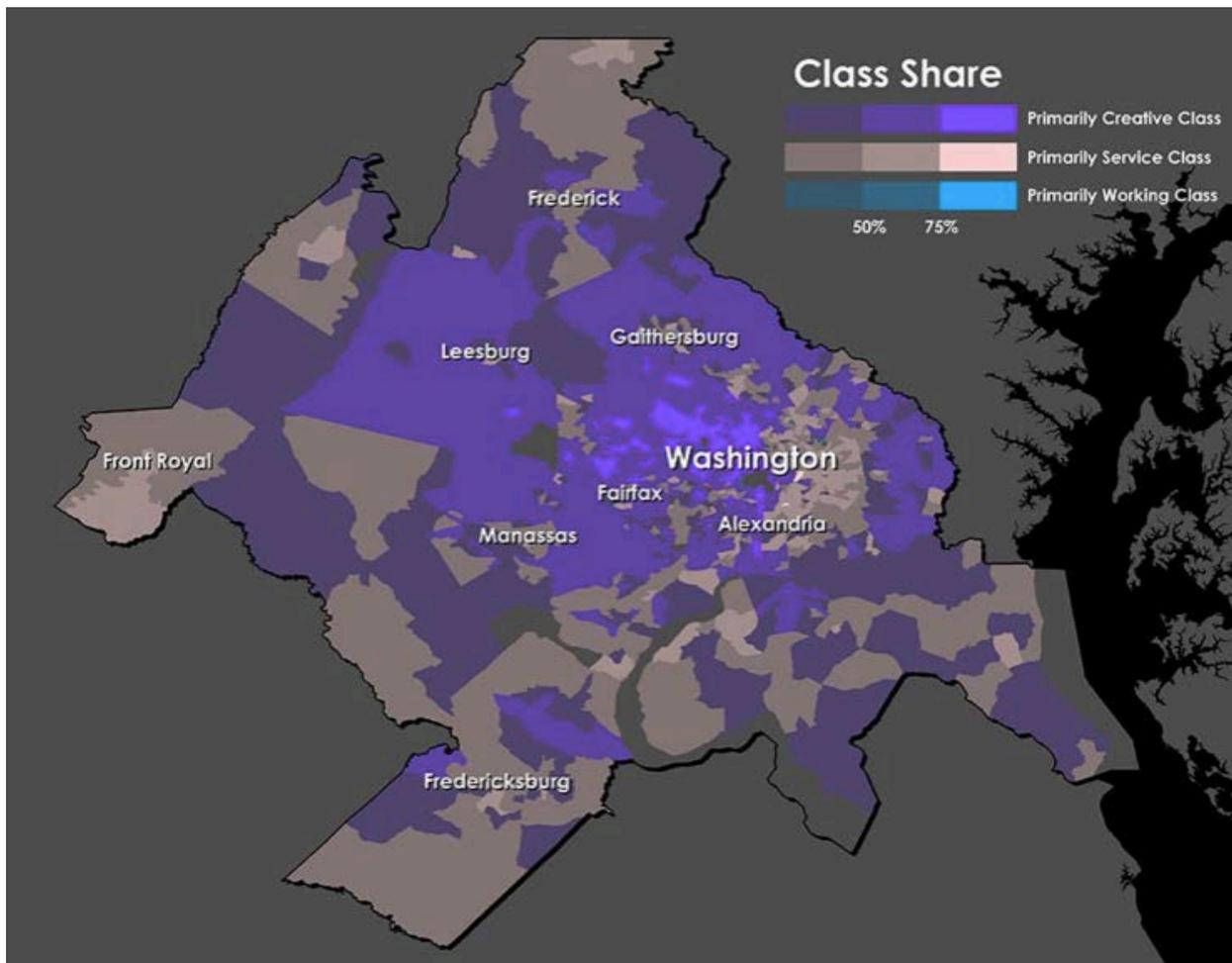


[Wonkblog](#)

Mapped: How the 'creative class' is dividing U.S. cities

By [Emily Badger](#) September 29 at 10:19 AM



"The Divided City: and the Shape of the New Metropolis," R. Florida, Z. Matheson, P. Adler, T. Brydges

The housing options of the disadvantaged are invariably defined by what's left over. If the wealthy want to live on the waterfront, the poor are driven inland. If high-paid professionals want to live close to the subway — picture the popular orange-line corridor in Arlington — then

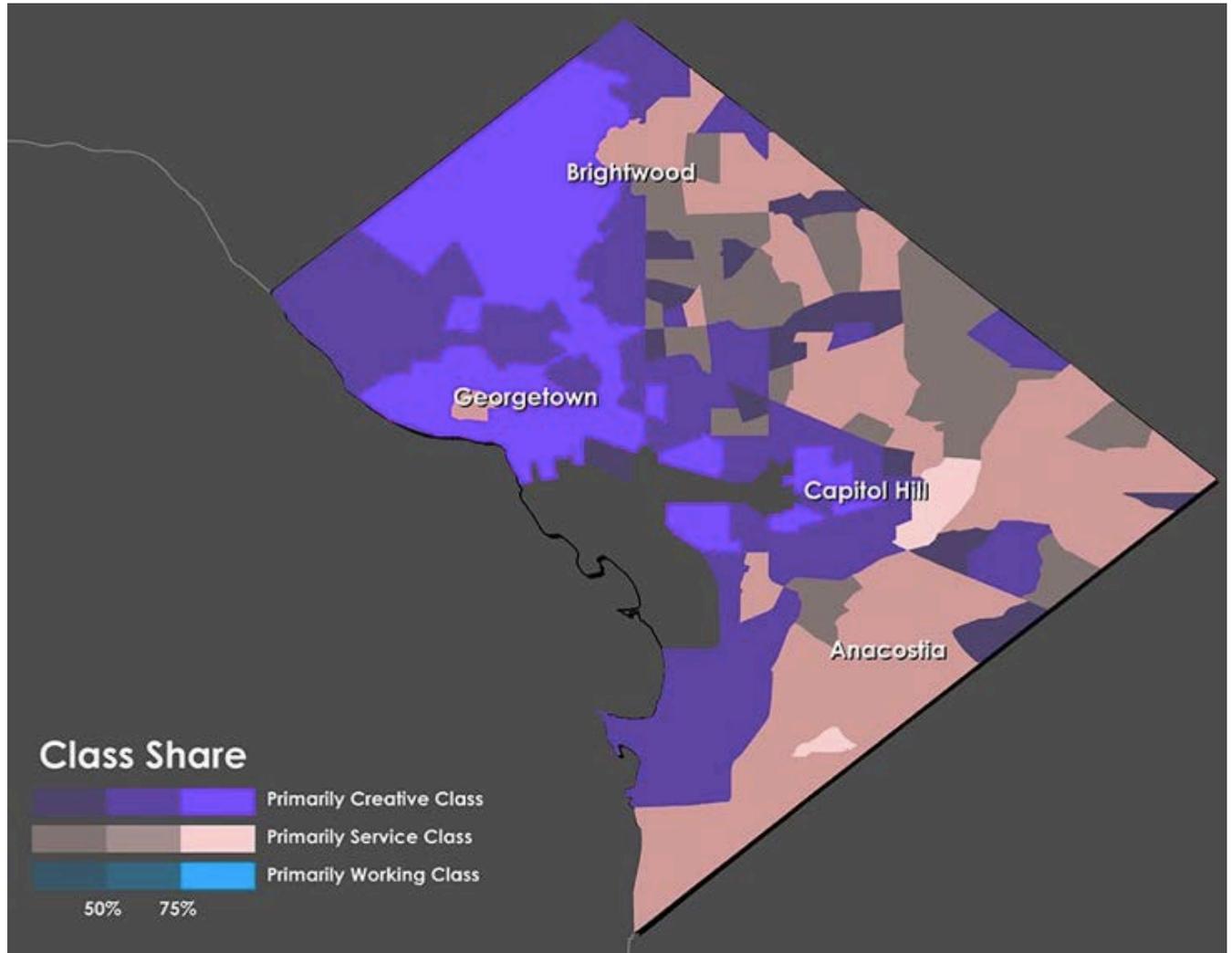
low-paid cashiers are pushed farther from transit. If upper-class college graduates want to live downtown, as is increasingly the case in many big cities, the poor are priced out to the periphery.

These patterns are particularly clear in a [new analysis](#) from Richard Florida, the urban theorist who coined [the "creative class" a decade ago](#) to describe the knowledge workers who he argues will drive urban economies. Florida and fellow researchers at the University of Toronto's [Martin Prosperity Institute](#) looked at where workers of different kinds live in 12 big U.S. metros using 2010 census data. Their results point to a different picture of socioeconomic segregation in American cities — one divided more explicitly by the nature and type of work we do, rather than how much money we make doing it — than we're used to discussing.

Their analysis separates workers into three classes, derived from Florida's research: the "creative class" of knowledge workers who make up about a third of the U.S. workforce (people in advertising, business, education, the arts, etc.); the "service class," which makes up the largest and fastest growing sector of the economy (people in retail, food service, clerical jobs); and the "working class," where blue-collar jobs in industries like manufacturing have been disappearing (this also includes construction and transportation).

The American Community Survey captures [the types of occupations](#) held by residents in local neighborhoods. Florida and his co-authors condensed those results into the three categories above — this is an admittedly imperfect exercise — and mapped the results by census tract across the 12 metros. The map above shows metropolitan Washington, where divisions between the service and creative classes are particularly striking, and where working-class neighborhoods appear all but extinct. In the purple splotches, "creative class" workers make up a plurality of working residents over 16.

This is what the same picture looks like just in the District:



Washington's economy is more heavily tilted toward knowledge workers than, say, Miami's. And these maps show that those workers tend to cluster in the same communities. About three-quarters of the region's "creative class" lives in a census tract where their neighbors are primarily creative-class workers, too. That means your lawyers, doctors, journalists and lobbyists live together in parts of town far from the people who pour their coffee.

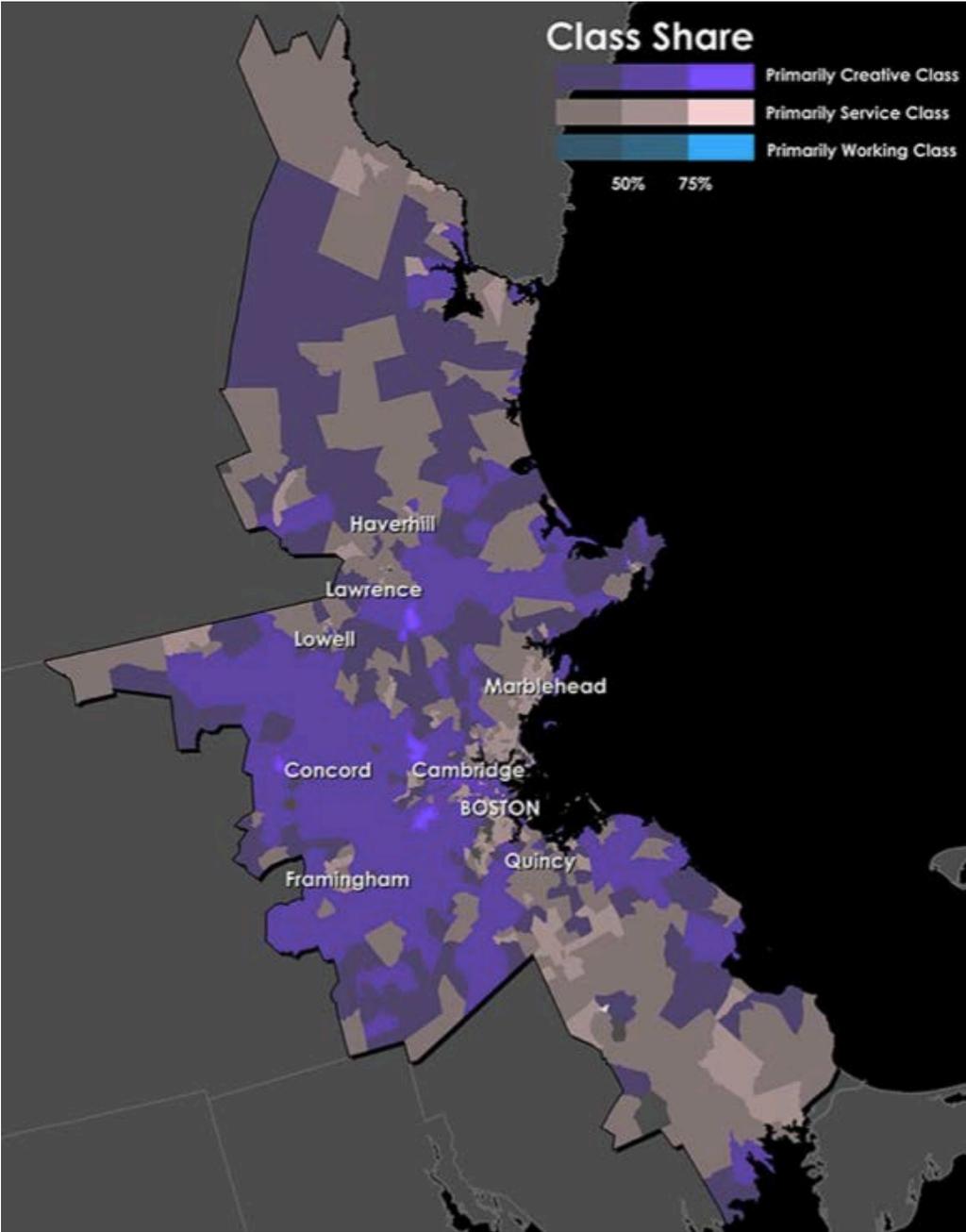
This also means that their evolving preferences — to live downtown, or close to the red line, or around Rock Creek Park — shape the city for everyone else.

For the last several decades, we've primarily thought of class-based segregation largely along urban-suburban lines. The well-off with good jobs live in the suburbs; the poor and working class live in the city. But today, young professionals are increasingly scrambling this picture in places like Washington, Boston and Chicago, moving into neighborhoods like the 14th Street corridor or NoMa in D.C. that were once more heavily low-income.

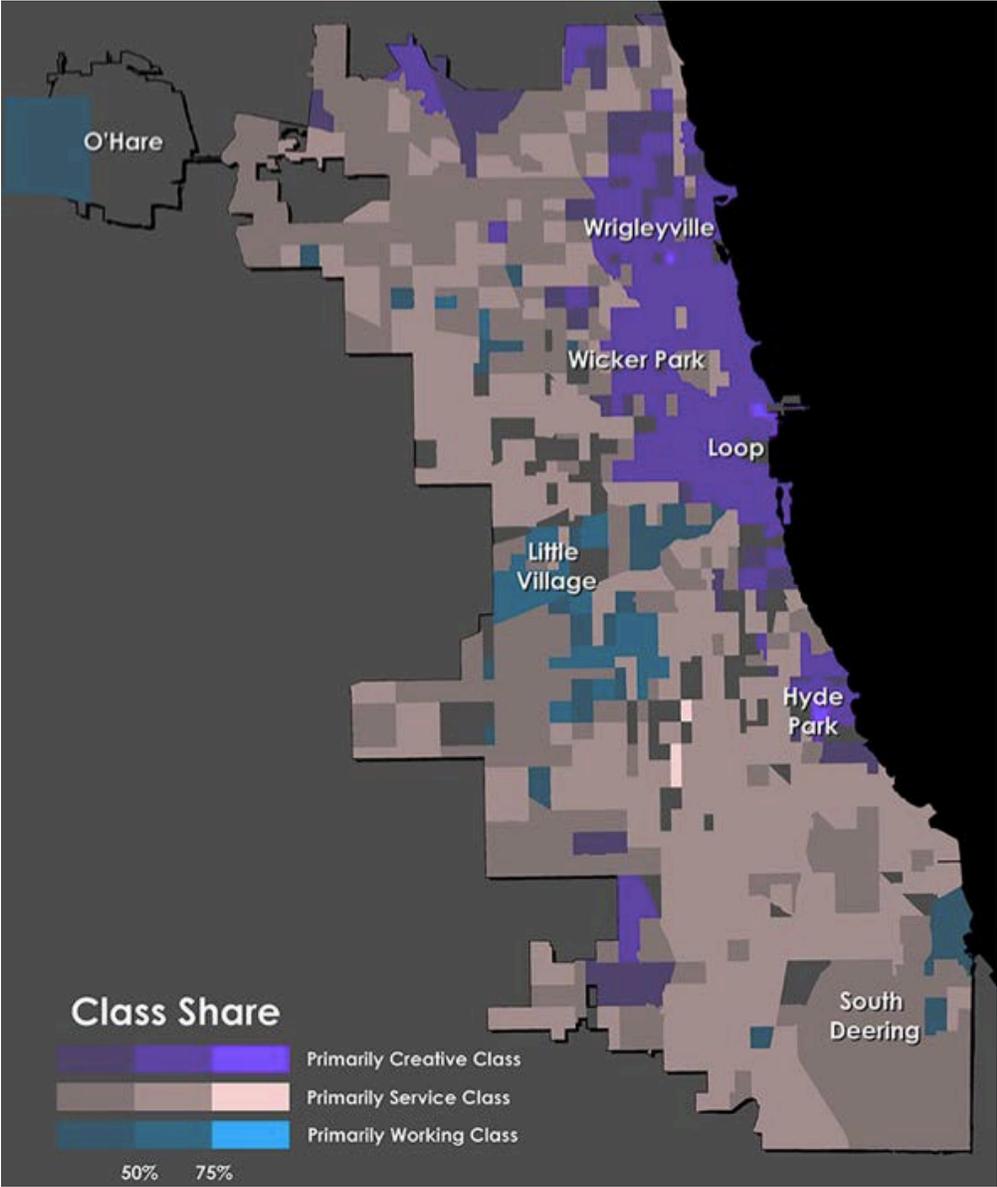
Florida's picture doesn't necessarily mean that the wealthiest people in the metropolitan region now live there, but that the area is increasingly home to skilled workers like freelance graphic designers, non-profit managers, or Hill staffers. A non-profit manager and a lawyer might not earn the same income, but they use a similar set of intellectual skills that rely on creative, critical thinking. And they want to live near each other.

As this creative class expands into cities, repeatedly it's clustering downtown, along transit lines, near big institutions like universities, and close to natural amenities like waterfronts. And as these workers drive up the cost of living in these places, service and working-class residents are effectively left with the least desirable parts of town, the longest commutes and the fewest amenities. This is the darker side of Florida's ascendent "creative class."

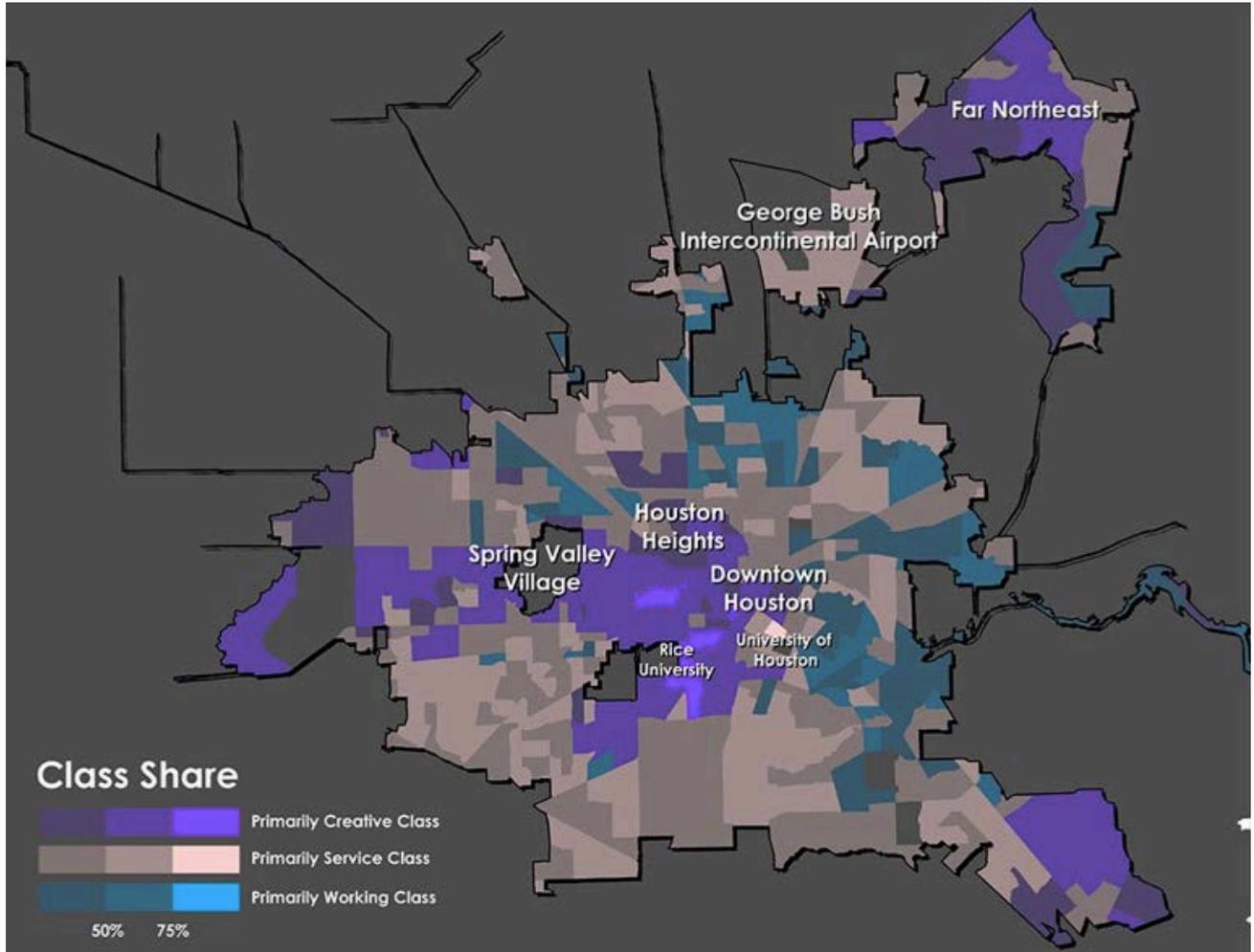
In metropolitan Boston, this is what the picture looks like:



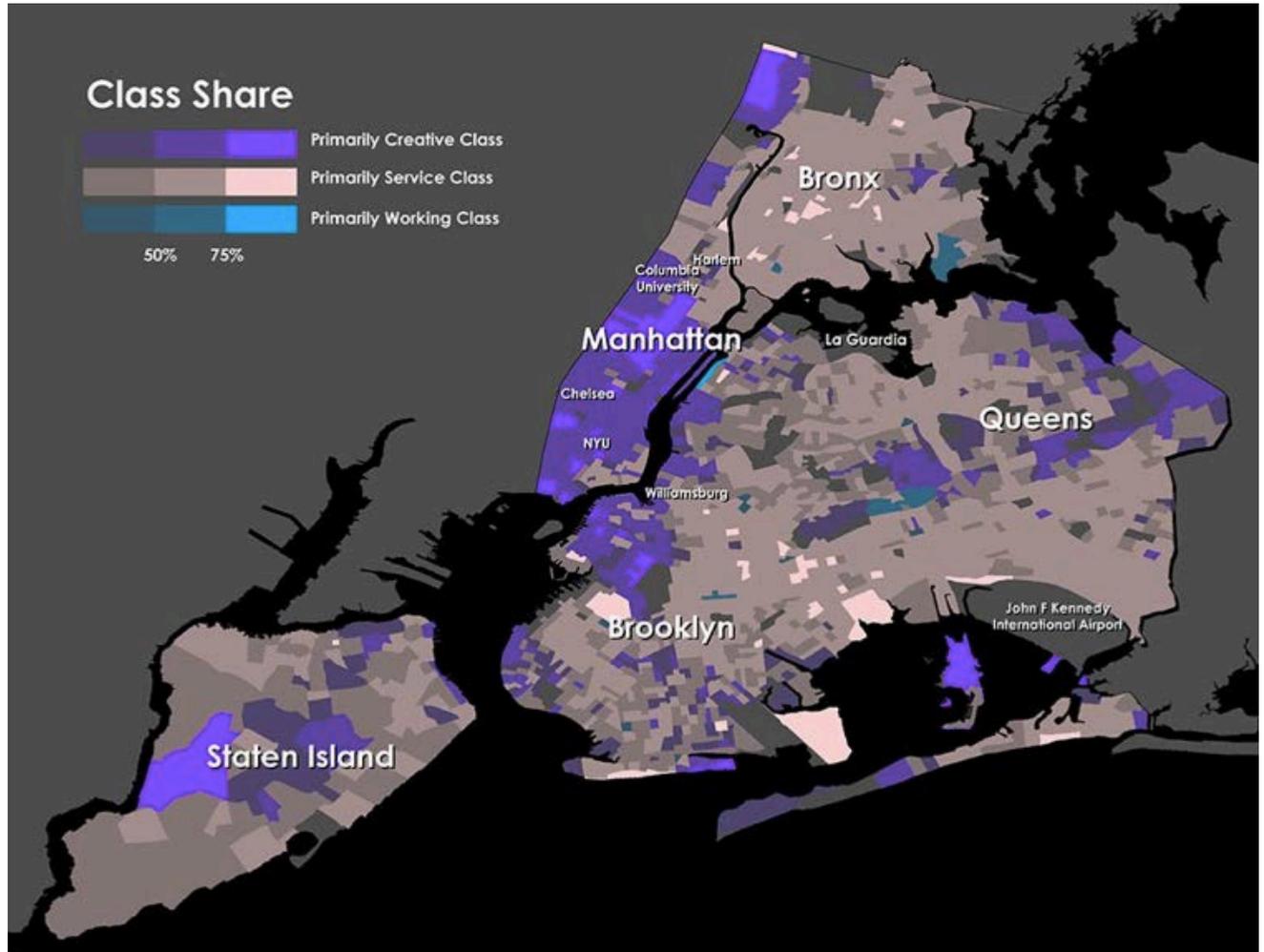
And within the city limits of Chicago:



In Houston:



And in New York City:



Across many of these places, there remain strikingly few working-class strongholds. It appears as if the "creative class" has claimed the downtown core. And because these workers have staked out transit-rich places like the north side of Chicago, the very people who must rely on public transit — because they can't afford to own a car — are often priced out of those locations.



Emily Badger is a reporter for Wonkblog covering urban policy. She was previously a staff writer at The Atlantic Cities.