' needs in order to tailor the assistance that would be provided through the Eviction Prevention Cohort.

Building on the goals set at the in-person kick-off, each team completed a City Action Plan in which they:

- Specified and ranked key priorities;
- Detailed necessary intermediate steps and benchmarks for success for each priority;
- Identified key stakeholders; and
- Determined needed resources and supports.

This Action Plan served as a roadmap to the city teams, in addition to guiding the efforts of NLC and the Lab to tailor technical assistance to the specific needs and priorities of each individual city.



Monthly Team Check-in Calls

Following the in-person kick-off, monthly check-in meetings were conducted by video call between the city teams and program staff. These monthly calls were used as an opportunity to get updates on city initiatives and developments, refocus efforts based on community need, and to reassess city priorities by checking against the City Action Plan. Based on challenges or opportunities identified through these calls, NLC and the Lab also used check-ins as an avenue by which to provide tailored coaching and technical assistance. Many calls featured outside experts or speakers from peer cities that could provide deeper knowledge or a new perspective on a topic that was a priority for each given city team.



Learning Meetings

The Cohort program also included monthly Learning Meetings conducted as all-city video calls. NLC and the Lab curated a curriculum and engaged outside experts to join these meetings based on Cohort-wide trends in city needs and priorities. The Learning Meeting topics and presentations sought to address challenges associated with the pandemic, in addition to providing insights that could be applied to the ongoing and long-term eviction crisis cities face. With presentations from organizations such as the **Princeton Eviction Lab**, the **National Center for State Courts** and the **Reinvestment Fund**, the Learning Meetings were an opportunity for all of the Cohort city teams to connect, share, and ask questions in an environment of their peers. A comprehensive list of individuals who provided outside expertise through the Learning Meetings can be found in the Acknowledgements section of this report.

Topics for the Cohort Learning Meetings included:

- Eviction Diversion Programs
- Court Proceedings in Light of COVID-19
- Data Collection & Analysis Methods to Manage Evictions
- Sustainable Funding Strategies
- Communications, Outreach & Engagement Strategies
- Team Reflections & Looking Ahead to Eviction Prevention in 2021



Communication & Resource-Sharing

All Cohort materials, such as recordings of meetings and presentation decks, were compiled in a shared drive, along with outside resources. The online platform made it possible for city team members to look back on materials from previous Learning Meetings or Check-in Calls, review additional resources identified by the program team, or upload and share their own resources. Cohort team members were also able to post questions, reach out to the full Cohort, or get in contact with other individual members of the Cohort.



PROGRAM EVALUATION

Anonymous feedback surveys were issued to the Cohort city team members following each Learning Meeting. These surveys assessed overall satisfaction with each session, collected feedback on individual presentations or components of the meetings, and surfaced the information participants found most useful, along with any additional questions arose that required follow-up.

Feedback on the Cohort program in general was collected via an anonymous mid-program survey. The survey assessed satisfaction with the Cohort overall and with individual program elements such as Check-in Calls, Learning Meetings, cross-city collaboration and communication; gathered feedback on how well NLC and the Lab were supporting city programmatic goals; and collected recommendations for how to improve the program. A similar anonymous survey at the conclusion of the Cohort program helped evaluate the initiative as a whole.

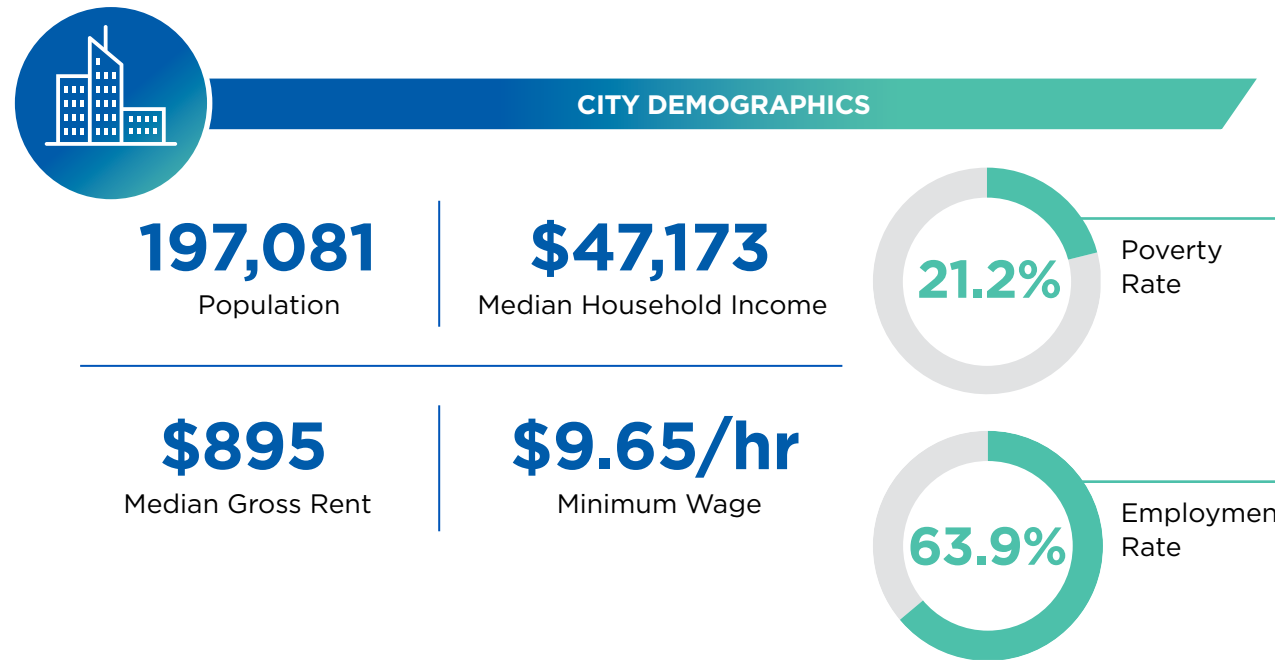
Tracking the progress of each city team against their chosen priorities proved difficult due to the variable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. It became critical for the teams to have the flexibility and support to respond to the ongoing crisis, and many shifted their priorities multiple times over the course of the Cohort. As a result, no formal program evaluation was conducted on the basis of each city's priorities. Instead, the NLC and Stanford team focused on responding agilely to the changing landscape of the eviction crisis in cities.

Cohort City Snapshots

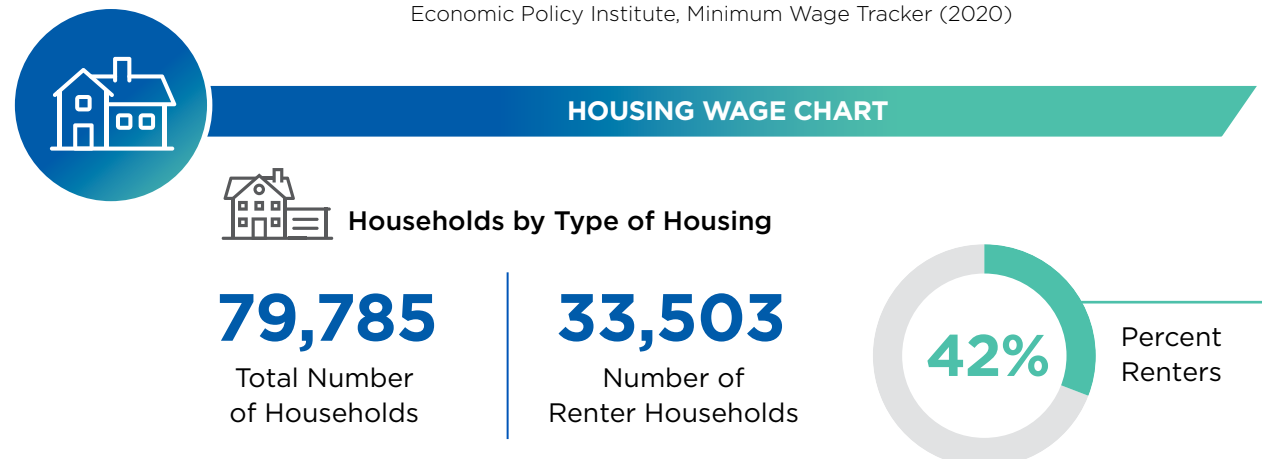
The following section details the demographics, economic factors, housing market conditions and eviction status quo for each of the five cities that participated in the 2020 Eviction Prevention Cohort. It also explores the unique challenges each city faced as a result of COVID-19. Additionally, these snapshots outline the chosen priority areas of each city, the specific technical assistance that it received through participation in the Cohort, and what lays ahead for each city as it continues to respond and adapt to the local eviction landscape.



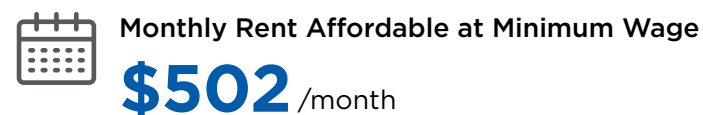
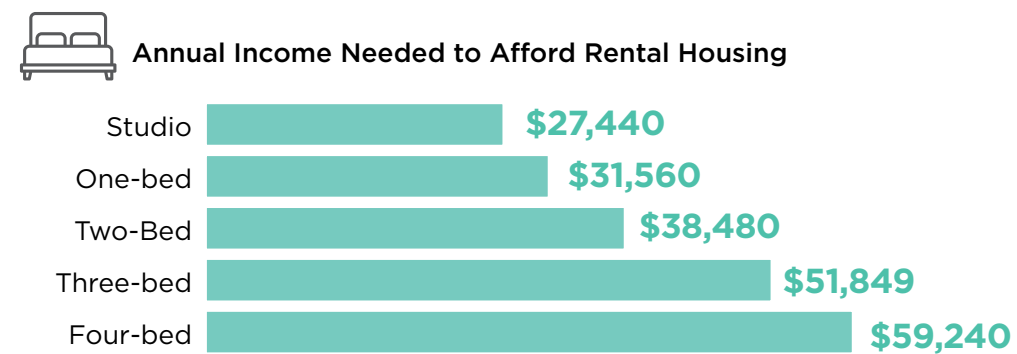
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



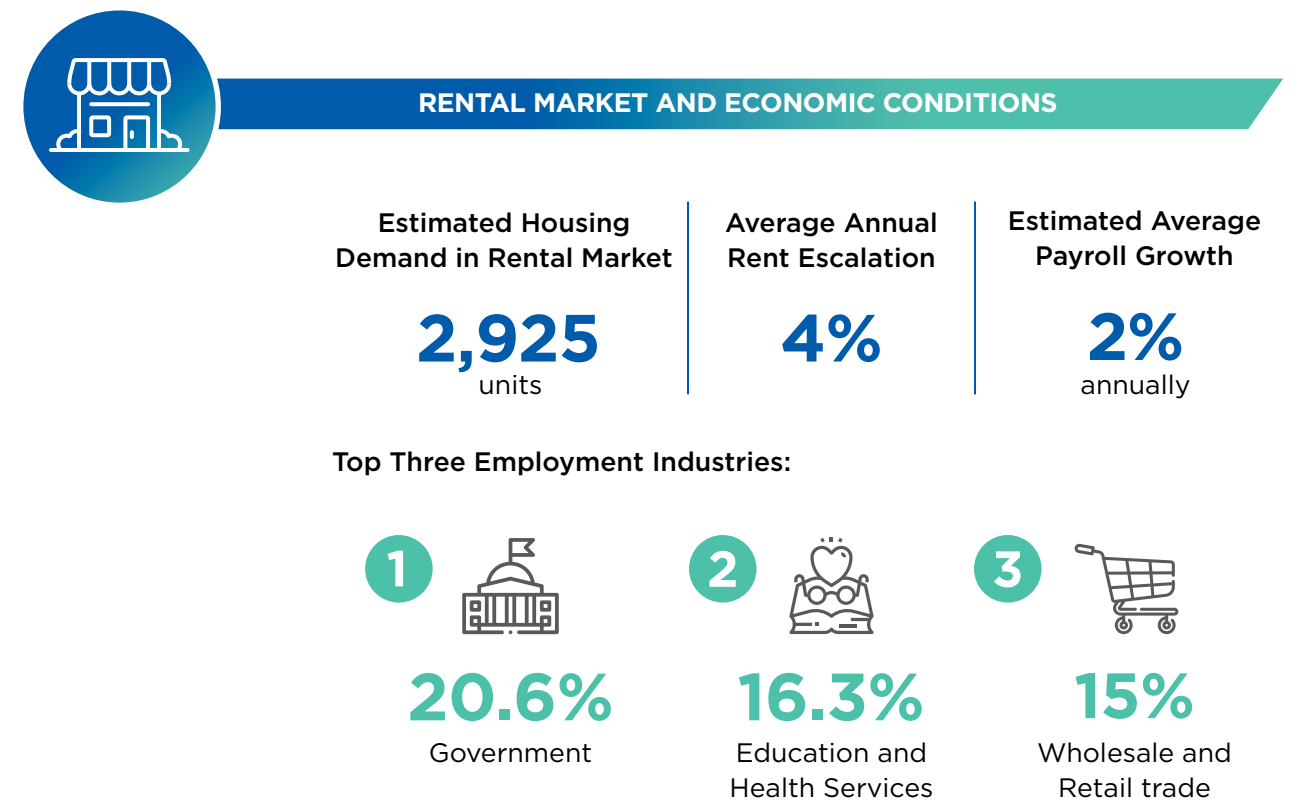
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2014-2018); The Economic Policy Institute, Minimum Wage Tracker (2020)



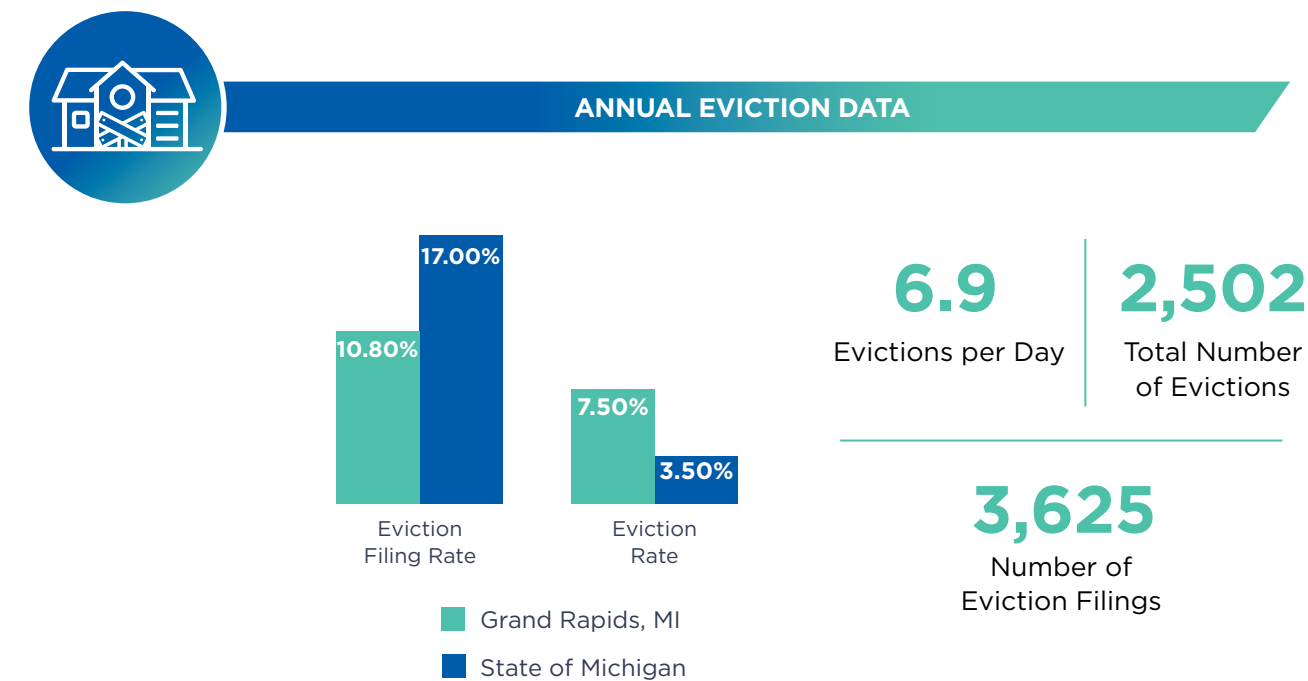
Source: American Community Survey (2013-2017)



Source: Grand Rapids-Wyoming HMFA, National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach* (2020)



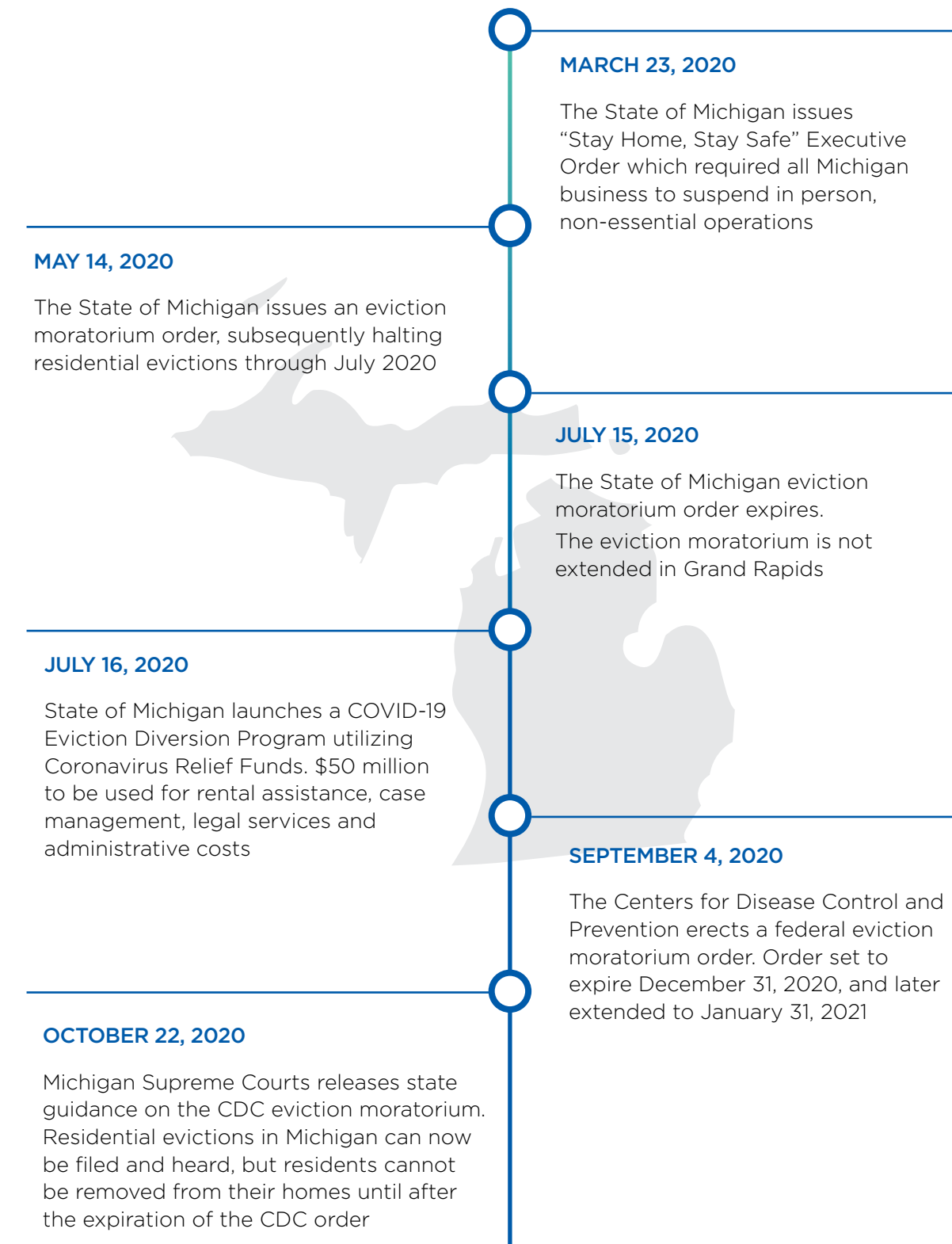
Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis (2020)



Source: Métrica (2019); University of Michigan (2020)⁹

* The City of Grand Rapids provided 2018 eviction data to reflect progress achieved through the recently deployed Eviction Prevention Pilot Program. As such, state data, rather than national, was used for comparison given that 2018 national eviction data is unavailable at this time.

TIMELINE OF LOCAL EVICTION MORATORIUM ORDERS¹⁰



TEAM PROFILE

The Grand Rapids Cohort team was comprised of cross-sector stakeholders who represented the following organizations:



City of Grand Rapids



Michigan Department of Health and Human Services



Legal Aid of Western Michigan



61st District Court, Grand Rapids, Michigan



The Salvation Army

COHORT PRIORITIES

The Grand Rapids team focused on the following priorities during their time in the Cohort:

- 1** Developing a sustainable funding plan to support the city’s eviction diversion efforts once federal relief dollars are exhausted.
- 2** Expanding the city’s pre-filing eviction prevention and diversion programs.
- 3** Identifying strategies to decrease the prevalence of serial evictions and improve success rates for tenants receiving direct assistance.
- 4** Improving landlord engagement and outreach strategies in order to increase enrollment in programs targeted to landlords and to increase the likelihood of resolving landlord/tenant disputes prior to an eviction filing.

By targeting these areas, the Grand Rapids team aimed to strengthen systems and processes that will foster housing stability to ensure that all city residents have access to safe and stable housing.

SUPPORT, ACTION & IMPACT

Over the course of the six-month pilot, the Grand Rapids team continued to refine the city's pre-filing eviction prevention and support programs, in coordination with the state-run post-filing diversion program. With a cohort team that included representatives from the city and state, the court system, and local nonprofit partners, alignment was key. To gain further insight into housing court developments and state-wide diversion efforts, Grand Rapids team received technical assistance from the **Honorable Thomas P. Boyd (ret.)**, a 55th Judicial District Court Judge in Ingham County, Michigan. The team also benefited from a data and policy discussion with researchers from the **University of Michigan** and the **Michigan Poverty Law Program** that identified additional local sources for assessing the impacts of evictions.

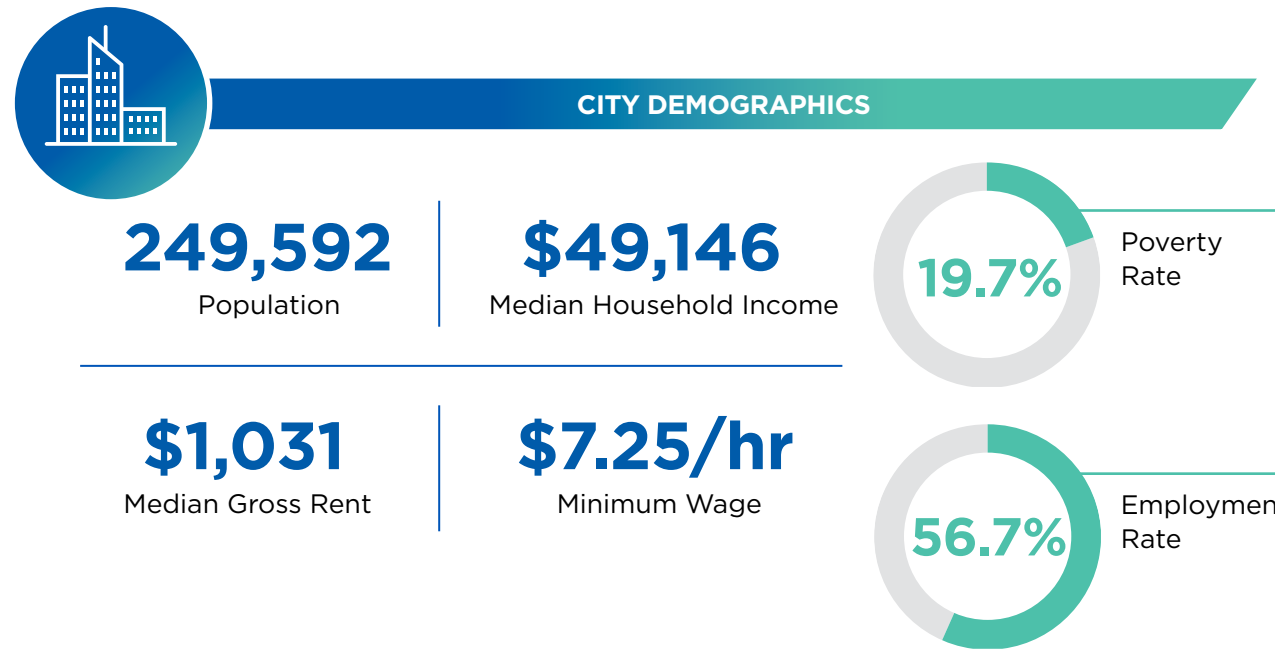
NEXT STEPS

Leveraging the resources, tools and knowledge gained through the eviction cohort, the Grand Rapids team looks to:

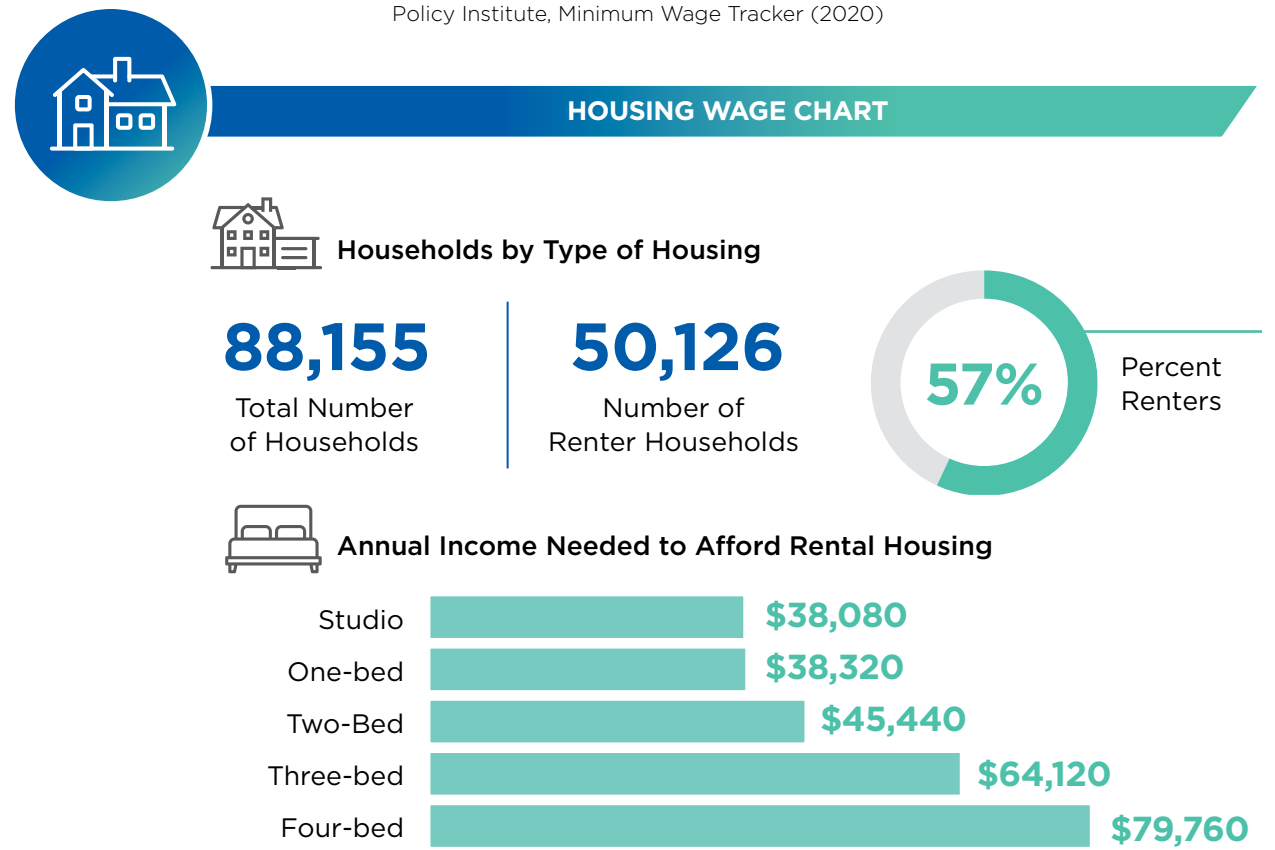
- Continue and expand the Eviction Prevention Program to meet the local need and ensure efficient, equitable access to assistance.
- Continue to strengthen intergovernmental and local partnerships to ensure sustainable resources for staffing and rental assistance funds.
- Continue to strengthen university and civic partnerships to ensure that the City has access to the latest eviction data for the purposes of monitoring and creating relevant programmatic strategies.



NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

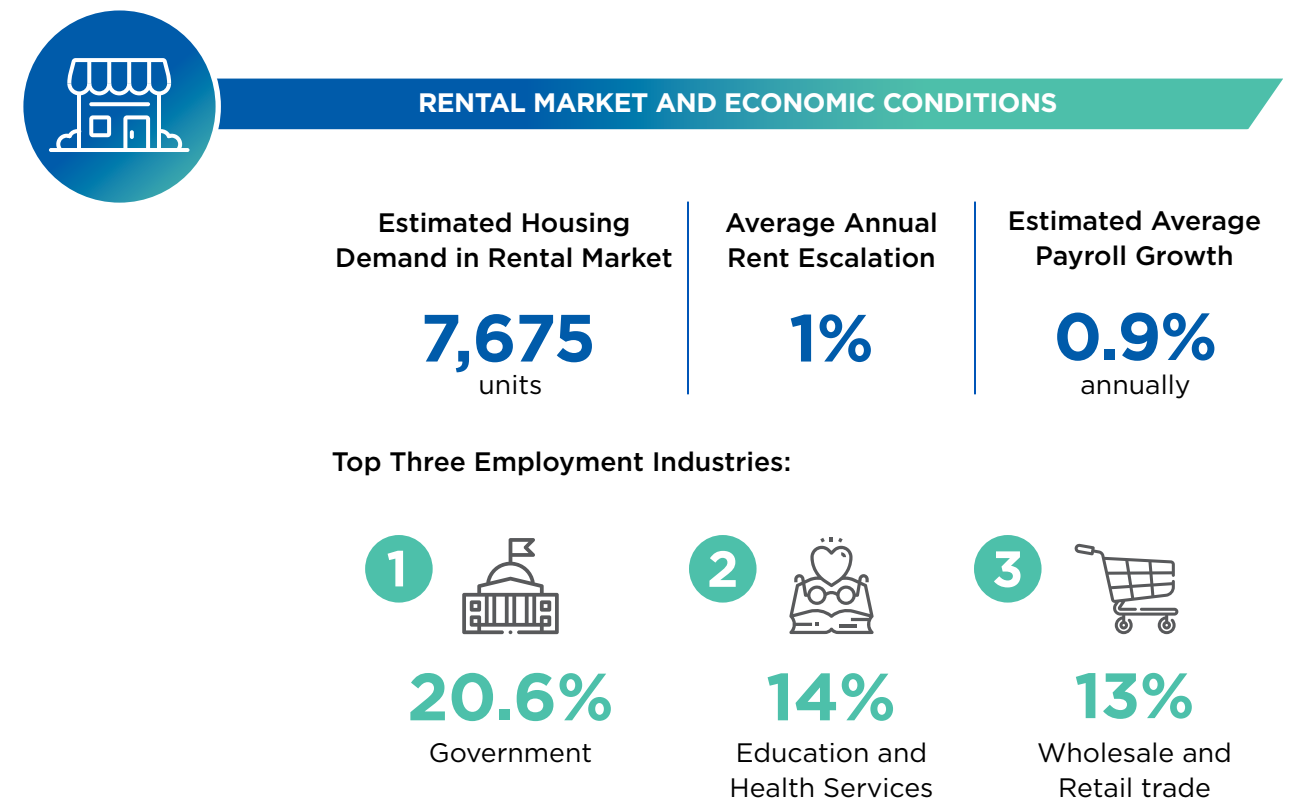


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2014-2018); The Economic Policy Institute, Minimum Wage Tracker (2020)

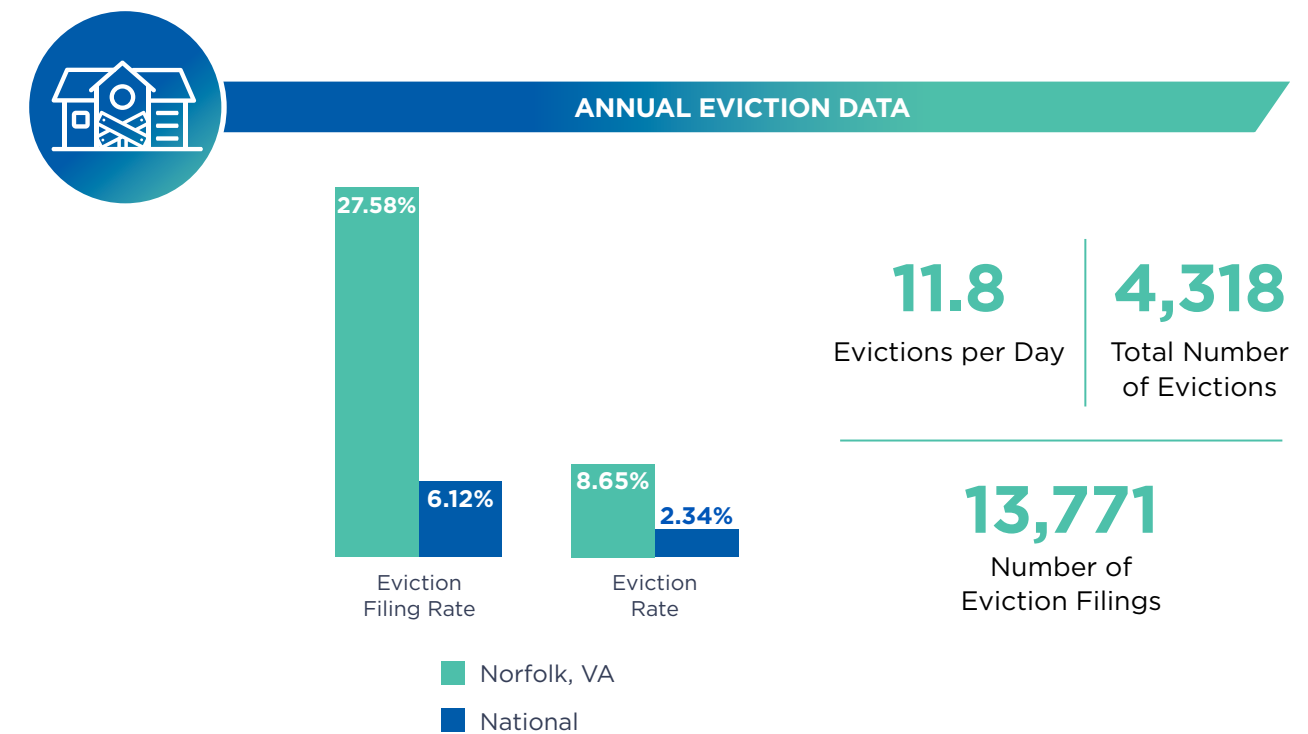


Monthly Rent Affordable at Minimum Wage
\$377/month

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach* (2020)

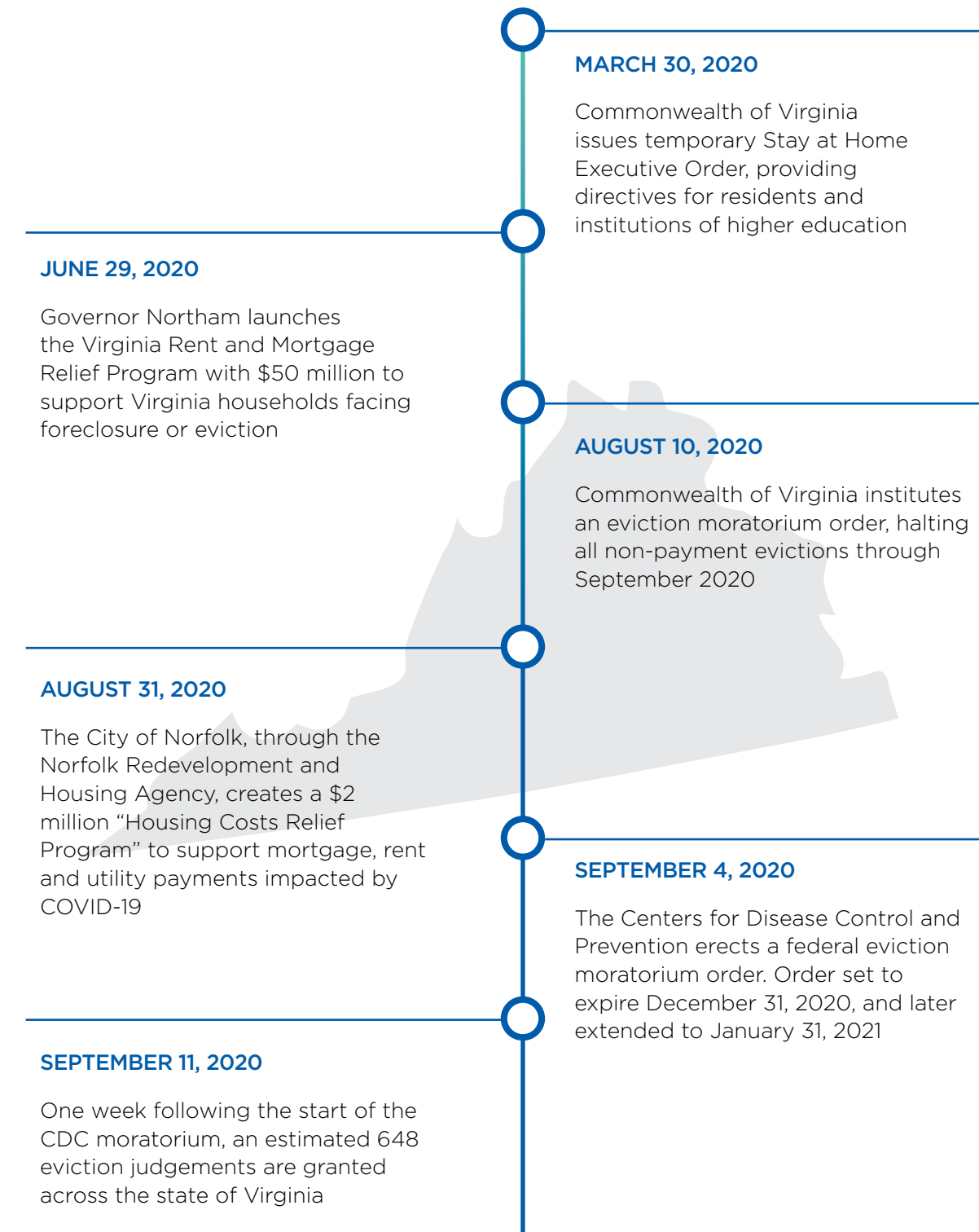


Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis (2020)



Source: The Eviction Lab (2016)

TIMELINE OF LOCAL EVICTION MORATORIUM ORDERS¹¹



TEAM PROFILE

The Norfolk team consisted of members from the City of Norfolk's Department of Neighborhood Development, which leads the city's efforts in building strong, healthy neighborhoods of choice for the residents of Norfolk, Virginia.



COHORT PRIORITIES

The Norfolk team focused on the following priorities during their time with the Cohort:

- 1** Establishing a cross-sector eviction mitigation team comprised of stakeholders who manage touchpoints along the eviction process.
- 2** Identify sources of local eviction data and strengthen relationships with the entities that manage these sources.
- 3** Identify long-term funding strategies for housing stability and housing affordability.

By targeting these areas, the Norfolk team aimed to streamline processes and resources among participating stakeholders and to surface long-term strategies that can proactively help mitigate evictions for Norfolk residents.

SUPPORT, ACTION & IMPACT

During the initial months of the Cohort, the City of Norfolk worked independently to develop a cross-sector eviction task force that would provide strategy and recommendations on the city's response to the economic impacts of COVID-19. A leading priority for the task force was to assess the resources and service offerings of each participating organization and to develop strategies for streamlining eviction supports across the participating organizations. Specifically, to aid in the development of the city's eviction mitigation strategy, the City of Norfolk received cross-cohort support from the **City of Pittsburgh**, which offered a case study and best practices of Pittsburgh's eviction mediation program. Additionally, to support the city's data and housing strategy needs, the Norfolk team received coaching from the **RVA Eviction Lab**, a data and research institute hosted at Virginia Commonwealth University. The city's funding strategy was also bolstered by assistance from the **Center for Community Investment**, which specializes in connecting local communities to capital sources to assist in developing strong, thriving cities.

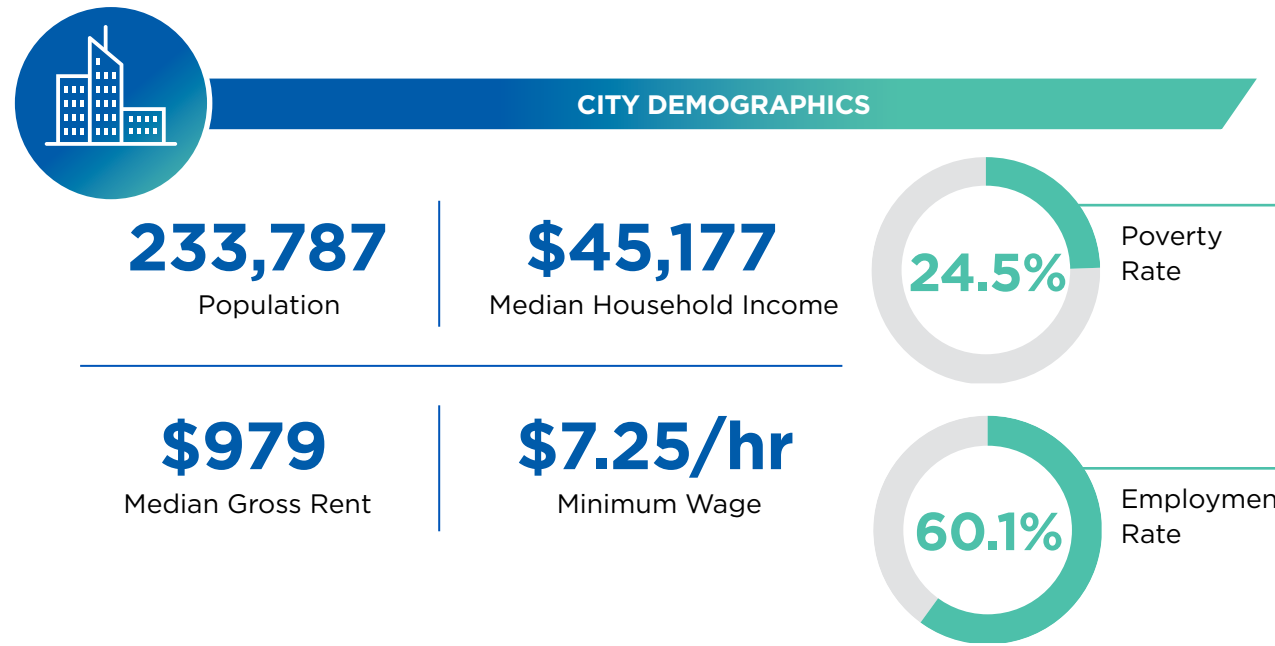
NEXT STEPS

Leveraging the resources, tools and knowledge gained through the Eviction Prevention Cohort, the Norfolk team looks to:

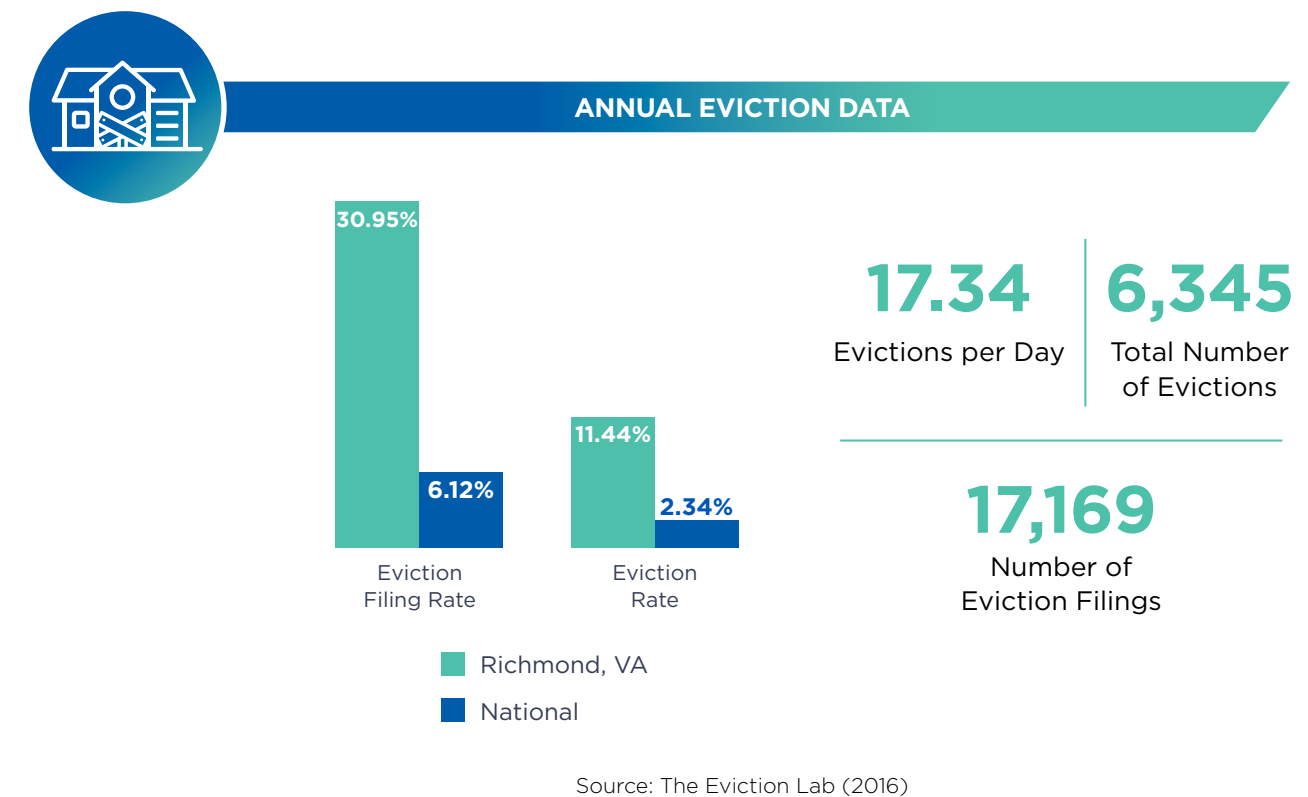
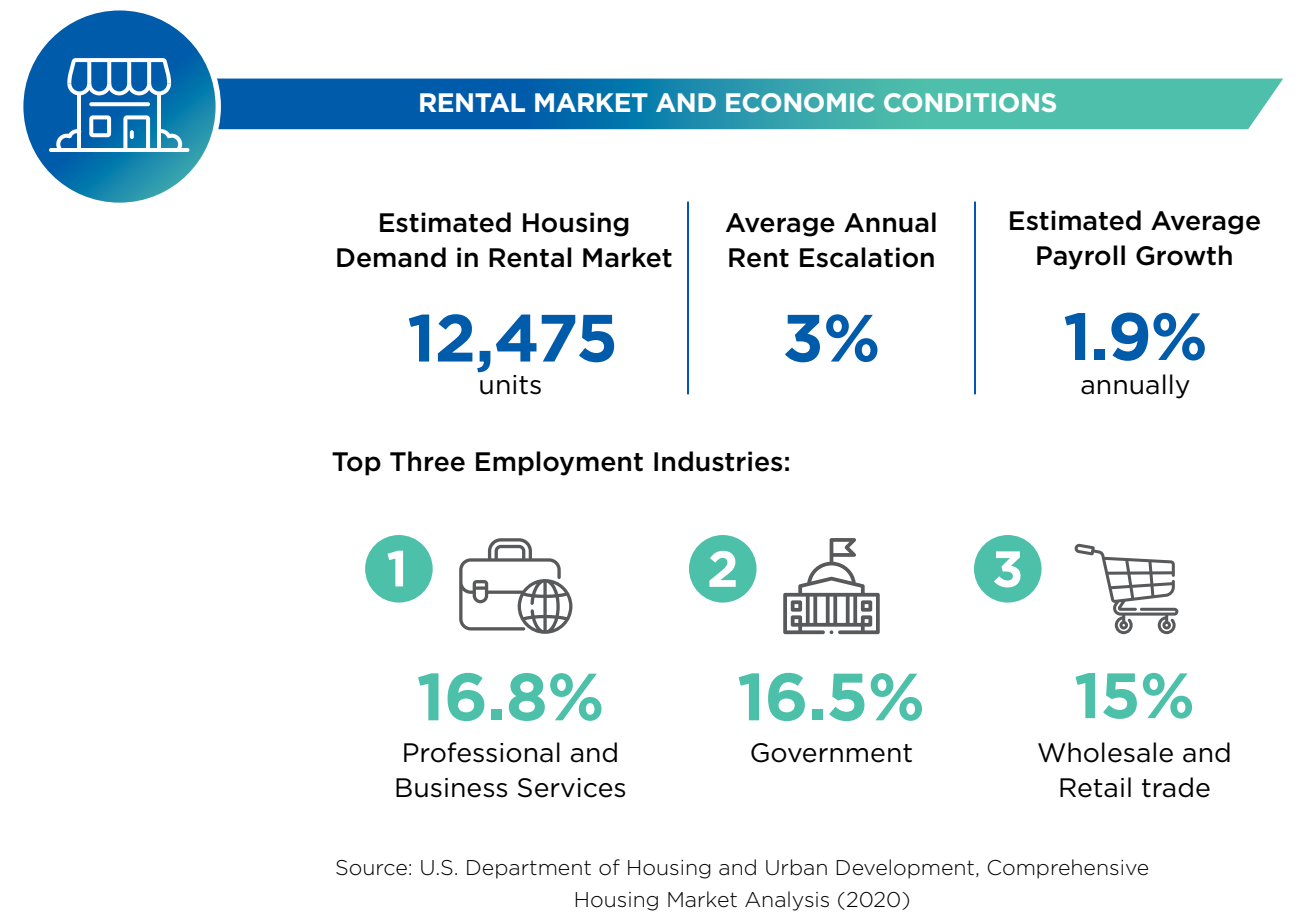
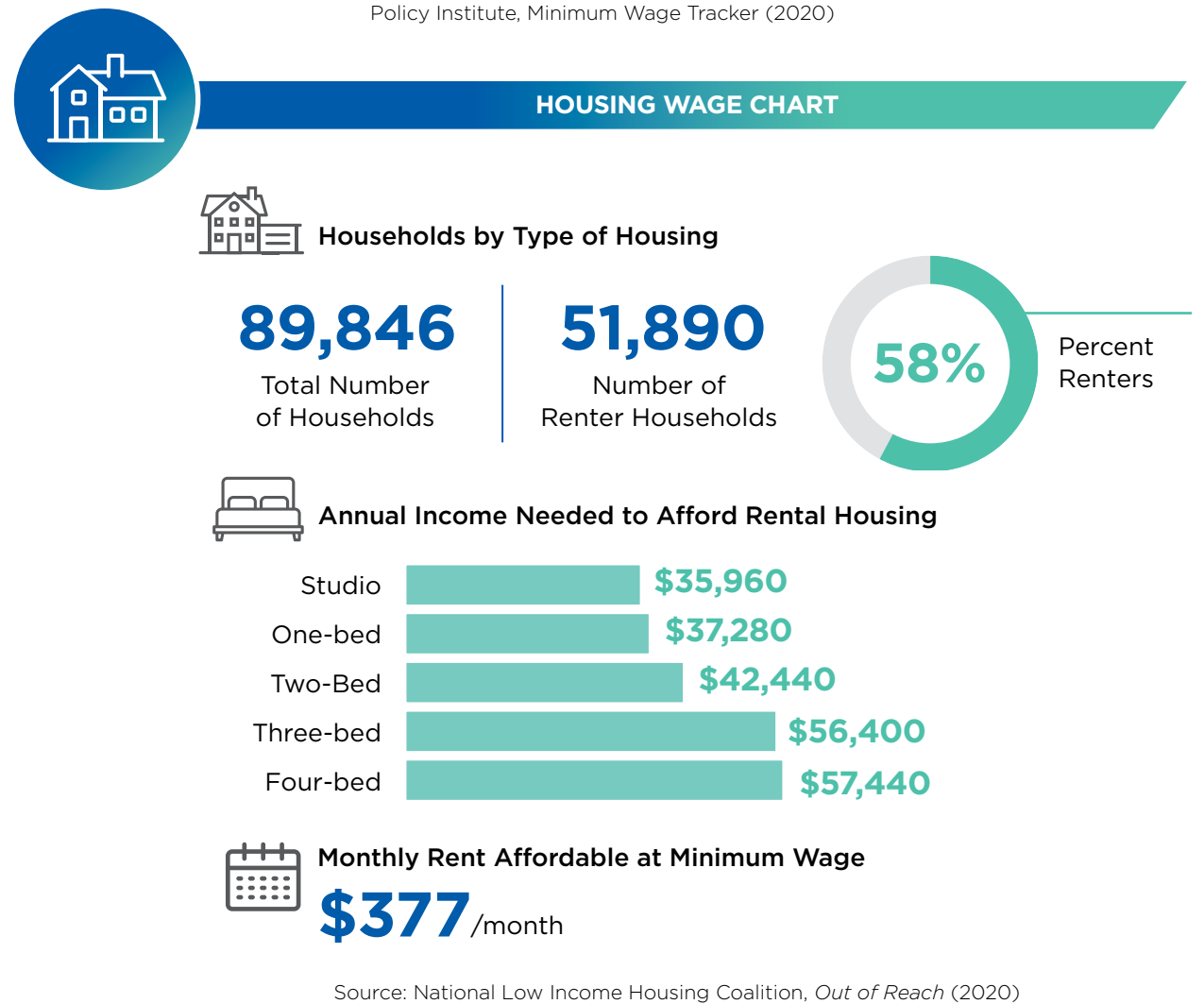
- Continue to strengthen external partnerships by making the eviction taskforce a permanent fixture in the city's eviction mitigation strategy.
- Utilize a data-driven approach in mitigating local evictions by partnering with local, state, and national research institutes. This will ensure that strategies and programmatic efforts are being designed around real time needs.
- Identify public and private funding sources that promote long-term affordability of housing for Norfolk residents.



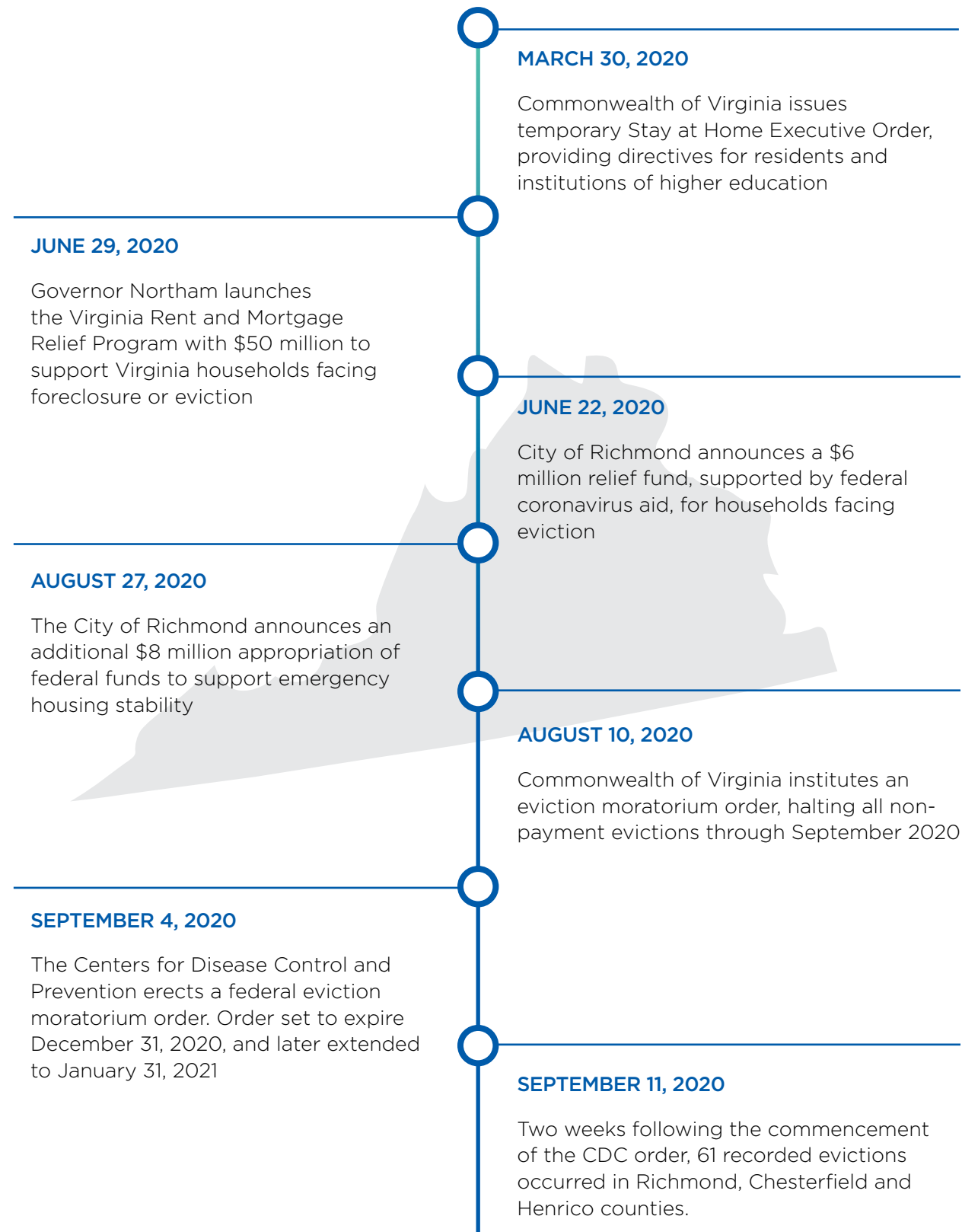
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2014-2018); The Economic Policy Institute, Minimum Wage Tracker (2020)



TIMELINE OF LOCAL EVICTION MORATORIUM ORDERS¹²



TEAM PROFILE

The Richmond team was supported by the following entities, which are also members of the city's Eviction Taskforce:



City of Richmond's Department of Housing and Community Development



Central Virginia Legal Aid Society

COHORT PRIORITIES

To support the city's Eviction Task Force in its goal of establishing a Landlord Tenant Education Portal, the Richmond team focused on the following priority:

1

Establishing a landlord-tenant education plan that provides targeted assistance to support the success and stability of those housed in Richmond's rental market.

SUPPORT, ACTION & IMPACT

Over the course of the six-month Cohort, the Richmond team received technical support on best practices for landlord and tenant engagement. Using a peer-to-peer learning approach, the Richmond team engaged with the **City of Norfolk, Virginia**, the **City of Minneapolis, Minnesota** and **HOME Line**, a Minnesota tenant advocacy organization. To support the Richmond team in deploying the best practices learned during the cohort, the **National League of Cities** developed an eviction prevention program that presented targeted strategies for increasing engagement and education within Richmond's rental communities.

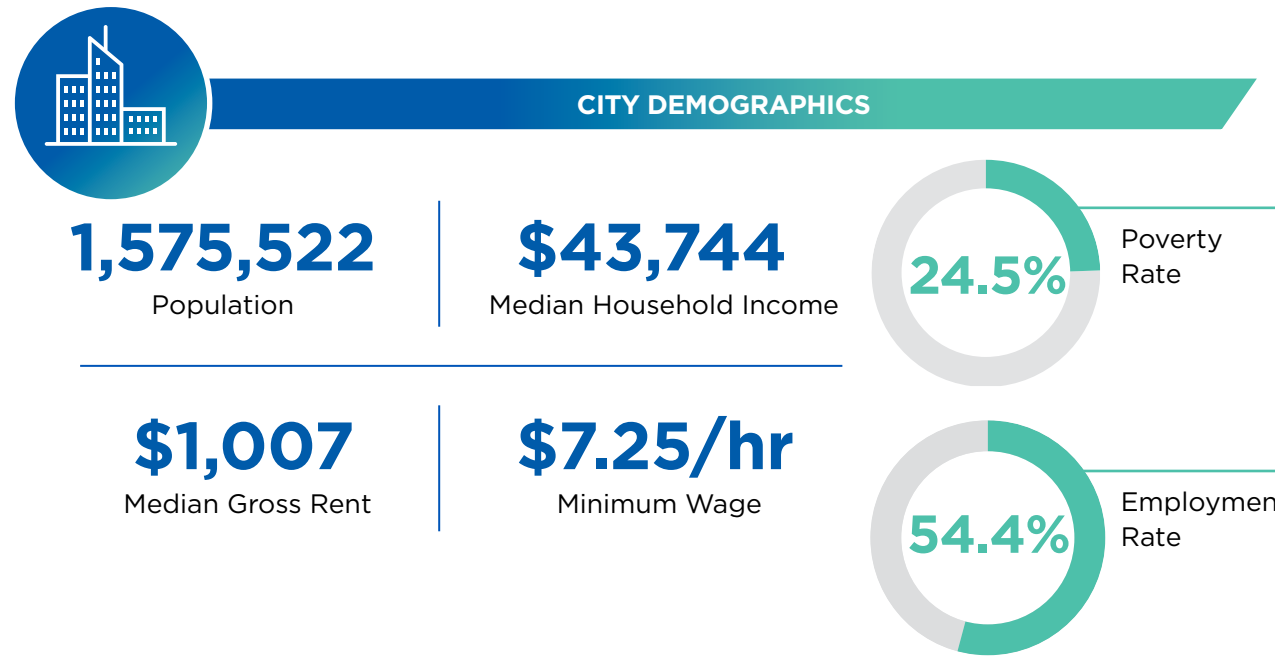
NEXT STEPS

Leveraging the resources, tools and knowledge gained through the eviction cohort, the Richmond team looks to:

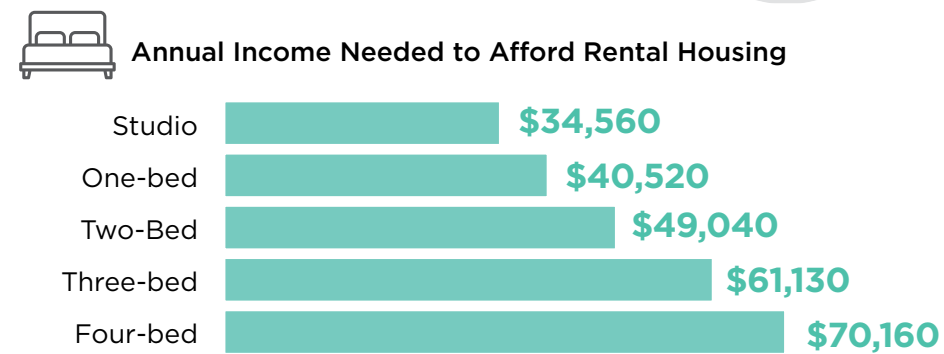
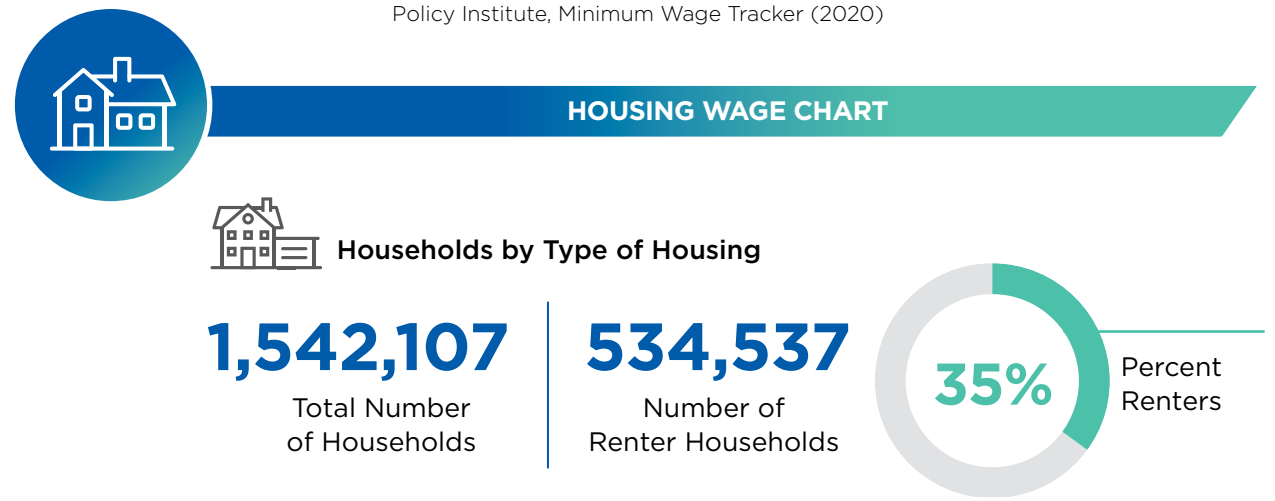
- Continue to urge their local city council to implement the five-phase anti-eviction strategy, as proposed by the city's Eviction Task Force.
- Implement the strategies provided in the eviction prevention program to work toward minimizing the number of eviction filings throughout the city and to institutionalize proactive prevention measures within the city's eviction process.

An aerial photograph of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, taken at dusk. The image shows a dense urban landscape with numerous skyscrapers and buildings. The sky is a deep blue, and the city lights are beginning to glow. A large, semi-transparent blue banner is overlaid on the bottom right portion of the image, containing the text 'PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA' in white, uppercase letters.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

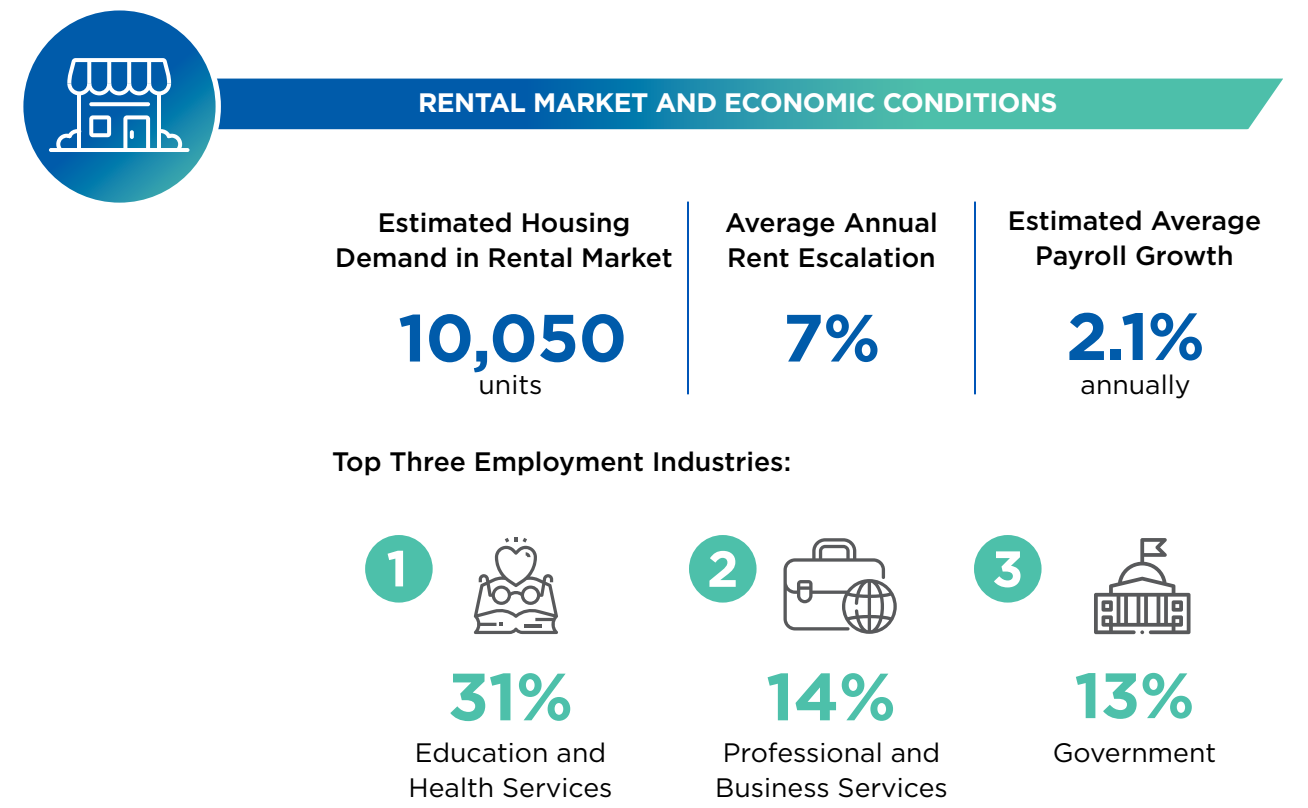


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2014-2018); The Economic Policy Institute, Minimum Wage Tracker (2020)

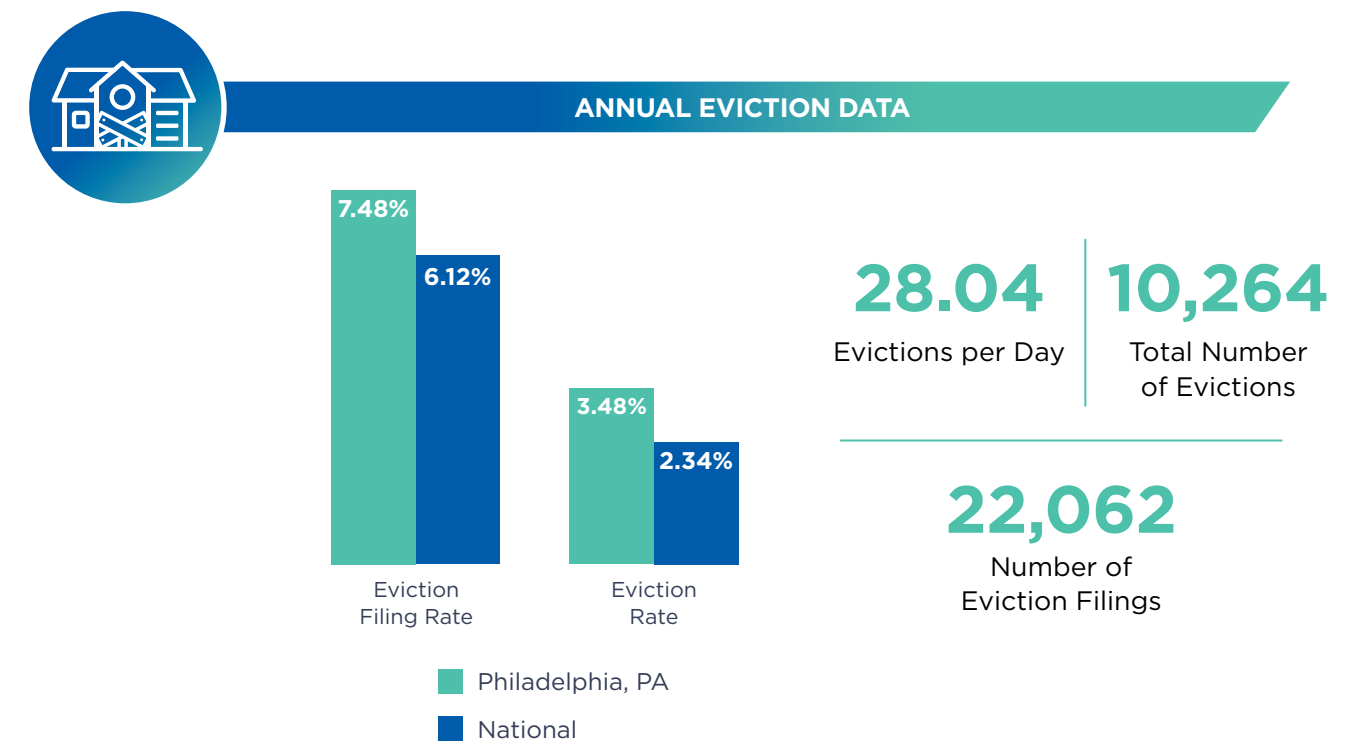


Monthly Rent Affordable at Minimum Wage
\$377/month

Source: National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach* (2020)

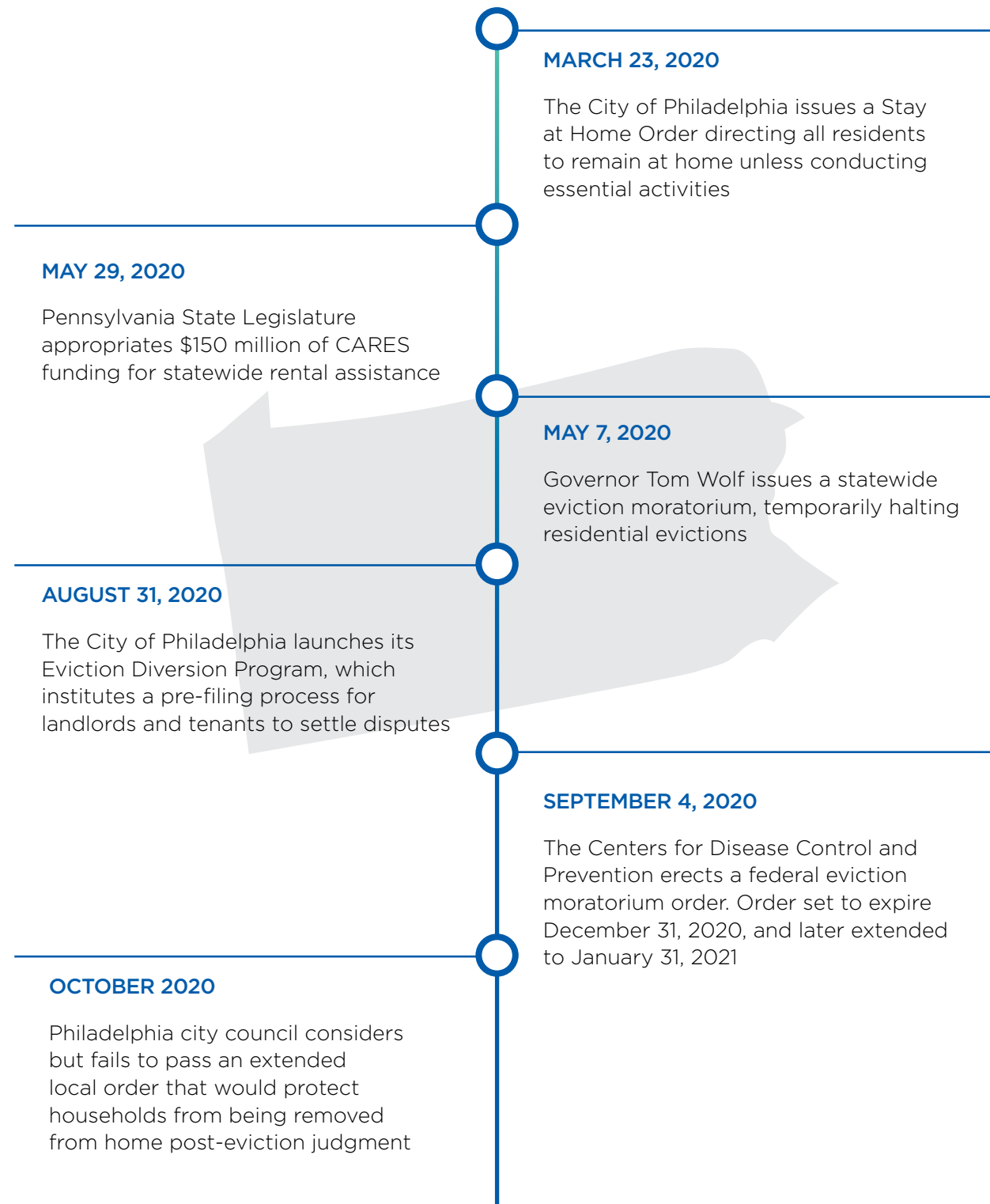


Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis (2020)



Source: The Eviction Lab (2016)

TIMELINE OF LOCAL EVICTION MORATORIUM ORDERS¹³



TEAM PROFILE

The Philadelphia team consisted of representatives from the following organizations:



City of Philadelphia:

- Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity
- Division of Housing and Community Development
- Health and Human Services

Community Legal Services of Philadelphia

COHORT PRIORITIES

The Philadelphia team focused on the following priorities during their time in the cohort:

- 1** Launching an Eviction Diversion and Mediation pilot program to support the current needs of COVID-19 response and recovery, including streamlining the intake and triage process.
- 2** Planning for the implementation and roll-out of “Right to Counsel” services for tenants in line with legislation recently passed by the City Council.

By targeting resources on these areas, the Philadelphia team aimed to equitably disperse COVID-19 relief resources to households in need and to provide adequate support to households navigating the eviction process.

SUPPORT, ACTION & IMPACT

While participating in the cohort, the City of Philadelphia independently launched a city-wide eviction diversion program focused on pre-filing measures that prevent evictions. To support the success of this initiative, the Philadelphia team engaged in a peer-to-peer learning call with the **City of Boston, Massachusetts** to source best practices on the use of data on eviction mitigation strategies. The team also met with the **City of San Francisco, California** for guidance on implementing a right to counsel program. Additionally, the team received ongoing support from the **Stanford Legal Design Lab** and **National League of Cities** on strengthening city-and-court partnership strategies and regarding mediation programs.

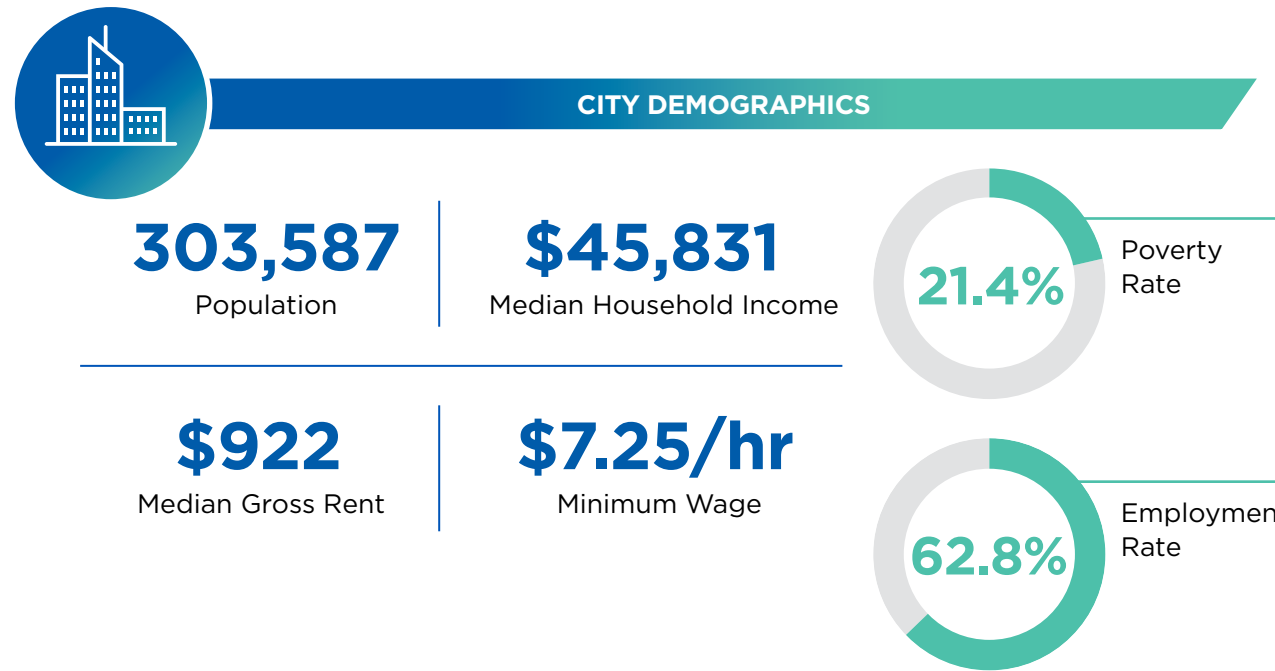
NEXT STEPS

Leveraging the resources, tools and knowledge gained through the eviction cohort, the Philadelphia team looks to:

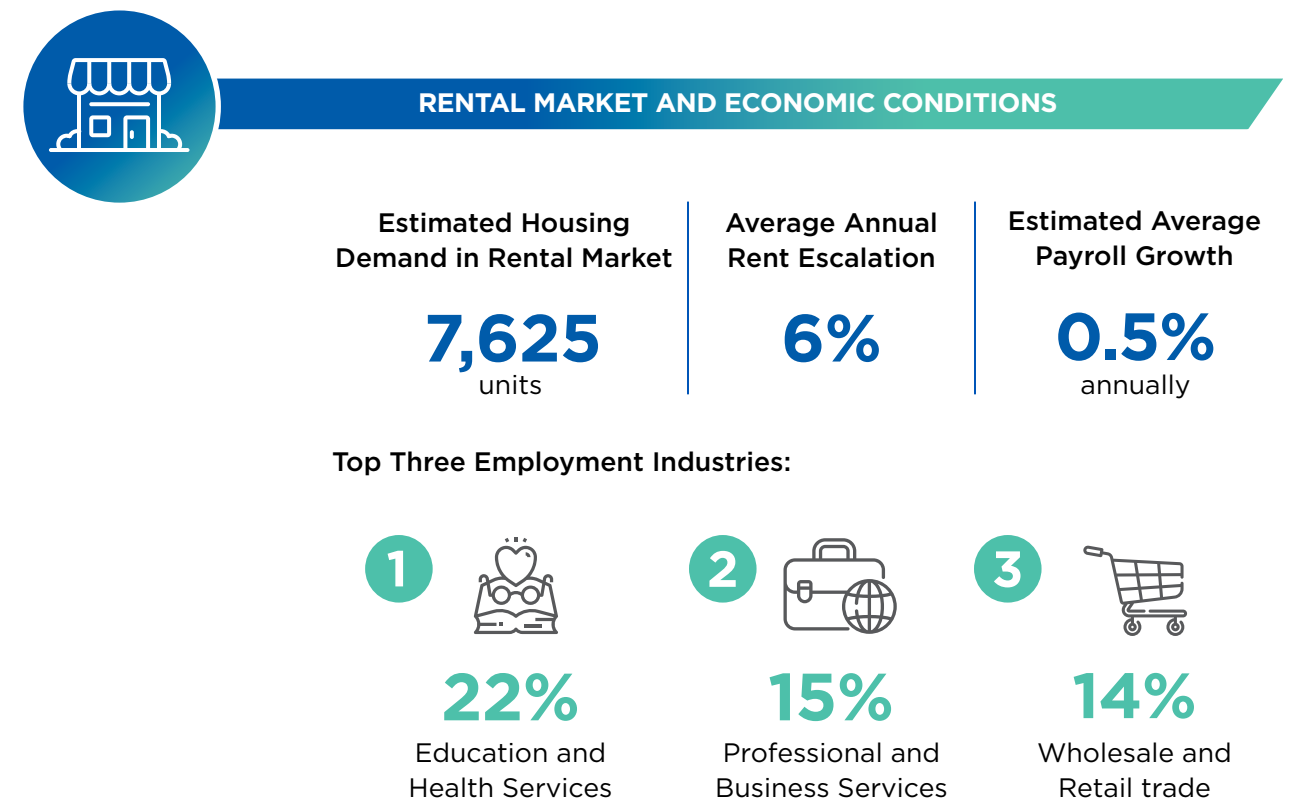
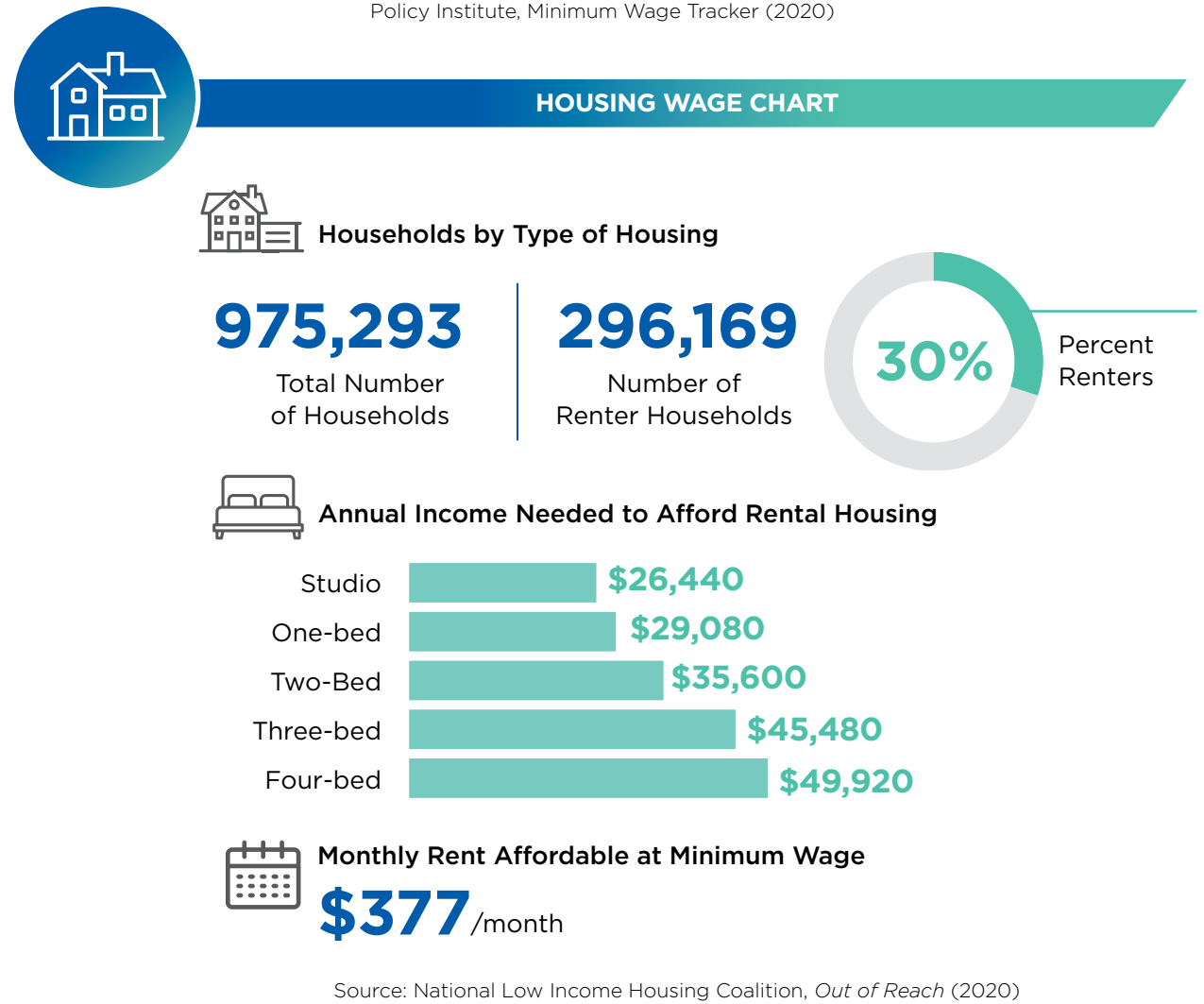
- Identify and secure long-term funding streams that will support ongoing eviction mitigation programming when COVID-19 relief funding expires.
- Expand their new eviction outreach campaign that provides communication to landlords and tenants on the rapidly changing policy landscape of the City's eviction procedures.



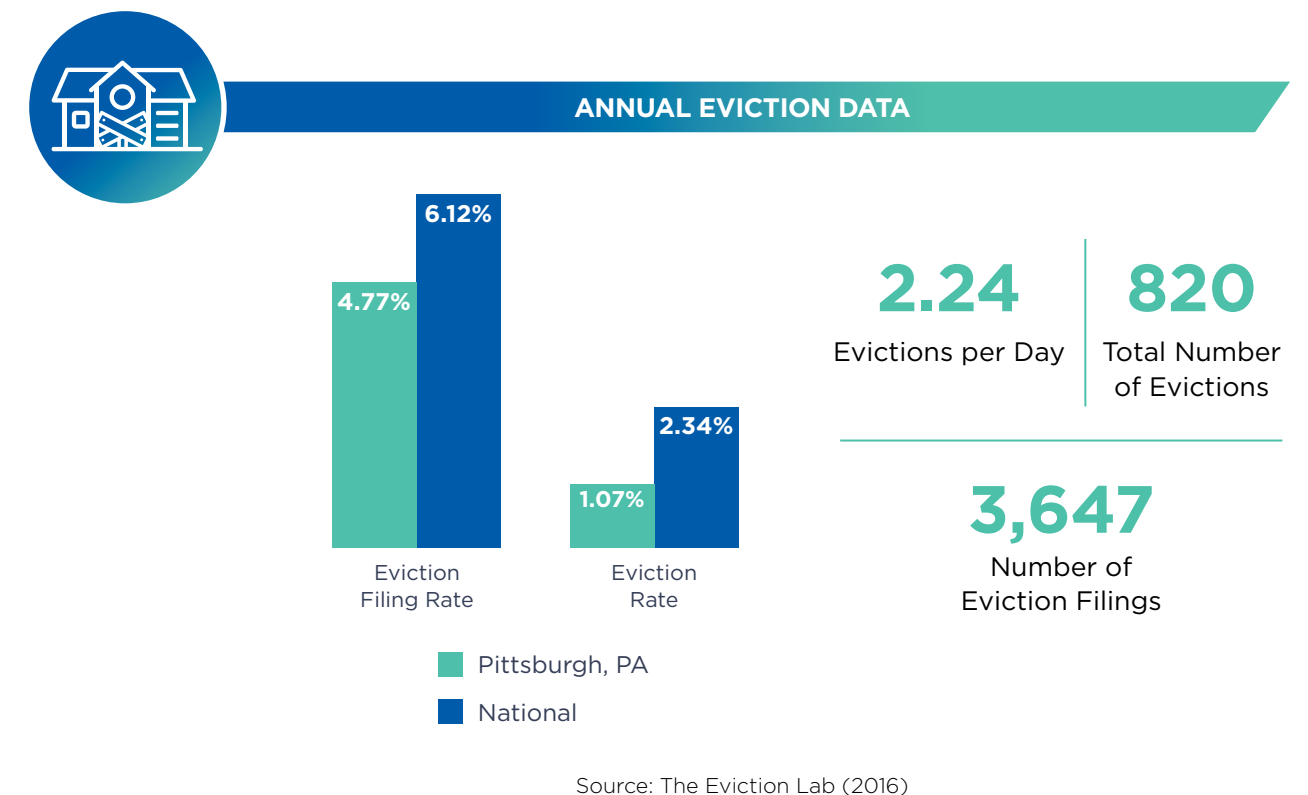
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA



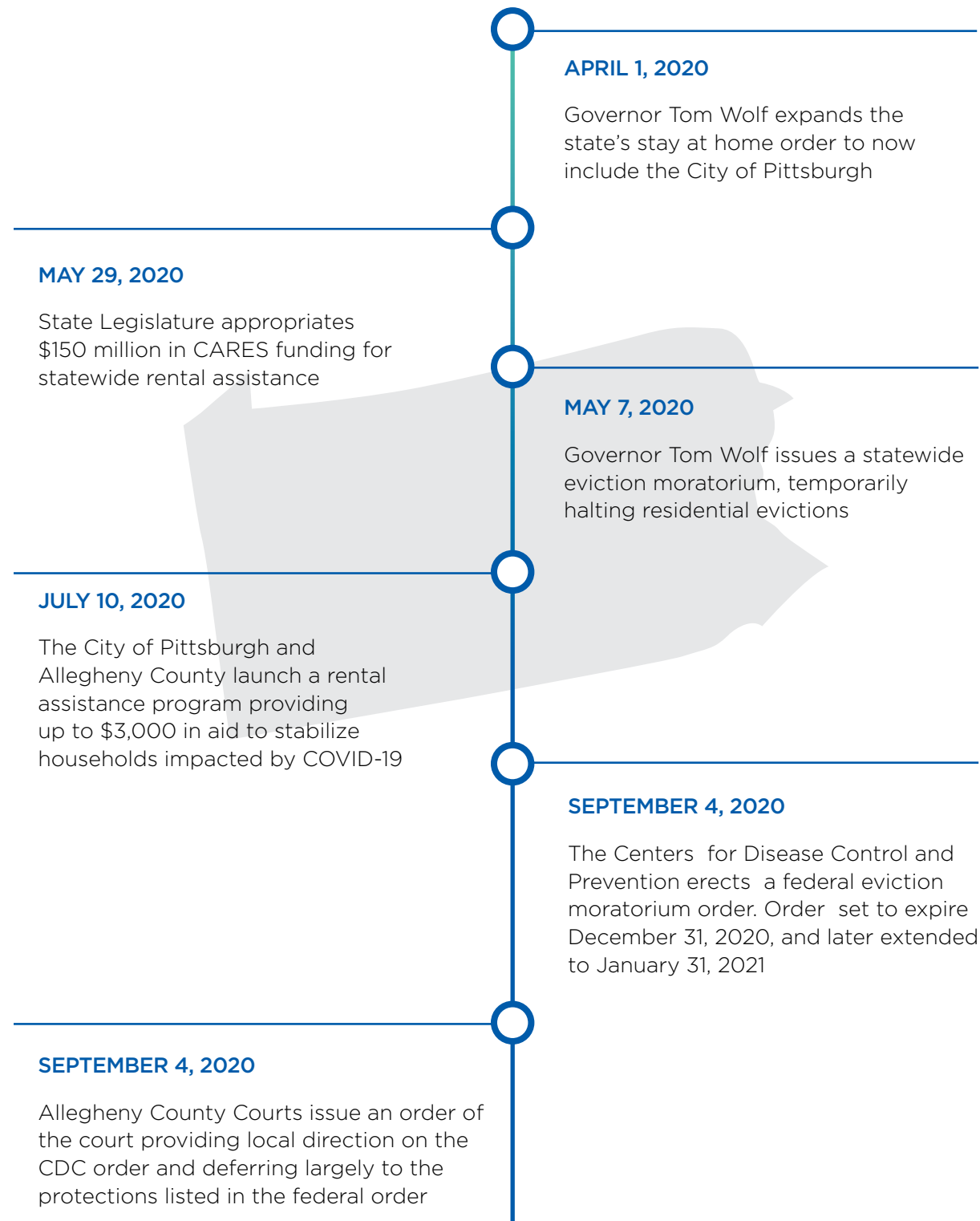
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2014-2018); The Economic Policy Institute, Minimum Wage Tracker (2020)



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis (2020)



TIMELINE OF LOCAL EVICTION MORATORIUM ORDERS¹⁴



TEAM PROFILE

For the cohort, the Pittsburgh team consisted of a collaboration between:



The Pittsburgh Foundation



The City of Pittsburgh's
Commission on Human Relations

COHORT PRIORITIES

The Pittsburgh team focused on the following priorities during their time in the cohort:

- 1** Reducing eviction filings and displacement through landlord-tenant mediation services.
- 2** Developing a system map for current eviction services/resources in Allegheny County.
- 3** Creating a full-scale model for a local eviction diversion program.

By targeting these areas, the Pittsburgh team worked to align the city's fifty-member eviction task force on strategies and shared resources that would decrease the number of eviction filings in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania.

SUPPORT, ACTION & IMPACT

To assist with streamlining processes and maximizing resources across the eviction task force, the Pittsburgh team received technical assistance from the **Urban InSTITUTE**, which provided strategies for targeting rental assistance in high-need areas. The city also benefited from a process map developed by the **Stanford Legal Design Lab** and the **National League of Cities**. This map outlined strategies for streamlining communication and highlighted intake points across city stakeholders that provide eviction support. Members of the Pittsburgh team went on to use insights gleaned from the Cohort to support the launch of Just Mediation PGH, an independent non-profit organization that provides free mediation services to landlords and tenants seeking to resolve housing disputes.

NEXT STEPS

Leveraging the resources, tools and knowledge gained through the eviction cohort, the Pittsburgh team looks to:

- Continue to strengthen the relationships between agencies, and engage in more system mapping to help the city and residents understand the full continuum of services available to stabilize households.
- Spark a change in how the Pittsburgh community at-large thinks about evictions, shifting focus from solely on what happens after an eviction is filed, to being thoughtful about early prevention strategies for eviction diversion.

Looking Ahead

With this pilot of the Eviction Prevention Cohort coming to close, the National League of Cities and the Stanford Legal Design Lab are eager to build on the momentum achieved by the five Cohort member cities, as well as to chart a path for expanding, replicating and refining these efforts.

Continued Support for Cohort Cities

Though the six-month engagement with the inaugural Cohort cities ended in December 2020, the Lab and NLC team will continue to support the member cities with regular check-ins. These calls will be an opportunity to connect the city teams with additional resources as their programs and needs evolve, in addition to making it possible to continue to monitor municipal progress in preventing evictions. City team members will remain connected to their peer cities and will retain access to the suite of resources provided through the file sharing platform, making it possible to continue shared learning through the network.



Action Working Sessions

As the Cohort set goals for the next phase of eviction prevention, the Lab and NLC may also continue to support them with individual advice and assistance. These Action Working Sessions can help the teams take direct action to achieve their cities' goals. The small group sessions will build off insights from Learning Meetings and Team Check-in Calls, helping the teams to convert more 'academic' concepts to practical impact. For example, sessions could be an opportunity to design outreach materials for city-specific programs, set up evaluation protocols, work on funding requests, or outline training materials. These sessions can help the teams take action, get peer and expert feedback, and provide accountability in achieving their goals.

Expanding the Eviction Prevention Cohort

As the eviction crisis continues — and potentially escalates — in the wake of COVID-19, NLC and the Lab will continue to drive policy innovation and provide needed support to cities nationwide. With lessons learned from the 2020 Cohort, future Eviction Prevention Cohorts would potentially include:



Providing Grants to Participating Cities

Even modest grants offer significant potential to expand a city's capacity, further its programmatic goals and deepen its engagement with the Eviction Prevention Cohort. These funds could be committed to specific elements, such as data collection or program evaluation, or they could be issued as flexible funding directed to support policy solutions.



Further Embedding Racial Equity

Given the significant racial disparities in housing outcomes and evictions, this work must inherently be grounded in racial equity. Though this Cohort aimed to address root causes and explicitly confront inequities, more can, and should, be done to continuously push race to the forefront of these conversations and work. In addition to continuing to ask presenters to speak to racial equity specifically, future Eviction Prevention Cohorts could include a Learning Meeting exclusively centered on racial equity. NLC and the Lab could also support cities in further data collection with a racial equity lens, disaggregating data by race, or conducting race-based analyses of existing data.



Additional Facilitation of Cross-City Communication

Though city team members had the capacity to directly contact Cohort teams from other cities or ask questions of the group, future programs would do well to commit additional focus to encouraging these informal connections. Given that the opportunity to hear about and learn from the work of other cities frequently came up on feedback surveys as one of the most beneficial aspects of the Cohort, this should continue to be a focus for the program team.



Refining Program Evaluation & Progress Tracking

Though the 2020 Cohort implemented several surveys to gauge participant feedback on the Cohort experience and individual Learning Meetings, rigorous program evaluation was not conducted. With each member city tackling different priorities — and given the necessary fluidity of priorities in responding to the pandemic — tracking city progress and success of the Cohort posed a challenge. Evaluation is further complicated by the long time horizon associated with seeing results from eviction-related policy interventions. In future Cohorts, NLC and the Lab would aim to implement more rigorous tracking against city goals in order to evaluate program success.

Ideally, research partnerships can be established between city or court agencies and university research teams. These partnerships can help define protocols for evaluating the new programs that the cities are launching; they can also record the outcomes for other policymakers and funders to learn from. The relationships that emerged in the Cohort's sessions, and particularly through meetings with a wide variety of academic researchers and policy experts, might be building blocks for deeper and more substantial research partnerships.



Creating a Resource Hub for Other Cities

The Cohort resulted in a wealth of resources that city, judicial and nonprofit leaders might benefit from. These include webinars, articles, slide decks, process maps, databases, and other materials that can help civic groups both understand their local eviction situation and develop new programs to address key issues around it. These materials have been made for and with this Cohort in mind, but they can benefit other groups interested in eviction prevention. As such, the Lab and NLC will produce a public-facing website that presents the resources and organizes them into useful tracks. This may address an objective or problem specific to one group or partner, or serve as a blueprint for groups that are new to eviction prevention policymaking. As more cities look to combat the eviction crisis, particularly in the wake of COVID-19, this website clearinghouse can support them in learning what is possible, and guide their work to design, implement and evaluate new programs.

Conclusion

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the resulting economic fall-out, racial tension, and the volatile political environment of 2020, one thing is clear: Housing is integral to keeping families safe and helping them access opportunity. A combination of high cost-burden and low-availability of affordable units has long left millions of renters, particularly Black, Indigenous and People of Color households, at risk of the slippery slope of eviction. But prevention and diversion programs have demonstrated success at keeping families housed, and cities are on the frontlines of implementing and scaling these programs to support residents.

Over the course of the Eviction Prevention Cohort, the five participating cities have managed to make real strides in supporting their vulnerable renters at risk of eviction, such as by establishing an eviction mitigation program, forging data partnerships with academic institutions, and launching a mediation program. By bringing together a diverse group of interconnected stakeholders across each city — including staff from housing and health agencies, legal services, courts, academia, and philanthropy — the cities have tapped into the full ecosystem of stakeholders working to reduce the risk and impact of evictions. Through these conversations and efforts, cities have begun to shift their framework from mitigating the impacts of evictions on families, to preventing evictions before they happen — taking a proactive, rather than reactive approach. This model of cross-sectional team building and the peer-learning model has proven to be incredibly enriching and could be used for an array of challenges beyond evictions.

As conveners, educators, and fellow learners, the National League of Cities and Stanford Legal Design Lab will continue to engage with cities as they strive to support the nation's vulnerable renters. This Cohort is just one snapshot of U.S. cities that are rising to meet the moment by establishing more comprehensive, effective and innovative anti-eviction strategies.

Acknowledgements

City Team Participants

This Cohort would not have been possible without the generous participation of the city teams. The National League of Cities and the Stanford Legal Design Lab deeply appreciate the openness, dedication and passion of the team members, and would like to thank each individual listed below for their work and contributions to the program.

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Endnotes

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