

# Boston ranks high on digital access to public data

By Catherine Cloutier | GLOBE STAFF JUNE 02, 2015

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Boston residents have better online access to city records about crime, spending, and code violations than most of the nation, according to an analysis that looked at so-called “open data” programs in 98 municipalities.

The US Cities Open Data Census [lauded Boston](#), which makes data available to developers and other members of the public, for the availability of its information on restaurant inspections and municipal service requests.

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The city performed less admirably when it came to lobbying records, business listings, property transactions, and transit schedules.

But overall, only Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco [ranked ahead](#) of Boston. The results highlighted both the limitations and the opportunities facing open government advocates who are pushing agencies to make public records easier to navigate for both people and computers.

The review comes after Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh has taken measures to make this information more publicly accessible through [an executive order](#) signed in 2014.

Since then, the city has beefed up the offerings on its [open data portal](#), including jobs policy compliance reports and 2015 property assessments. Boston has also released [small nuggets of larger datasets](#) for analysis during two city-sponsored open data hackathons.

“Across Boston, government, private companies, and civic organizations are generating enormous amounts of data on what is happening in the city,” said Walsh, in a statement in February. “I want to tap Boston’s creative talent to create workable tools that help guide City policy and operation toward a thriving, healthy and innovative city.”

The US Cities Open Data Census, which was launched on Open Data Day on Feb. 22, 2014, evaluated how accessible public records are in 98 US cities. According to their review, 24 percent of local public databases are open.

The census’ findings are crowdsourced and reviewed periodically by volunteers from the Code for America Brigade and the Sunlight Foundation.

## How open is Boston's open data?

US City Open Data Census scores for each reviewed public database

Dataset	Score	Location (URL)
Government Officials' Financial Disclosures	0%	
Budget	75%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Business Listings	75%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Campaign Finance Contributions	70%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Code Enforcement Violations	100%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Construction Permits	100%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Crime	100%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Lobbyist Activity	75%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Parcels	70%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Municipal Contracts with Vendors	90%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Property Assessments	45%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Property Deeds	45%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Locations of Public Buildings	100%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Restaurant Inspections	100%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Service Requests (311)	100%	<a href="#">Link</a>
City Spending	100%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Transit Schedules	60%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Zoned Land Use	75%	<a href="#">Link</a>
Web Analytics	-	

**SOURCE: US City Open Data Census**

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