

Importance of Place: Affordable Rental Housing and Neighbourhood Characteristics Through Maps

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Our Research Questions

- Are market rentals with lower shelter costs more likely to be in places with greater deprivation?
- Are market rentals with lower shelter costs further away from amenities and services than market rentals with higher shelter costs?

Why This Matters

- Because having the opportunity to live in ‘normal housing’ in ‘normal neighbourhoods’ is a fundamental part of supported housing (Carling, 1995)
- Because of potential neighbourhood effects (Galster, 2010)



How Might Neighbourhoods Impact Individuals?

Social reasons

- Your behaviour or sense of hope might be influenced by your neighbours
- Your neighbours might have connections that will help you access opportunities, like a job

Environmental reasons

- The state of buildings around you might affect your mental health
- Exposure to nearby toxic waste might affect your physical health

Locational or “geographic” reasons

- Jobs might not be located in your neighbourhood
- Parks and grocery stores might not be located in your neighbourhood

The Problem

- Limited rent supplements and low shelter allowances mean that Housing First workers need to search for low-cost market units (and rooms in rooming houses) with and for tenants
- The Canada Housing Benefit, if implemented in Nova Scotia for market renters, may be capped at median market rent

This Leads Us To Ask

- What kinds of neighbourhoods do our tenants live in? Are they supportive/enabling? Are they 'normal'?
- In general, in what kinds of neighbourhoods do households needing lower cost rentals live?

Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM)

- A legacy of wealth extraction
- A de-industrial community with severe population decline & chronically high unemployment (18%)
- A significant population experiencing homelessness
- A spirit of problem-solving in the housing sector (housing co-operatives, labour-sponsored home ownership, New Dawn & Seton, the Affordable Housing & Homelessness Working Group)

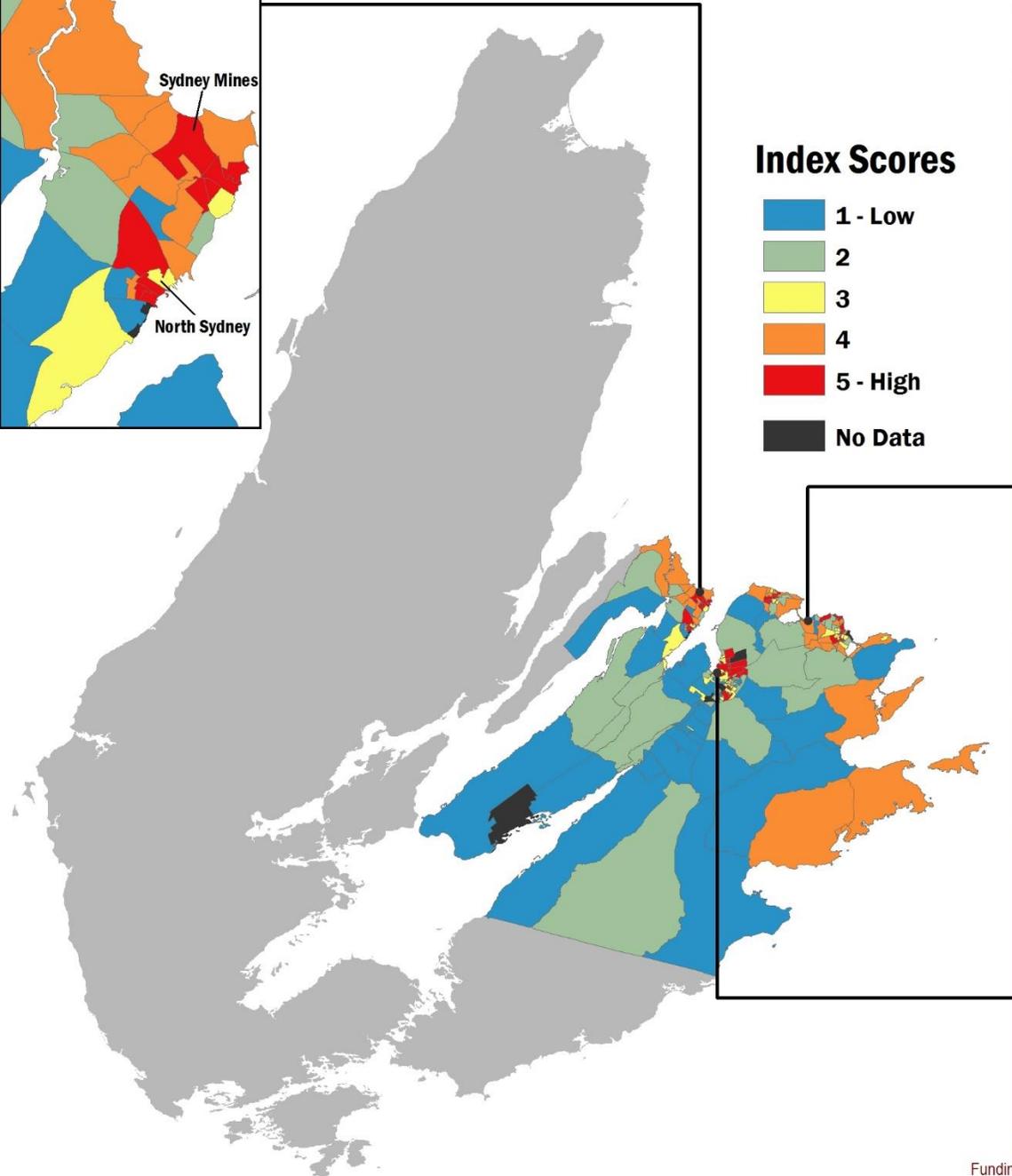
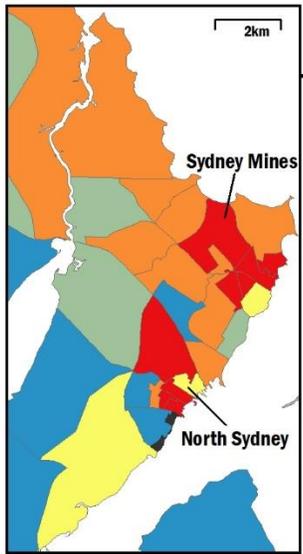


STEP 1: Mapping Neighbourhood Deprivation in the CBRM

The INSPQ deprivation index captures

- Social deprivation: single-parent families, people living alone, & people who are divorced, separated or widowed
- Material deprivation: average income, high school completion & employment status
- Scores are ordered from lowest to highest & then divided into five equal groups (group 1 = lowest deprivation & group 5 = highest deprivation)

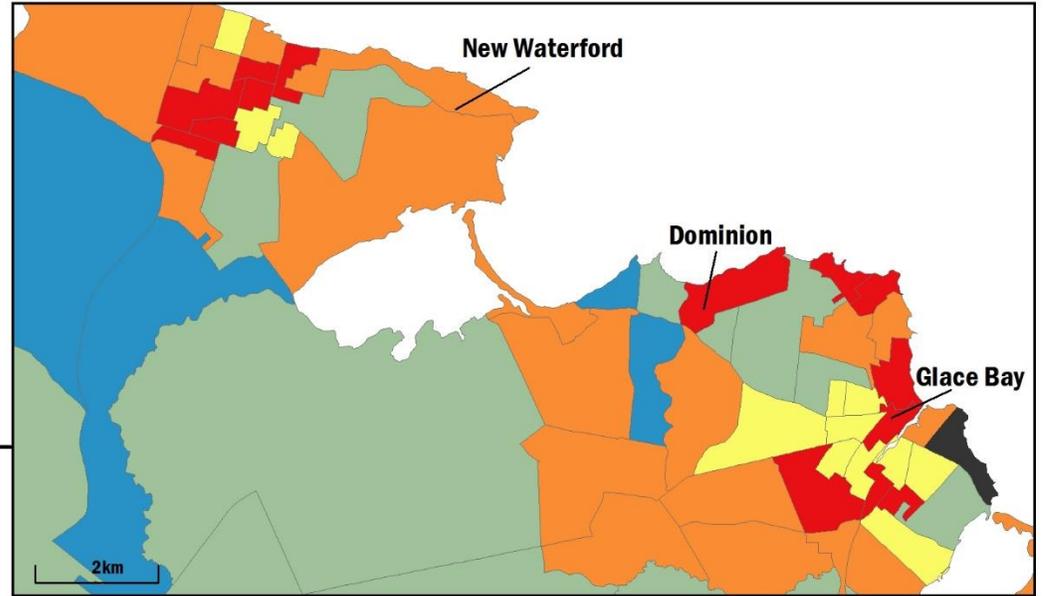
CBRM 2016



Index Scores

- 1 - Low
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - High
- No Data

Material & Social Deprivation *...relative to CBRM*



STEP 2: Sorting & Grouping Data on Rental Housing

In 2015/2016, we collected data on 2306 market rentals

We looked at lower cost versus higher costs units two different ways:

- if units were equal to or below median market shelter costs
- If units were equal to or below the provincial shelter allowance

Where provided, addresses were geocoded & joined to geographic boundaries (dissemination areas (DAs)) using Statistics Canada data (2016)

Descriptive
Data: Results

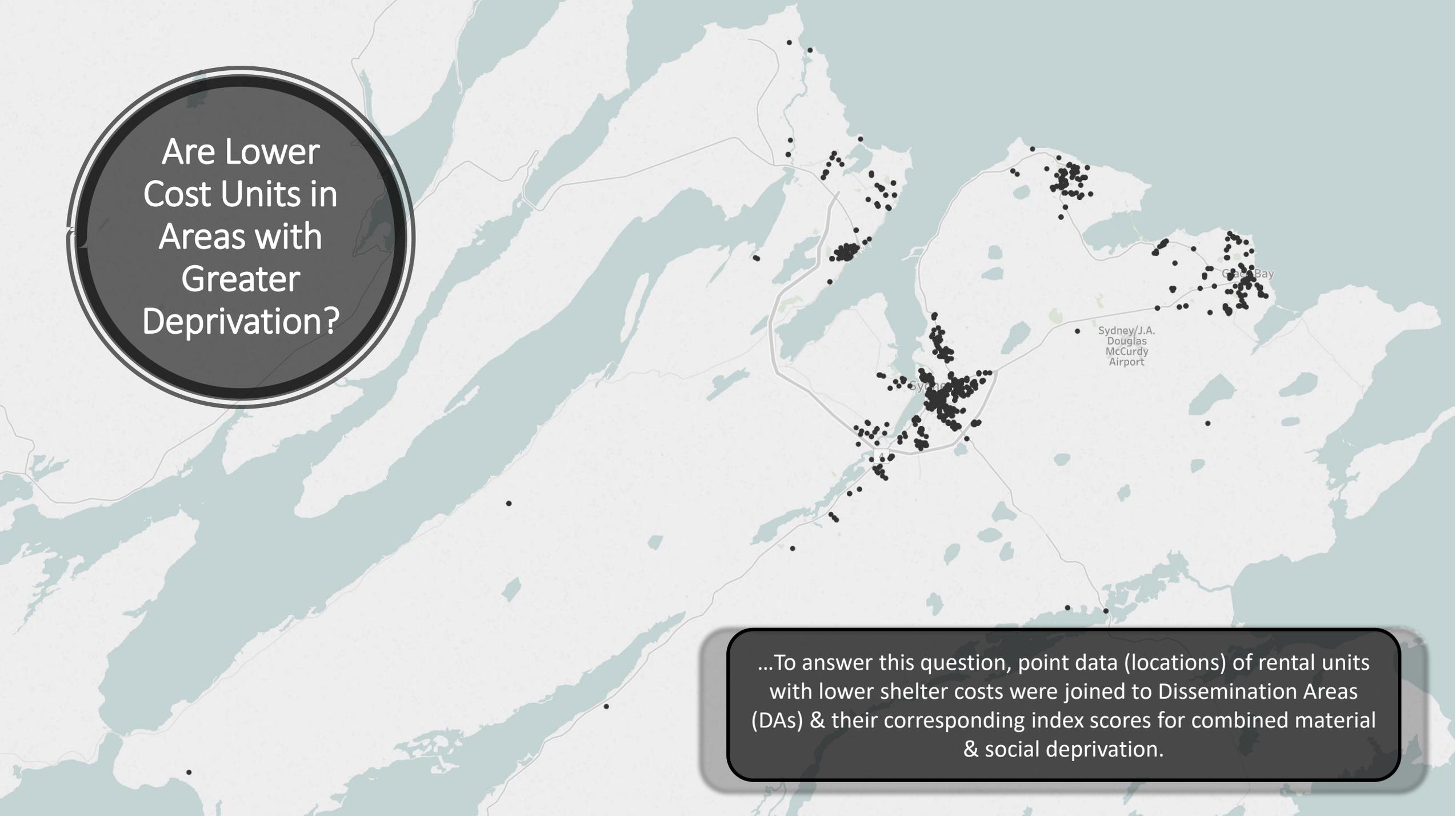
Market Rentals by Shelter Cost (Count Data)

MEDIAN



SHELTER ALLOWANCE

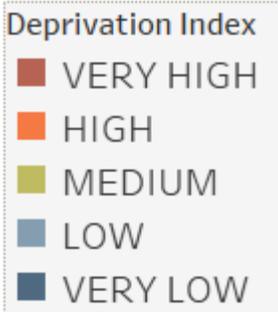




Are Lower
Cost Units in
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Greater
Deprivation?

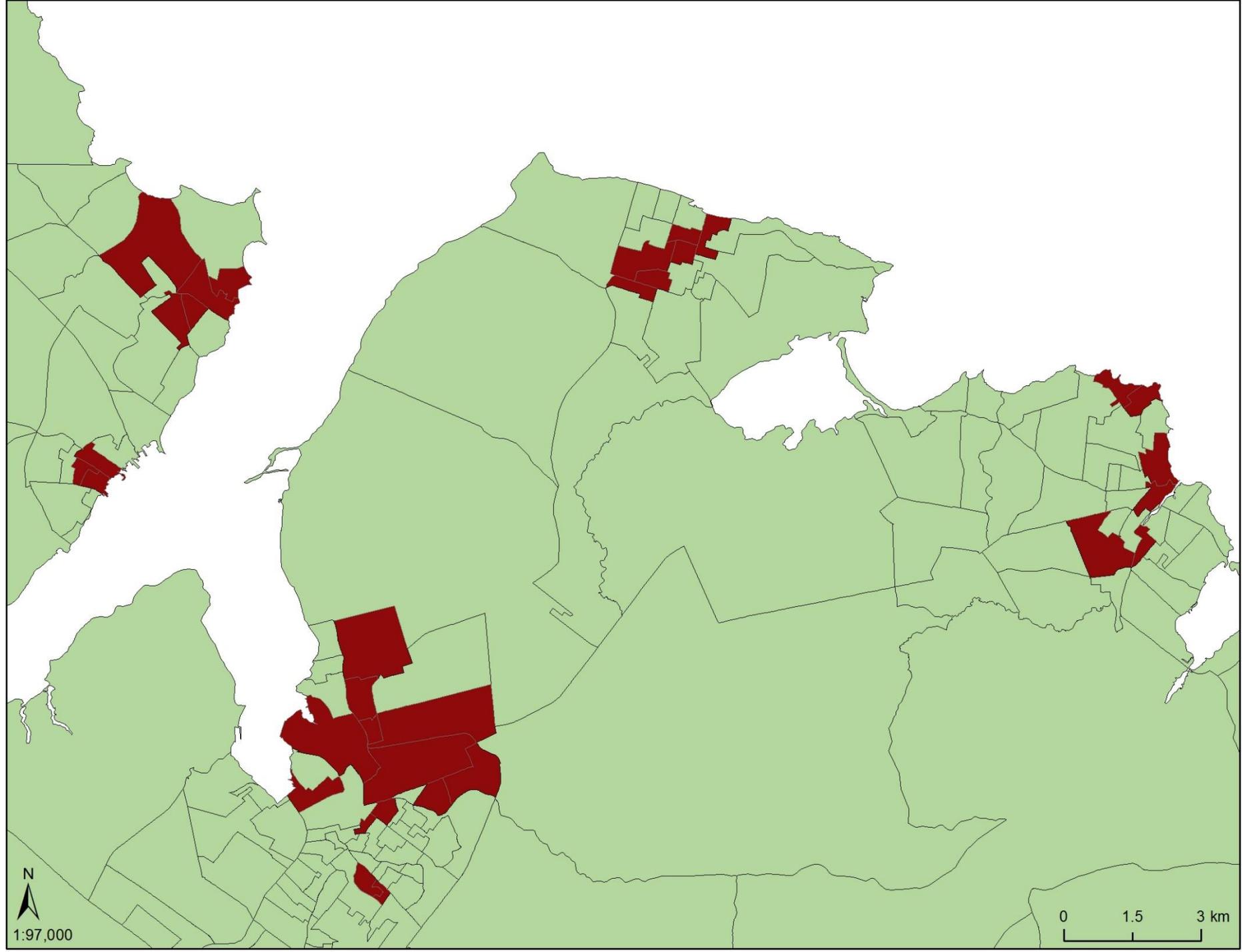
...To answer this question, point data (locations) of rental units with lower shelter costs were joined to Dissemination Areas (DAs) & their corresponding index scores for combined material & social deprivation.

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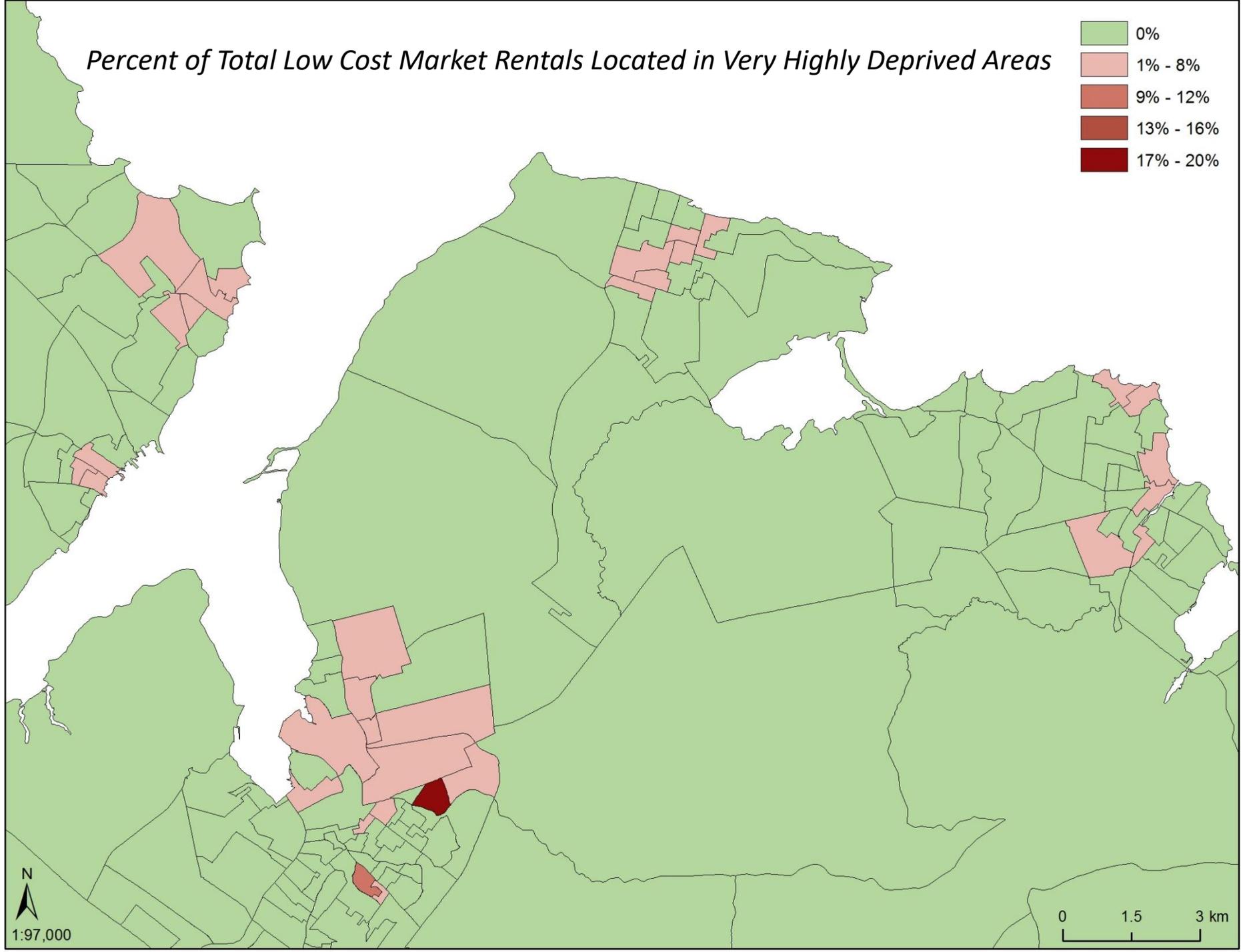


...To answer this question, point data (locations) of rental units with lower shelter costs were joined to Dissemination Areas (DAs) & their corresponding index scores for combined material & social deprivation.

Where are the areas with low cost market rentals AND the greatest deprivation?

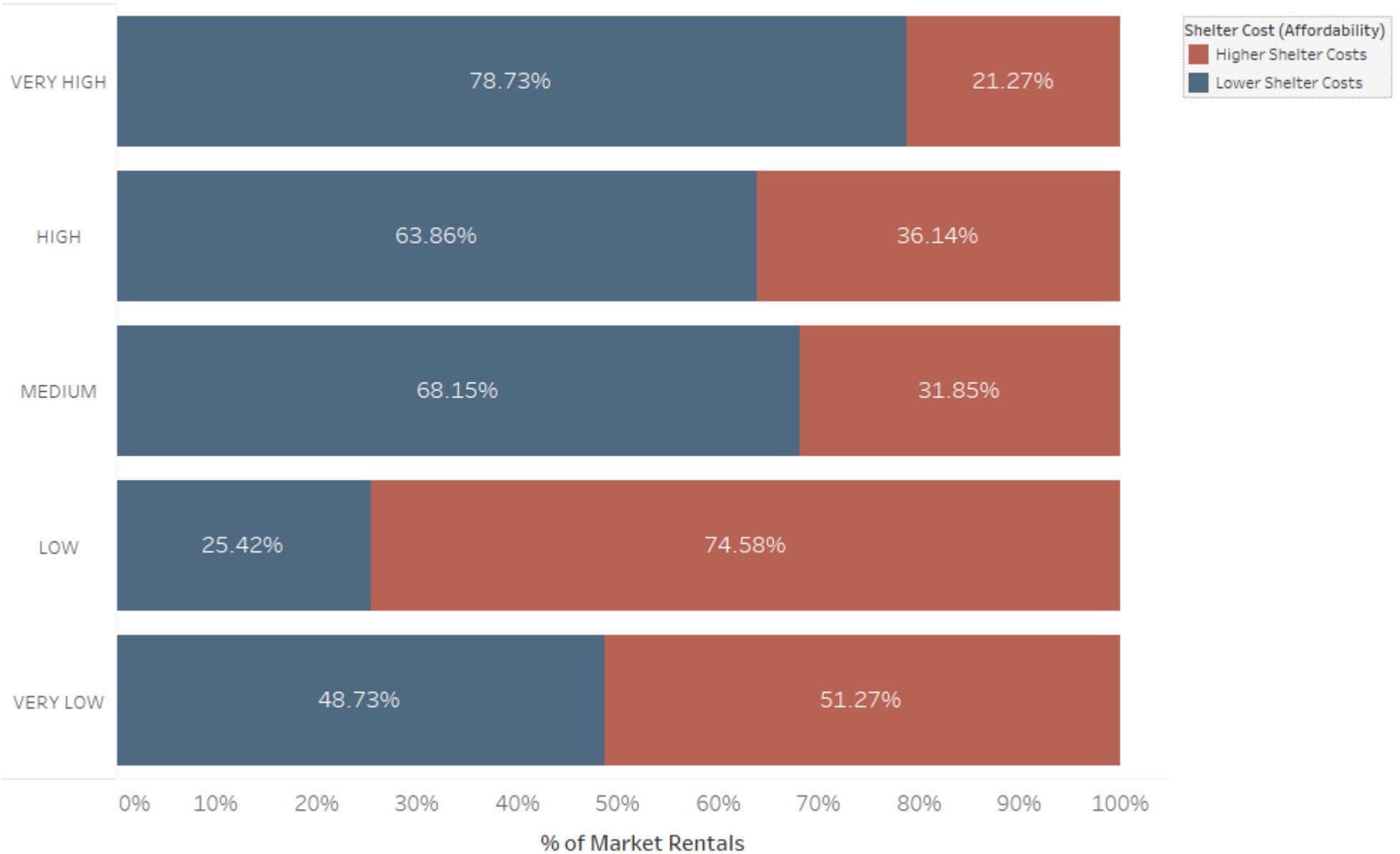


Where are the areas with the highest % of low cost market rentals within the areas with the greatest deprivation?



Deprivation Areas by Shelter Costs

MEDIAN RENT



Are Lower Cost Units in Areas with Greater Deprivation?

STEP 3: Preliminary Distance-to-Amenity Analysis

PURPOSE

- to compare the average difference between lower-cost units to key amenities & the average distance between higher-cost units to key amenities

KEY AMENITIES EXPLORED

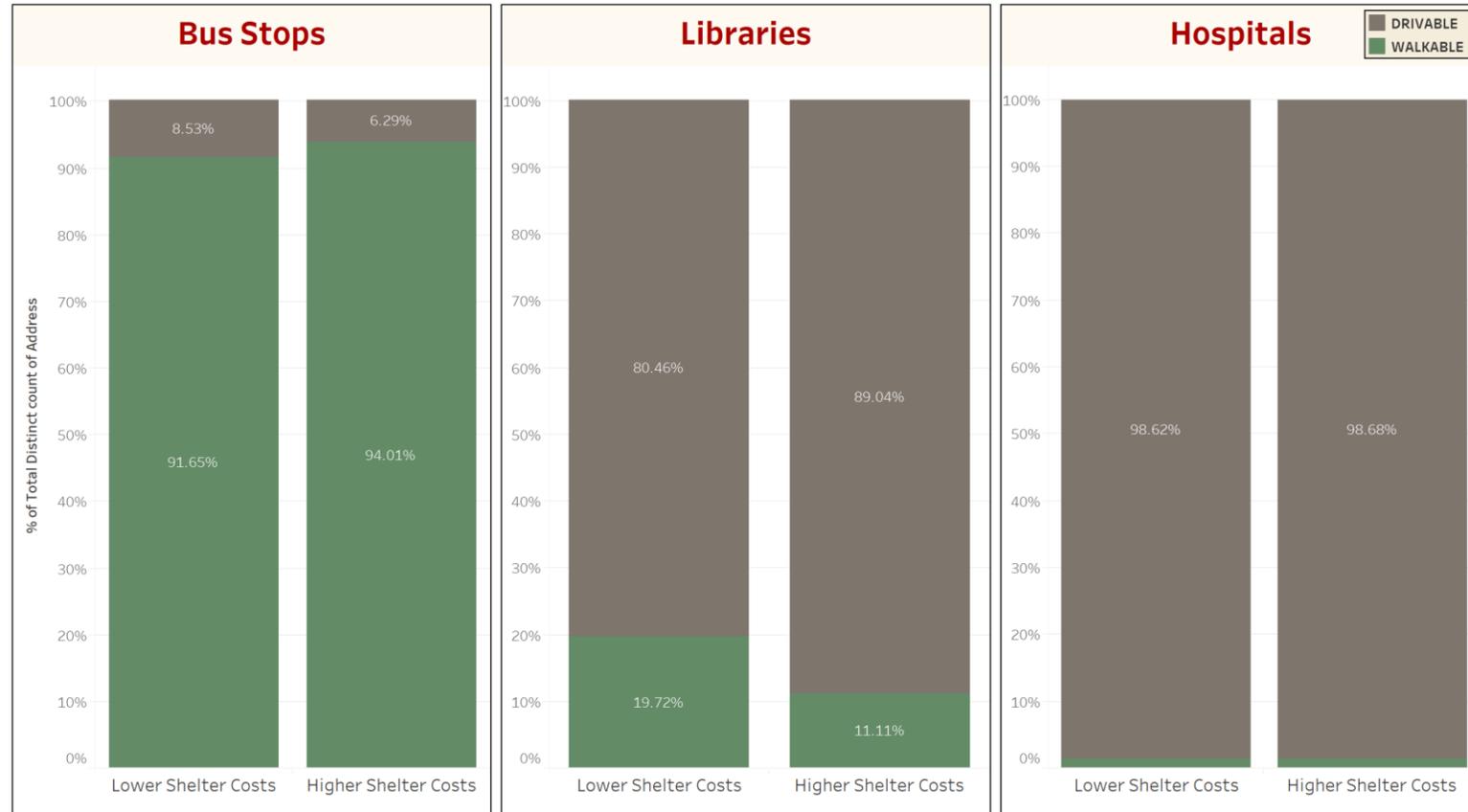
- bus stops, hospitals (w/emergency services, since this is where health care is typically accessed in the CBRM) & libraries

PROCESS

- Amenity data (geocoded locations) provided by the CBRM planning department & 211 & validated by a local, multi-sectoral group
- Vector (road) & point (rental) data combined using 'Network Analysis' (ArcGIS); distance of rental units to nearest amenity calculated (in metres).
- Data grouped by 'walkability' & 'drivability'

Are Lower Cost Units Further Away from Amenities and Services?

- Access to public transportation is the same
- Market rentals with lower shelter costs are slightly closer to libraries
- Access to hospitals is the same; in addition, virtually no market rentals are within walking distance (1000m or less) to a hospital with an ER



Distances defined as
>= 1000m (walkable)
< 1000m (drivable)

Our Conclusions & Next Steps

- We are analyzing a range of supportive/enabling amenities and services
- We will expand our analysis to include rooming houses and units with shelter costs less than 80% of median shelter costs
- Depending on results, local groups will advocate for greater financial support for tenants and outreach services, and initiate community development projects
- Results will also inform new affordable housing development

THANK YOU



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