

# THE HEART OF THE CITY

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the past generation, the City of Boston been part of an historic urban renaissance in the United States. After years of serious decline, when businesses and population fled the city as racial and social problems festered, Boston has used its strategic location, priceless institutional assets, and grassroots know-how to offer a vital place to live, work, and enjoy cultural and community life. At a time when government is denigrated in the political discourse, Boston City Hall has developed programs and policies that have won acclaim for their pragmatism and effectiveness — including community policing, Main Streets business districts, nonprofit housing development, public-private partnerships in hospitals and community health centers, building-level reform of public schools, a small but significant growth in school choice, development of whole new neighborhoods and transit systems, and a renewal of citywide park systems. These programs and strategies work because they create place-specific approaches to problems, where people are engaged in fixing their own communities and institutions. Mayor Thomas M. Menino, Police Commissioner Paul Evans, Schools Superintendent Thomas Payzant, the late Parks Commissioner Justine Liff, and others have provided very real leadership from City Hall — as have community leaders in all neighborhoods and even field of endeavor.

One of the areas to experience the most striking renaissance is the area that we call the Heart of the City. The area includes parts of several “inner city” neighborhoods — Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, Roslindale, and Jamaica Plain — located in the geographic center of Boston. The Heart of the City is home to the city’s greatest collections of parks and open spaces, including Franklin Park, the Arnold Arboretum, the Boston Nature Center, the Southwest Corridor Park, and Forest Hills Cemetery. The communities of the Heart of the City were once devastated by violence and disinvestment, but they are now are among the most dynamic and diverse in all of urban America. In recent years, the people of the Heart of the City have demonstrated deep civic pride, an abiding commitment to improving the area “house by house, block by block,” and the economic and social skills needed to create a future with economic opportunity, health, civic pride, and beauty.

But at the same time, the Heart of the City remains fragmented. The streets are home to some of the finest housing stock in urban America, and yet there are gaping holes in the fabric of the community. Parks offer every conceivable opportunity for recreation, exercise, and encounters with friends and neighbors, but at the same time parts of the area feel unsafe and unwelcoming. The area’s natural environment provides not just recreational opportunities but also offers potentially one of the healthiest places for people to live, and yet years of dumping and pollution have spoiled significant parts of that environment. Businesses of all sizes, for people of all income levels, are located within just miles of virtually every resident, but many people lack the training for qualify for those jobs. Major roads and transit systems serve the area, but many short many trips take a hour or even more because of the incompleteness of service systems. The area is brimming with young people, but the schools, libraries, and community services do not meet their needs fully.

Universities traditionally take two approaches to communities with such mixtures of prob-

lems and opportunities. Under what might be called the Ivory Tower model, scholars develop research agendas to explore the complex dynamics of those communities. The exemplar of this approach might be the famed Chicago School of the twentieth century, in which scholars and students from the University of Chicago fanned out and explored the intricate “ecology” of the city’s neighborhoods and groups. The research was done for the sake of scholarship, not to create a policy program for the areas under study. At the opposite end of the spectrum, under what might be called the Fix-It-Up model, universities seek to transform their surrounding neighborhoods with financial and other investments in construction projects and service provision. The exemplar of that approach might be the Trinity University in Hartford, Connecticut, which under the leadership of Evan Dobbelle sought nothing less than the complete turn-around of the neighborhoods that abutted the campus.

It always seemed to me that a third model – call it The Middle Way – offered a more creative way for the university to engage the community. Under this approach, researchers do not conduct research for the sake of research, nor do they presume to play a direct role in transforming a community. Rather, they seek to provide some of the strategic information that people in the community can use to better their own fortunes. In many urban neighborhoods, there is no shortage of committed or talented people who want to make things better. But many of these people do not have access to the kind of information they need to “connect the dots” of their communities. When issues arise – a controversy over brownfields or transit service, say, or an RFP for land use or health services – people in the community mobilize and represent their interests as well as they can. But because these people are so busy tending to their primary concerns – businesses, health centers, schools, households – they do not always have the data or the background information they need to act strategically.

The Heart of the City project seeks to provide a middle-way model for university engagement. The Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, based at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, joined forces with the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University in the fall of 2001 to develop a comprehensive information database of a wide range of issues facing the communities in the Heart of the City – environment, parks, schools, community centers, housing, health, recreation, and more. That database – which includes literally thousands of text entries, maps, photos, charts, and references – will help anyone who cares about the information learn what they need to know, when they need to know it. The database will be updated on a regular basis so that people in the community, government officials, nonprofit organizations, school teachers, advocates, journalists will be able to keep tabs on the community and its many opportunities for renewal.

The project operated at the Rappaport Institute from October 2001 to March 2003. The primary researcher was Ashley Lanfer, a talented and energetic graduate of Yale’s master’s program in environment and forestry. Lanfer lived in the area and spent thousands of hours walking the streets and parks, interviewing experts and residents, and building a massive database of information that would be useful to people who want to make change in the area. In the spring of 2003, with the project nearly complete, the database was passed on to Northeastern University’s Center for Urban and Regional Policy. The thinking was twofold. First, CURP

pledged to use its resources to maintain the database for the foreseeable future. Second, with the database a “live” resource, we felt that it should be located closer to the communities in question.

I should say a work about the genesis of the project. From 1997 to 2000, I served as a consultant to the Boston Redevelopment Authority. I coordinated a project called Boston 400, which sought to develop a planning and policy framework for the city for the next generation. The Boston 400 effort revolved around an extensive community process. In all, I, my colleague Lynn Berkley, and other BRA staff conducted some 200 meetings in Boston’s neighborhoods. We asked residents what they thought their neighborhoods strengths were, what kind of vision they had for their neighborhoods, and what kinds of strategic approaches might help them to realize their dreams. Summaries of those conversations, as well as a report detailing a number of initiatives that could provide a basis for planning Boston for its next generation, can be found on the Internet at [www.cityofboston.gov/boston400](http://www.cityofboston.gov/boston400).

It was during this process of community meetings that we came to believe that the future of Boston lay in its heartland communities. These communities have a dazzling collection of assets, but also struggle to deal with countless everyday realities that fragment both the people and the spaces of the area. Toward the end of the Boston 400 process, Berkley and I decided we wanted to find some way to give the community some of the vital tools it needed to make a better future for itself. Berkley helped to develop a vision for the Heart of the City project. I mention the origins of this project in Boston 400 for a simple reason – to underscore that community-building efforts take many different forms that evolve over time. The Boston 400 agenda was never adopted by City Hall, but it nonetheless gave life to a project that could serve as a model for community building and university-community engagement.

In addition to the massive web site that will be maintained henceforth by Northeastern’s Center for Urban and Regional Policy – which can be found at [www.heartofcity.info](http://www.heartofcity.info) – we also wanted to provide the community, policy makers, and others with a written report highlights the study’s key findings. That report is in your hands now. Let me tell you a little about what you will find inside.

The report contains the stories of a place with rich history and tremendous potential. The report was written for anyone who lives in, works in, or cares about the Heart of the City. Because it treats the urban environment as a single, interconnected system, it defies easy categorization, but offers a conceptual framework for building on the momentum of recent gains. The report’s author, Ashley Lanfer, divides the report into six chapters, each dealing with a critical “layer” of the issues found in the Heart of the City. Here’s a brief overview of the report:

### **Chapter 1 – History**

The Heart of the City is a product of decisions made by generation upon generation of residents – from the Massachusetts Indians to the many communities living in the area today. This chapter serves as an introduction to the story of the area’s people and the place where they live.

### **Chapter 2 – Environment**

Soil, rocks, plants, and water bodies form the most basic foundation for Heart of the City neighborhoods. The chapter explores how the land was formed, where the rain-water flows, what kinds of animals and plants flourish here, and how people have used the land over time. It goes on to explore the area’s parks and open spaces – land that is natural and designed at the same time. These special areas were set aside to allow urban communities to maintain a strong connection to the natural world. It concludes with a discussion of the environmental hazards in the Heart of the City – the brown-fields, air, water, and soil pollution, and dumping that put the urban environment, as well as human health, at risk.

### **Chapter 3 – Infrastructure**

Physical infrastructure undergirds the neighborhoods. Roads, bike paths, and railways, sewer systems, sidewalks, and side streets comprise the system that connects each thing to everything else. This chapter pays special attention to the physical and psychological barriers that inhibit access to public resources. It evaluates the effectiveness, equity, and connectivity of travel networks ranging from bus and rail systems to bike-ways and other connections between greenspaces.

### **Chapter 4 – Buildings**

Buildings in the Heart of the City include everything from triple-deckers in Mattapan, to a library in Grove Hall, to industrial warehouses, apartment complexes, coffee shops, and hardware stores. In addition to private housing, businesses, and public buildings, the chapter explores the geography of human density and vacant land in the Heart of the City.

### **Chapter 5 – People**

People breathe the air, sit under the trees, travel the roads, and work, eat, and sleep in the buildings of the Heart of the City. This chapter touches on the social problems and opportunities specific to this area – everything from health and education to community policing. It highlights a handful of the people, organizations, and partnerships that have left indelible marks on the neighborhoods.

### **Chapter 6 – Choices**

Over the course of the next generation, people who care about the Heart of the City will face a complex array of opportunities, trade-offs, and risks. This chapter invites us to imagine the Heart of the City as it could be – healthier and more whole, more diverse, with its pieces better connected and its people better served by community resources. It expresses general principles for the future and outlines some of the ways people in the Heart of the City are already working successfully according to these principles.

The Rappaport Institute owes words of thanks to many people. First on the list is Robert Cook, the energetic and creative director of the Arnold Arboretum, who generously provided funding for the first year of the project. Jerry and Phyllis Rappaport, through their gift to the Kennedy School to create the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, helped us to supplement those resources with another half year of funding as well as office space and other Rappaport Institute staff. Polly O'Brien, the program coordinator for the Institute, played a central role in designing the web site. Lynn Berkley helped to write the proposal and offered smart advice throughout the project.

Barry Bluestone, director of the Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University, has been a good friend and collaborator on many projects and I was thrilled when he agreed to house and update the database as we completed the project. Bluestone provided funding for the last three months of the project and offered editorial advice as well as enthusiasm for our vision. Sarah Heim, the web editor for CURP, offered priceless editorial assistance in the last months of the process. Heather Seligman and other CURPers also provided useful assistance.

But the greatest thanks much go to the people of the Heart of the City, who welcomed Ashley Lanfer into the community and offered endless assistance and advice. The names are too numerous to note here, but they are sprinkled throughout this report and throughout the database. These are the people who make great cities great. Our only hope is that the database will be as helpful for their community-building efforts as their generosity and knowledge was helpful to us.

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## THE HEART OF THE CITY

*In Boston's 'heartland' neighborhoods, residents are working with state and city agencies, nonprofit organizations, and grassroots groups to revive their fragmented landscape and community. After years of disinvestment and neglect, this area is becoming whole again. But to insure that the area offers all of the requisites of a healthy urban community — good homes, jobs, commercial opportunities, and recreational and civic life — all parties need to build on its strengths and repair its broken pieces.*

**BY ASHLEY G. LANFER**

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In the geographic center of Boston lies a unique collection of neighborhoods, parks, transportation centers and corridors, and civic and social spaces. In the midst of this area can be found some of the city's biggest parks and natural spaces – Franklin Park, the Arnold Arboretum, the new Boston Nature Center, the Forest Hills Cemetery, Franklin Field, and several other cemeteries. On the edges of these green spaces are the city's most diverse communities – parts of Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roslindale.

Years of struggle against neglect, disintegration, fragmentation, and disinvestments are producing an historic revival in the Heart of the City. Small business owners have set up shops and restaurants in and around the Forest Hills MBTA Station. Local churches have restored a grand but long vacant former temple on Seaver Street and established a center for education, worship, homeless families, and at-risk youth on Forest Hills Street. City Hall has contributed by redeveloping Blue Hill Avenue – once the well-populated Main Street for Jewish life in Boston – and by building a clubhouse at Franklin Park golf course. The state has helped to rejuvenate the Franklin Park Zoo. The Massachusetts Audubon Society has established a new center for nature and learning in the midst of a sprawling abandoned hospital site. A broad coalition of residents, non-profits, state and city agencies, and Harvard University has pooled land and resources to establish a pedestrian pathway through forested wetland to connect people with parkland via public transit.

The struggle continues. Despite years of frustration, community activists work with passion to craft good plans for the Boston State Hospital site and the Arborway Yard. Communities along Blue Hill Avenue and Washington Street raise their voice to demand



**New Housing Construction in the Stanwood Street/  
Grove Hall area of Roxbury**

enhanced transportation services. Community Development Corporations from Egleston Square to Codman Square fight to keep the neighborhoods affordable for working households. Architects and community residents consider how to take better advantage of existing transit connections and reduce dependence on the automobile.

Gains have been made, but much remains to be done in the “heartland” neighborhoods of Boston. The area’s neighborhoods – the residential districts, commercial spaces, park system, transit connections, school and other public buildings – remain fractured from a troubled history and halting efforts to reinvigorate the area. Fixing these

broken pieces in a way that improves the larger whole will ultimately result in the revitalization of the whole area.

Sustaining the substantial progress in the Heart of the City will require even more work and stronger partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit groups. The revitalization efforts will take place at different levels, as people create new infill housing, improve a park entrance, develop a young leader, or make new investments in health care.

The pieces are broken indeed. But what would the city look like if people started to put them together? Truly, here is Boston’s great frontier. The challenges are great – education, gentrification, segregation, poverty, dumping, air quality, and social isolation. But the potential for integration, diversity, access, health, prosperity, and environmental quality is far greater.

# 1

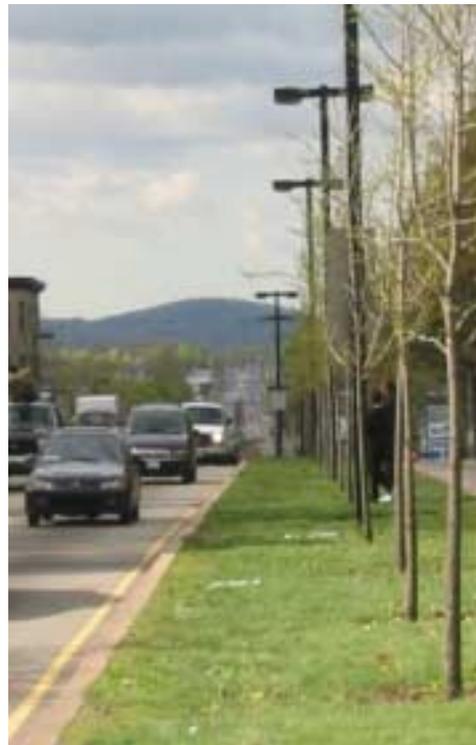
## HISTORY

The story of urban and natural change in the Heart of the City is a tale of glacial kettleholes, stony brooks, and Roxbury Puddingstone; of Native Americans and wave upon wave of immigrants; of people with the foresight to set aside natural lands for everybody to use; of dramatic changes in communities along Blue Hill Avenue and a highway that was never built.

The Massachusetts, who lived in the vicinity of Franklin Park before 1630, were the first known human residents of the area. Parts of today's Blue Hill Avenue, American Legion Highway, and Harvard Street were originally Native American trails. The Massachusetts Indians lived in the Heart of the City until the mid-17th century.

Since 1631, when British Puritans established the Town of Roxbury, the Heart of the City has become home to waves of immigrants from around the world. Like the Native Americans who preceded them, and like many who followed them, Puritan farmers were attracted to the area by clean, abundant water from Jamaica Pond and the Stony Brook. The Puritans established a sparse patchwork of farms and country estates on the land around Jamaica Pond. For generations, settlers planted farms and relied on water from the pond and the Stony Brook to irrigate them. Beginning in about 1740, Boston's wealthy elite began building country summer homes on sprawling rural estates near the eastern shores of Jamaica Pond, as well as the Grove Hall area of Roxbury.

By the mid 1800s, streetcars linked downtown Boston and the towns around its periphery. Public transportation opened the way for Boston commuters, eager for the suburban ideal of a wooded retreat from the city. As landowners subdivided and sold parts of their estates, and as newcomers began to build factories along the Stony Brook, the era of the landed gentry came to a close. By the late 1800's, poorer German, Italian, and Irish immigrants were streaming into the neighborhoods, building dense housing along the banks of Stony Brook. Industry developed along the brook and Jamaica Pond, and individual towns were annexed to Boston. Boston's new neighborhoods became increasingly diverse and urbanized.



Blue Hill Avenue, the Blue Hills and the edge of Franklin Park.

**Blue Hill Avenue and new immigrants:** Another wave of immigrants arrived in the Heart of the City between 1910 and 1920, after a devastating fire in the predominantly Jewish town of Chelsea. Jewish families moved from Chelsea and the Roxbury lowlands into Grove Hall, which soon became the northern border of the second largest Jewish community in the United States. The Jewish community spread south along the Blue Hill Avenue corridor into Dorchester and Mattapan, quickly transforming the once residential avenue into a thriving commercial district.

In the years that followed, Blue Hill Avenue became the backbone of Boston's Jewish community. Up and down the Avenue, Jewish businesses opened in the first floors of what had previously been entirely residential buildings. The Franklin Park Theater appeared on the corner of Blue Hill Avenue and Columbia Road in 1914, and was soon wildly popular. By the mid-1920s, 85 percent of the residents east of Blue Hill Avenue and west of the railroad tracks were Jewish. In those years, Boston police knew this area as one of the easiest and safest police beats in the city. The political epicenter of the area was the G&G Delicatessen at 1106 Blue Hill Avenue, where kosher food was served and aspiring politicians sought to win the favor of community leaders. For most residents, synagogues were within easy walking distance.

The 1940s and 1950s marked the beginning of a new era for the Heart of the City, as Jewish families began to move southward into Dorchester and Mattapan. Between the early 1950s and 1970, Jewish residents left the neighborhoods along Blue Hill Avenue in great numbers, and black families – often from southern states – moved in. Communities along Blue Hill Avenue that had been almost entirely Jewish in 1940 had become almost entirely black by 1970. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, blacks followed the Jewish migration pattern down Blue Hill Avenue all the way to Mattapan Square, while Jews largely left for Boston's suburbs.

This dramatic social upheaval was accelerated by real estate deals of the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (B-BURG). The group offered special loans to first-time black homebuyers. Real estate agents sometimes employed scare tactics to encourage panicked white residents to sell their homes for cheap, then offered the homes to black families at higher prices with minimal down payments. With little at stake, it was easy for black families to abandon their homes when faced with back payments or costly repairs. Foreclosures and arson became common. Vacancy rates increased. Beginning in the late 1960s, businesses along Blue Hill Avenue north of Mattapan Square began to fail. By 1979 there were hundreds of vacant lots the streets on both sides of Blue Hill Avenue.

As black southern families moved into the neighborhoods east of the avenue, they were joined by waves of immigrants of color from agricultural nations around the globe. Haitian immigrants began to arrive in large numbers in the late 1970s. Today, approximately one-third of Mattapan residents are from Haiti, and the Haitian community continues to be one of Boston's fastest growing nationalities. Other immigrants arrived from the Dominican Republic, Somalia, Jamaica, Cape Verde, and a range of other nations in Central and South America and Africa.

Puerto Ricans began to move to Jamaica Plain as early as 1920, and settled in larger numbers in the late 1950s and 1960s. In the early 1980s, there was a small but influential influx of Greeks into Roslindale. Today, according to the City of Boston, almost 30 percent of the

City's residents were born outside of the United States. That percentage is even higher in the Heart of the City.

**Disinvestment and decline:** Each Heart of the City community has its own stories of social, economic, and physical deterioration that took place between 1960 and 1980. The social fabric unraveled, business districts collapsed, populations plummeted, and foreclosure and arson were common occurrences. Racial tensions ran high as schools were desegregated through a new busing system, and whites fled the city.



Two vacant burned-out buildings in the Grove Hall area.

While all business districts in the area deteriorated in the 1960s and 1970s, perhaps the most devastating transition occurred in Grove Hall on Blue Hill Avenue. On May 26, 1967, 30 black welfare mothers vowed to remain in the Grove Hall welfare office until their demands for work training programs, representation on welfare boards, and respectful treatment, were satisfied. The mothers chained the doors to the office so that no one could leave. Hundreds watched as Boston patrolmen smashed into the building to release the workers. The crowd erupted into a riot that quickly spread to a five-block area. The mob burned and looted Jewish stores. Boston police came under sniper fire. The entire police force mobilized at the stadium in Franklin Park to organize a response.

In the wake of the riots, business failure spread along Blue Hill Avenue, and vacancy rates increased still further. By 1979 the City owned 243 vacant parcels within a block of Blue Hill Avenue while private owners held another 90 vacant parcels.<sup>1</sup> The Boston Plan of 1977 described Blue Hill Avenue as “the most striking physical personification of the many economic ills besetting Boston’s low to moderate-income population; it is a four-mile stretch of roadway characterized by boarded storefronts, abandoned multi-family housing, and all-too-visible expanses of vacant land.”<sup>2</sup>

Nearby Egleston Square, the commercial district where Roxbury and Jamaica Plain come together at the intersection of Columbus Avenue and Washington Street, also became a blighted and dangerous area. Breweries and tanneries closed down. The square fell beneath the shadow of the elevated Orange Line. Meanwhile approximately one third of the businesses in Roslindale Village, which the Boston Redevelopment Authority referred to as “the commercial powerhouse of southwest Boston” in the 1950s, were devastated by arson.<sup>3</sup>

**Community struggle for the Southwest Corridor:** The population of neighborhoods in the Heart of the City plummeted, but not everyone left. Many who stayed engaged in a fierce battle with state officials over the future of a corridor of land known as the Southwest Corridor. The corridor, which cut a course through the middle of Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and Roslindale, was to be part of an eight-lane interstate highway. The state acquired the land and demolished 300 businesses and 700 homes that stood in the way of the proposed highway.<sup>4</sup>

The demolition work devastated the neighborhoods. In their 1970 book *Rites of Way: The Politics of Transportation in Boston and the U.S. City*, Alan Lupo, Frank Colcord, and Edmund P. Fowler wrote of the impact of the razing on an elderly couple living on the edge of the Southwest Corridor. “[They had] seen and heard the bulldozers and the earth movers rip up their neighbors’ homes and leave a flat dirt wasteland all the way to Number 226. They had watched the machines at work and had seen the vandals rip the plumbing and pipes and all the other vital organs out of the abandoned houses, and finally, they had smelled the stench of arson and had heard the almost nightly wail and clanging of fire engines.”<sup>5</sup>

Thousands of residents and dozens of local organizations drew together to fight plans for the new highway. In 1970, in response to community opposition and a critical report by a task force sent to study the highway planning process, Governor Francis Sargent declared a moratorium on highway construction – in Boston and throughout the state.

But stopping highway construction was only half the battle. For years afterwards, the cleared, vacant land languished unused. Historian Sam Bass Warner called the corridor “a wide, unattended scab” through the neighborhoods. During this period, the population in the Heart of the City declined and business districts deteriorated. As real estate broker Robert Glassman put it, “The period from 1973 to ’77 was a black hole – a void. On some streets you couldn’t give houses away.”

Creative, determined community members worked to fill that void. In 1976, neighbors established the Southwest Corridor Community Farm. They transformed a stretch of the dangerous urban wasteland into a productive, profitable community resource featuring a solar heated greenhouse. Subsequently, the community garden movement spread explosively throughout Boston. By 1987, communities all over the city had established approximately 125 gardens all over the city, providing nutritious food to low-income households and putting vacant land to productive use.<sup>6</sup>

Also in 1976, negotiations among MBTA consultants, community groups, and individuals in the neighborhoods began for the construction of a new Orange Line and a linear park. Countless community meetings and neighborhood involvement resulted in an initial plan for the Southwest Corridor in 1978 that received overwhelming community support. For the first time in U.S. history, construction funds allocated for a major expressway were redirected to a transit project. The total price tag for the project was an estimated \$750 million.

**In recent years:** Committed activists and community leaders have built on the success of the Southwest Corridor. They have picked up and repaired the broken, blighted pieces and helped to make the neighborhoods whole again. These are people like Mossik Hacobian, Virginia Morrison, John Blackwell, Dan Richardson, Elma Lewis, Georgia Jones, Richard Heath, Jane Lewis, Will Morales, Sarah Freeman, Roy Blomquist, Christine Poff, and Ray Hammond – as well as people who volunteer at their children’s schools, show up for park cleanups, and work with their neighbors to fix up vacant lots. Myriad organizations, such as City Life/ Vida Urbana, Jamaica Plain NDC, Project RIGHT, the Haitian-American Public Health Initiative, Spontaneous Celebrations, the Blue Hill Avenue Merchants Association, and countless local churches and neighborhood associations have joined the effort. Lot by vacant

lot, park by park, street by street, tree by tree, school by school, business by business, they are rebuilding, repairing, and restoring the urban landscape.

The workers have been numerous and inspiring, their accomplishments remarkable. Even in the darkest and most despairing periods of recent decades, neighborhood heroes and organizations such as these have struggled to make their communities healthier, more equitable, and more beautiful.

And yet much work remains to be done. Many communities continue to be highly segregated. Census tracts in western Jamaica Plain and western Roslindale are up to 90 percent white, while census tracts in Mattapan and Dorchester are up to 92 percent black. Great gaps remain in public services, including community centers, libraries, and transit – particularly along the Blue Hill Avenue Corridor. Almost every measure of public health – from infant mortality to heart disease – reveals disparities between blacks and whites in the area, and between largely minority neighborhoods and largely white neighborhoods. Voting rates, political representation, and political power among recent immigrants and in areas such as Franklin Field have been relatively low. And as property values on many Heart of the City streets continue to rise, lower-income residents are being displaced from their homes.



## 2

### ENVIRONMENT

Like all places on earth, cities are sustained by natural ecological processes. Amid the houses, industrial sites, schools, and streets, trees cleanse the air of toxics and release oxygen; soils process rainwater, prevent flooding, and provide nutrients and stability for plant life; and stream beds collect rain water and merge with larger rivers. Urban ecological services have

inestimable economic value. Demand for more development and greater street capacity for traffic must always be met according to the natural carrying capacity of the urban environment. As it turns out, protecting the integrity of natural systems can both save money and improve people's lives.

**A brief history of the land:** Volcanic activity formed the land beneath the city of Boston more than 600 million years ago. The land was not originally connected to North America, but was part of a chain of mountainous islands known as the Avalon Belt. Over time, the Avalon Belt sank and was covered by a massive accumulation of eroded sand and gravel, and by the sea. The basin sank several hundred feet. Sand,

rock, mud, and hardened lava crushed together, fusing into metamorphic rocks called Roxbury puddingstone and slate. The belt of islands and the North American continent collided, pushing the puddingstone and slate above the surface of the earth.<sup>7,8</sup>

Over much of the past two million years, glaciers blanketed the northern half of North America, grinding over the land, smoothing hills and valleys, and leaving piles of sand and gravel in their wake. A massive hunk of glacial ice lay buried beneath the jumbled rock and sand in present day Jamaica Plain. When the ice melted, the surrounding debris settled and formed a "kettle hole" that we now know as Jamaica Pond.<sup>9</sup>

Receding glaciers littered the soil with stones that plagued farmers struggling to clear the land in years to come. The glaciers left the hard, durable puddingstone and slate intact, including the massive boulders at Hagbourne Hill in Franklin Park and Horatio Harris Park in Roxbury.<sup>10</sup>



Bussey Brook Wetland Meadow

The Massachusetts Indians, who lived in the vicinity of Franklin Park before 1630, were the first known human residents of the area. The Massachusetts grew corn, beans and squash on land they used communally. They burned the understory of the forest in the winter to make game more visible in the summertime. Early English traders were astounded by the visibility and beauty of the well-managed landscape, and Puritan English farmers settled a land already served by a well-developed network of trails and camps.

In 1631, British Puritans established the Town of Roxbury and a small group of settlers began to farm. The settlements spread, and the Grove Hall area in particular became known for its orchards. The land was a laboratory, and farmers developed many varieties of fruit, including the Roxbury Russett apple and the Bartlett pear.

The new settlements were separated from the Boston peninsula by a long, thin spit of high ground that flooded at high tide. Roxbury's leaders built up the high ground and laid out Washington Street. Over time, massive landfill projects filled in the swamplands and formed solid ground. Transportation arteries, including what are now Warren Street and Blue Hill Avenue, were constructed through the lowlands.

Today, many Heart of the City residents are disconnected from their natural environment – the soil, plants, animals, and running waters of their neighborhood. People often associate natural systems with protected wilderness, not with urban areas and contaminated soil. Yet ecological processes occur in inner-city neighborhoods just as they do in the most remote wildlife refuge. The hydrologic cycle, the flow of nutrients into and out of soil, plant respiration, the migration of wildlife, the weathering of rocks – ecological processes such as these are also vital to the lives of city dwellers.

**Functioning natural systems:** The Heart of the City is part of the Charles River watershed, which drains a 308-square-mile area and empties out into Boston Harbor. The flow of water through the Heart of the City is mostly hidden from view. Stony Brook – the largest and least visible body of running water in the Heart of the City – flows north through an underground pipe that runs roughly parallel to the Southwest Corridor Park and empties into the Charles River. Likewise, Bussey, Canterbury, and Goldsmith brooks flow through the Heart of the City and feed into Stony Brook. They run above ground through local parks, and underground through most settled areas.

Jamaica Pond, the area's largest and most widely recognized body of water, feeds the Muddy River, a semi-stagnant body of water that connects several Emerald Necklace parklands. Jamaica Pond was the main water source for the entire city of Boston between 1795 and 1845. Even today, the water in Jamaica Pond is clean enough to serve as an emergency source of drinking water for the city. But the demand for water in Boston exceeded the volume that Jamaica Pond could provide long ago, and the sources of the area's drinking water lie far from Jamaica Pond or any other local lake or river. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) pipes in water from the Quabbin Reservoir more than 50 miles west of the city.



Dead tree on the Arborway

Water quality in Jamaica Pond and the Stony and Bussey Brooks is protected from contaminated runoff and flooding by the soils, forests, meadows, parklands, and gardens that surround them. Natural areas protect rivers and streams by soaking up, processing, and cleansing rainwater, and by slowly returning it to the groundwater supply. The Arnold



**Duck Pond in Allendale Woods**

Arboretum protects Goldsmith Brook, three small ponds, and a tributary of Bussey Brook. Franklin Park and the Forest Hills Cemetery protect Scarboro Pond and Lake Hibiscus, both of which are man-made. Both the 90-acre Allendale Woods urban wild and the Arnold Arboretum protect water quality in Bussey Brook, which originates in West Roxbury and merges with the Stony Brook underground near Forest Hills Station.

Although they go largely unnoticed by residents, local soils perform other critical environmental services. Soils store large quantities of carbon, significantly reducing the major greenhouse gas contributing to climate

change. They provide the nutrients, water, air, and organisms necessary for the growth and sustenance of all plant life. Soils in the Heart of the City are considered nutrient-poor, acidic, and rocky, yet they are still capable of sustaining a wide variety of plants.

The Heart of the City is a forest of trees that give shade to more than one-fourth of the neighborhoods.<sup>11</sup> In between streets and houses, sidewalks and parking lots, trees sink their roots, draw water from deep soil, convert carbon dioxide into oxygen, bear fruit, spread seed, germinate, and die. The practical functions of this forest are myriad. Trees cut down energy use, improve air quality, absorb noise pollution, and can make the shabbiest streets magnificent in May and October. Large, mature trees such as those along American Legion Highway and the Arborway are particularly effective at cleansing the air of toxins. Large, healthy trees greater than 77 cm in diameter remove approximately 70 times more air pollution per year than small healthy trees of less than 8 cm in diameter.<sup>12</sup>

Trees also provide cool shade for neighborhoods in the summer. They insulate and protect homes in the winter. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and harmful contaminants from urban streets. Their leaves release oxygen into the atmosphere. Tree cover serves as a critical indicator of environmental health for urban areas.

Plant life in the Heart of the City is notable not only because of the extent to which trees cover the land but also because of the biological diversity of plant life in the area. The Arnold Arboretum contains virtually every woody plant capable of surviving in the New England climate. The life cycle and growth of each tree and bush – each member of the “living collection” – is maintained, managed, and recorded with skill and precision on a sophisticated computer database for use by scientists around the world. Other areas are also high in

biological diversity. Ecologists have discovered rare foreign plant species in the Allendale Woods urban wild – germinated from seed carried by birds from trees in the nearby Arnold Arboretum. Wetland areas are particularly diverse. The Bussey Brook wetland meadow is home to crab apples, black willows, purple vetch, Jerusalem artichokes, raspberry vines, and evening primroses.<sup>13</sup>

This urban environment of city streets, apartment buildings, and commercial districts provides a home to a surprising variety of wildlife – animals that live here year round, as well as those that use city greenlands as migration corridors. City residents are often unaware of the wildlife in their midst beyond squirrels and the odd opossum. Yet who does not experience a moment of delight and wonder when he spots a red-tailed hawk soaring in a cloudless blue sky, a deer darting into the forest, or yellow springtime butterflies hovering over green wetlands?

A diverse wildlife population is an indicator of a healthy urban ecosystem. When strips of protected greenspace connect city parks, the value of parkland as wildlife habitat increases. Connected open spaces or “wildlife corridors” maximize the value of habitat for the greatest concentration and diversity of animals. Because the parks of the Emerald Necklace are connected to one another by parkland, they are more valuable as wildlife habitat than they would be individually. As part of the Atlantic Flyway, the Emerald Necklace is used by songbirds and hawks twice each year during periods of migration. The necklace is also home to great blue and night crowned herons, the New England cottontail rabbit, brown bats, and mute swans. People who enjoy walking or biking also benefit from connections between parklands.

Eastern red foxes, wild turkey, deer, and a number of butterfly species can be found in the Bussey Brook wetland meadow adjacent to the main section of the Arnold Arboretum. Red-winged blackbirds, muskrats, and painted turtles make their homes at the Boston Nature Center. Red-tailed hawks reside in parklands year round in protected areas throughout the Heart of the City.

## **PARKS AND OPEN SPACES**

In the late 1800s, city residents and administrators recognized that continued unchecked growth and development in and around Boston could result in a landscape with no room for open meadows, trees, grass, clean air, and outside exploration. They made unprecedented investments in open spaces to ensure that remnants of the natural landscape would be preserved for Boston’s residents forever. First with the Forest Hills Cemetery and later with



**Dorchester artist’s sculpture in Forest Hills Cemetery.**

Franklin Park, the Arnold Arboretum, and Jamaica Pond, the City set aside large chunks of land and designed them to be accessible, beautiful, botanically diverse public landscapes. Today, these immense, historic open spaces are complemented by other natural lands under varying degrees of management – from community gardens and playgrounds to urban wilds and tiny pocket parks.

**Nineteenth-Century Open Spaces:** Four of the six major public parks in the Heart of the City have defined and been defined by the surrounding neighborhoods for a century or more. Native Americans and early settlers alike valued Jamaica Pond for its beauty and utility, and settled along its shores long before it was a public park. The Town of West Roxbury established Forest Hills Cemetery in 1848 as a rolling, green public space for the enjoyment of the living as much as a sacred burial space for the dead. Much like Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Forest Hills is an outdoor art gallery, park, and arboretum, as well as an historic burial ground. The sculpting of Franklin Park by Frederick Law Olmsted in the late 1800s drove and gave shape to the development of neighborhoods along its edges. The Arnold Arboretum, which Harvard and the City established over the course of the 1880s, has shaped the surrounding communities to a lesser extent, although today the well-managed open space is a major draw for institutions and residents alike.

At its creation in 1848, Forest Hills Cemetery provided a model for protected areas that set the stage for the creation of public parks almost four decades later. The cemetery was so popular when it was established, and brought such a large number of visitors to the area, that the railroad company was prompted to change the name of the nearest station to "Forest Hills."

The 275-acre Forest Hills Cemetery contains the largest collection of Victorian memorial sculpture in the nation, as well as numerous contemporary pieces. It is an arboretum with thousands of trees, many of which are labeled for the public. It is the neighborhood gathering place for poetry readings in honor of beloved artists such as e.e. cummings and Anne Sexton, who found their final resting place here. At the center of the cemetery lies Lake Hibiscus, a hand-dug storm drain retention area that attracts bufflehead, mute swans, and mallards.

Of these four oldest and largest public parklands, the Forest Hills Cemetery presents the most dramatic and varied face to the public at its main entrance. Visitors, if they are fortunate enough to find their way, pass through a gothic, cathedral-esque gateway and are immediately confronted with sculpture, a functioning bell tower on a hill, old-growth trees, manicured grass, and a kiosk with maps and other orienting information. However, all of this is invisible from Morton Street – the turnoff for the main entrance. For passers by, Forest Hills may appear very similar to the seven other cemeteries in the immediate vicinity. The extraordinary open space is one of the best kept secrets of the neighborhood.

Jamaica Pond, in contrast, is visible and accessible from virtually any point along its perimeter. Even when other parks are closer to their homes, many area residents feel it is worth the extra effort to walk, run, bike, or drive to Jamaica Pond. Area real estate agents agree that proximity to Jamaica Pond is more important to potential renters and buyers than proximity to any other community resource. Park users cannot get lost on the circular walking path around the pond. They know that one loop equals about a mile and a half. They remain in constantly connection with the main attraction of the park – a clean, deep, blue, fish-filled

kettle-hole. The parkland slopes from the street to the pond, shielding the path from the busy street. People can fish, run, walk, rest on a bench, rent row and sail boats for reasonable prices, or visit a small nature center. Frederick Law Olmsted designed the park, and today it is clearly part of the larger park system. Tree lined bike and walking paths extend north and south, and the Jamaica Pond Project provides visitors with information about the Emerald Necklace as a whole.

Newcomers to the area are often surprised to learn that for a period of years in the 1970s, the banks of Jamaica Pond were trashy and overgrown. In the early 1980s, Christine Cooper, a poet, artist, and single mother, began picking up trash, clearing overgrown vegetation, and gathering community support for investment in the beleaguered park. Today, Cooper runs the Jamaica Pond Project, and facilitates learning and boating programs for youth and adults at the park.<sup>14</sup>

Franklin Park is the largest of the Heart of the City parks. Its 527 acres include a zoo, an 18-hole golf course, a stadium, woodlands, tot-lots, picnic areas, playing fields, tennis courts, and a lake. The perimeter of Franklin Park is formed almost entirely by densely populated major roads along the edges of four of Boston's neighborhoods - Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Jamaica Plain. (*For a brief history of Franklin Park see Appendix 1: A Timeline of Franklin Park.*)

Along with Central Park in Manhattan and Prospect Park in Brooklyn, Franklin Park is considered one of Frederick Law Olmsted's three greatest masterpieces of landscape design. His original plan divided Franklin Park into two sections - the Country Park and the Ante Park. Olmsted intended the Country Park to provide a beautiful country setting for passive recreation such as picnics and Sunday strolls. He viewed the Country Park as an antidote to the grind of city life. Olmsted intended the Ante Park to be used for active recreation, and included a section that would showcase local animals. Deviations from this vision have included a zoo with non-native animals, a golf course, a rose garden, a concert area, unplanned playing fields, and the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital and homeless shelter.

Franklin Park has had various influences on surrounding communities over time. When the park was first established it attracted development and investment. Because of its proximity to Franklin Park, the Forest Hills neighborhood was exclusive and expensive in the early 1900s. When a group of triple-decker homes was built on Glen Road, the Jamaica Plain paper called it an invasion of "Barbarians pouring in upon the classic beauties of Rome."<sup>15</sup> By the mid-1960s, Franklin



Arnold Arboretum in full spring color.

## OTHER HEROES OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Greenspace advocacy groups at work today in the Heart of the City – groups such as the Franklin Park Coalition, the Boston Natural Areas Fund, and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy – stand on the shoulders of community activists who preceded them. Augusta Bailey, Elma Lewis, Charlotte Kahn, and Richard Heath each participated in and contributed to this history.

Those who have lived in Roxbury for thirty years or more remember Augusta Bailey. For almost two decades, Bailey led communities in Roxbury and North Dorchester to reclaim vacant land, plant flowers and vegetables, and distribute fresh produce to residents. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, she built a solid foundation for future work by organizations such as Boston Urban Gardeners and Dorchester Gardenland Preserve, both of which became powerful forces for community empowerment and positive grass-roots improvements in the 1980s.

Roxbury resident Charlotte Kahn said of Augusta Bailey: “I thought there were ten years of work to be done before we could start community gardens in Roxbury. But when I met Augusta Bailey in 1976, I realized that she had already put in those ten years, and that it was time for our work to begin.”<sup>16</sup> In 1977, Kahn formed the Boston Urban Gardeners, a coalition of urban gardeners who used vacant land to provide a food supplement for low-income families. She served as its director until 1990.

While Bailey transformed vacant lots into productive space, a black artist named Elma Lewis focused her efforts on the city’s largest and most neglected public park. In September 1969, Elma Lewis held a press conference to announce a major cleanup campaign. She began to articulate a vision for Franklin Park that reflected the national importance of the landscape. “Franklin Park is not a community park,” she insisted. “It is an Olmsted miracle; it is the major park in Boston; it is one of the most important parks in America. Franklin Park lives. It will live with us or without us. I would rather see that it lived with us. It is a park located in a community, benefiting the city, belonging in part to the Commonwealth, and making a splash on the American scene.”

In 1971, Lewis established the all-volunteer Franklin Park Coalition. When the Coalition hired a full-time director in 1980, progress toward the new vision for Franklin Park accelerated. Richard Heath had been a volunteer for the Coalition for many years. As its director, he marshaled community and private investment in the park. Heath hired local teens for summer work crews who became skilled at pruning and tree removal. He and the Coalition raised money for improvements to park infrastructure and led a centennial celebration of the park. Together with the MBTA and the Parks Department, the Franklin Park Coalition closed crime-infested roads to vehicular traffic. The Coalition published a scholarly series of historical documents relating to Franklin Park, as well as new articles and a monthly newsletter called *Franklin Park Notes*. In her Historic Landscape Report, Franklin Park historian Cynthia Zaitzevsky wrote of the Franklin Park Coalition during this time period, “*It is almost impossible to overstate the impact of this citizens’ advocacy group.*”<sup>17</sup>

Toward the end of their years as greenspace activists, Richard Heath and Charlotte Kahn planted a pin oak tree at the Tiffany Moore Playground in honor of Augusta Bailey and her legacy. Today, the work of the Franklin Park Coalition continues under the leadership of Christine Poff. Others such as Simone Auster, Betsy Johnson, and Margaret Dyson continue the tradition of open space activism in the Heart of the City.

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Park reflected many of the racial tensions and crime in the area’s increasingly segregated neighborhoods. In the context of a rapid demographic shift along the eastern edge of the park along Blue Hill Avenue, policing in Franklin Park had become almost non-existent. The park became more of a buffer between alienated communities than a common space they shared. Crime, dumping, and vehicular abuse of the parkland were rampant.

Since the low-point of those years, the Franklin Park Coalition, the City of Boston have leveraged millions of dollars of investments and thousands of community work hours towards improvements in the park. Since 1980, along with other partners, they have made major improvements at the golf course, zoo, playgrounds, woodlands, and roadways. Perhaps most significantly, beginning in 1981, the Franklin Park Coalition closed several park roads and entrances to cars, resulting in a dramatic drop in crime, dumping, and vehicular

abuse. Today, Parks Department officials report a discernable increase, month by month, in the number of people walking and running in the park.

However, much work remains to be done. In many areas, Franklin Park still presents a dangerous or confusing face to the community. Poor pedestrian access from Forest Hills Station; blocked or ineffective gateways and entrances along Morton Street and Walnut Avenue; overgrown woodlands; crumbling walls; fast-moving traffic that uses the park as a short-cut; inadequate interior orientation; and insufficient woodland management all deter visitation and detract from the impact of a beautiful and brilliantly designed landscape that was intended to be Boston's central park. The main entrance to both the park and the zoo at Blue Hill Avenue is dominated by traffic and pavement. Flowerbeds, monumental columns, and an historic stone carriage building cannot compete with the combined effect of a parking lot, traffic light, separate roads for entrance and exit, and multiple city bus stops. The four-man crew employed by the City Department of Parks and Recreation to care for Franklin Park, the entire Emerald Necklace, and nine more of the oldest parks in the city is insufficient to meet the management needs of these parks – particularly in terms of woodland management.

Unrealized potential lurks within and just outside the boundaries of Franklin Park in the realms of public health, economic development, environmental quality, and community building. Economic experts and local residents alike recognize this potential. In a 1997 study, the Boston Consulting Group and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City found that Franklin Park Zoo alone has the potential to attract one million visitors each year, and that related economic benefits would accrue along the Blue Hill Avenue commercial corridor as a result of increased visitation to the zoo.

The final major 19th century public open space is the Arnold Arboretum, a 265-acre botanical garden managed by Harvard University and dedicated to the growth and study of trees and shrubs. The collections at the Arnold Arboretum are among the largest and best documented collections of woody plants in the world, and the core historical mission of the Arnold Arboretum is "to increase knowledge of woody plants through research and to disseminate this knowledge through education." At the same time, the Arnold Arboretum is a public park that receives approximately 200,000 visitors each year.

In the early 1870s, at the same time that Harvard University was making plans to establish an arboretum on a parcel of farmland it had owned since 1842, the City of Boston and Frederick Law Olmstead were in the midst of planning Boston's system of public parks. Charles Sprague Sargent, the first director of the Arnold Arboretum, convinced Olmsted to partner with the university. Despite initial resistance from both Harvard and the City, the two men ultimately received permission to make the Arnold Arboretum part of Boston's new system of public parks. In 1882, after four years of negotiations, the City of Boston and Harvard University signed an agreement that is in effect to this day. The City of Boston owns the Arboretum land and leases it to the Arnold Arboretum at a cost of \$1 each year for 1,000 years. The City is responsible for road building and maintenance, water supply, and policing, while the University is obligated to offer the Arboretum as a free public park and to furnish the staff necessary to run it.

In 1886, Sargent brought the first botanical collections to the site. He made trips to gather seeds of trees and shrubs in Japan, South American, Europe, China, Formosa, and Korea – among other areas. His goal was to gather every tree and shrub species that might be able to survive in New England and establish it in his arboretum.

In 1883, when Olmsted laid out the roads for the new arboretum, his major challenge was to make the new open space accessible to the public. In 2003, public accessibility to the Arnold Arboretum continues to be problematic. The Arboretum has 17 entrances. Yet unlike Franklin Park, which is surrounded almost entirely by high-density neighborhood, the Arnold Arboretum is bordered by a commuter rail and the backyards of sparsely populated neighborhoods. At times over the course of its history, surrounding communities have regarded the Arboretum as “an esoteric institution with little relevance to the community.”<sup>18</sup> In recent years, Arboretum staff have worked to make the park more accessible and welcoming to its neighbors. In cooperation with city and state government agencies and local

advocacy groups, the Arboretum constructed a pedestrian connector between the Forest Hills MBTA Station and its own South Street gate. The Arboretum has welcomed community members onto the grounds and into the Hunnewell Building not only for lectures and educational opportunities, but also to participate in its own planning process and a planning process for the future of the Arborway. *(For future plans for the Arboretum, see Appendix 2.)*



Southwest Corridor Park from Forest Hills Station looking towards downtown.

**Twentieth-Century Parks:** The linear Southwest Corridor Park, which was completed in 1987, runs along the rapid transit Orange Line from Forest Hills to downtown Boston. With its easy accessibility, proximity to transit, and broad range of possible activities, the Southwest Corridor Park offers unparalleled convenience to thousands of residents. In its entirety, the Southwest Corridor Park is 4.7 miles in length, with a total of 52 acres of parkland. About 27 of the total acres are located in the Heart of the City. No walls, fences, or cemeteries limit access to the park. With gardens, tennis courts, bike paths, tot lots, splash pools, and basketball

courts, the park offers a range of activities, as well as chunks of grassy open space for impromptu games of catch and soccer. Any one of these possible activities may entice people off the sidewalk route from an Orange Line station to home. Although sections of the park between Forest Hills and Green Street are narrow and remote because they are surrounded by industry as opposed to housing, the park’s accessibility and proximity to rapid transit have made it an integral part of peoples’ travel patterns. The Southwest Corridor Park offers a daily invitation to play.

The youngest major open space in the area – acquired in 1997 and constructed between 2000 and 2002 – lies in the midst of the old Boston State Hospital site, the largest tract of

developable land in the city. The Boston Nature Center is a 67-acre wildlife sanctuary with two miles of walking trails, more than 20-acres of wetlands, a wide range of plant and animal life, one of the largest community gardens in the city, and a new environmental conservation center. An estimated 48 schools serving more than 23,000 children lie within a two miles radius of the Boston Nature Center. This is approximately 40 percent of the total number of children in schools in Boston.<sup>19</sup>

The Boston Nature Center is located in the midst of ghostly remnants of the sprawling, 175-acre former Boston State Hospital site, which has been mostly vacant since the late 1970s. In 1997, more than 30 of the abandoned hospital buildings were demolished. At least two dilapidated buildings remain. A lattice of blocked, unused roads and parking lots weaves through sections of the Boston Nature Center property. A planning process for the property has been ongoing since the early 1980s.

The Massachusetts Audubon Society, which runs the Center, is in the process of replacing the rusted, broken fencing along the edges of the property with attractive new wrought-iron fencing. The new George Robert White Environmental Conservation Center at the Boston Nature Center is a model of green design, with such elements as a geothermal heat pump that cools or warms water more than 1,100 feet below the earth's surface, and photovoltaic roof shingles that generate electricity. Yet in the fall of 2002, gaps in fencing, ramshackle entrances, and blocked, forlorn former roads persist in and around the nature center, which receives limited spontaneous use by community members. Connections between the Boston Nature Center and other public resources are virtually non-existent. Much work remains before the building and the wildlife sanctuary become inviting, fully utilized civic spaces.

**Playgrounds and tot-lots:** Playgrounds are strongly associated with particular neighborhoods. Franklin Field in Dorchester, Healy Playground and Fallon Field in Roslindale, and the Almont/Hunt Playground in Mattapan are some of the most open, accessible, inviting, and best-used playgrounds in the city. They are highly visible and well lit, but not walled off by dangerously busy roads. They are accessible from multiple sides. Organized sports leagues value them, use them heavily, and tend to keep them clean and well maintained. They lie in close proximity to shops, schools, major roads, and residential areas. The fields often pose scheduling conflicts since the number of teams and leagues exceed the available space, and many of the fields



Balsam-Lucerne Community Gardens in Dorchester.

are worn from overuse. To respond to the intense use of the fields, the City of Boston built a modern artificial surface at the English High School fields in Jamaica Plain (across from Doyle's Café); those fields have won critical acclaim in the first year of use in 2003.

In contrast, a commuter rail, a fast-moving thoroughfare (Hyde Park Avenue), and two sprawling residential lawns separate Pagel Playground from the population it was created to serve near the border of Roslindale and Jamaica Plain. Parkman Playground in the Forest Hills neighborhood of Jamaica Plain is similarly isolated. The playground runs along the edge of a sparsely settled street called Wachusett. It backs up to Forest Hills Cemetery – a fence without a gateway. A long-neglected playground, Parkman was at last reinvigorated with new park equipment and a cleanup effort in 2002.

More intimate than the large playgrounds are the tot-lots, community gardens, urban wilds, and pocket parks that reflect the specific history and values of small groups of neighbors. Connections between people and their smallest open spaces are reflected in the names of many of the pocket parks and totlots in the Heart of the City. Tiffany Moore Playground along the northeastern edge of Franklin Park was named for a child who was shot and killed while perched on her Roxbury mailbox during a period of heavy gang violence. Parquisita de la Hermanidad Playground on Walnut Avenue in Franklin Park was named by members of the Latino community in the largely Spanish-speaking Egleston Square area.

Public urban spaces such as Puddingstone Park in Roxbury reflect the cycle of blight and courageous grass-roots renewal that define the grit and spirit of urban communities. Elm Hill Park in Roxbury – a long, thin garden that runs through the center of the street – has enjoyed a greater degree of stability and investment than other streets in the neighborhood, in part due to the award-winning design, beautiful trees, and engaging art of its small park.

A number of pocket parks — including the South Street Courts, and Murphy, Rossmore/Steadman Park, located in Jamaica Plain — have suffered from inadequate maintenance and care. These parks are almost completely paved and provide little relief from the grime and vehicular exhaust of the street.

**Community gardens:** Community gardens are communally cultivated and cared for. They provide residents with a source of inexpensive, nutritious food while building community and putting vacant lands into productive use. Two dozen community gardens serve vital purposes in the Heart of the City, particularly in neighborhoods of recent immigrants with an agricultural heritage.<sup>20</sup>

Evolving groups of urban farmers reinvent community gardens each growing season as they divide and replant the land. Community gardens such as the Williams Street/Minton Stables community garden serve as a gathering place during times of celebration and mourning. The Clark-Cooper community garden in Mattapan – by far the largest in the area – has kept the mostly vacant Boston State Hospital property in productive use for the benefit of hundreds of families. It has become a place for celebration and community building.

Many of these gardens were established when the demand for vacant land in the Heart of the City was low. In recent years, as land values have risen, an increasing number of gardens have come under the ownership and long-term protection of organizations such as the Massachusetts Audubon Society and the Boston Natural Areas Network. Others, such as the South Street Community Garden, are vulnerable to development. In this case, the State Laboratory, which owns the garden, is facing a parking crunch and may turn the garden into a

new parking lot. Rising demand for other land uses, including new housing and businesses, forces residents to make tough trade-offs between competing land uses.

Two areas have no formal totlots, pocket parks, or community gardens of any kind: the community just north of Seaver Street in Roxbury, and the area just north of Talbot Avenue in Dorchester. Both are densely populated minority neighborhoods with large youth populations. The neighborhood north of Talbot Avenue has a particularly large number of blighted vacant lots, many of which are owned by the city through foreclosure. Ample opportunities for the creation of small parks and gardens exist.

## THE DEGRADED URBAN ENVIRONMENT

The urban environment is resilient and prolific. It processes toxic wastes from water, air, and soil. Flowers and grasses flourish through the smallest crack in sidewalk pavement. Yet unsustainable development in the Heart of the City has in some respects outstripped nature's capacity to absorb toxins. A landscape of impermeable surfaces inhibits the ability of the soil to clean and process rainwater. Cars, trucks, and buses emit tons of toxic chemicals with devastating effects on human and environmental health. Low income, minority neighborhoods and vacant lands such as the former Boston State Hospital are treated as dumping grounds. Contaminated soils at former industrial sites block efforts to redevelop blighted city properties. The challenge is to bring urban development into balance with the inherent capacity of the earth to sustain itself.

**Air:** Air is a critical, invisible natural resource with compromised quality in the Heart of the City, as in most urban areas. The atmosphere in the city is typically several degrees hotter than the surrounding area because concrete and asphalt absorb more heat than trees and soil. Gasoline-powered vehicles emit more carbon monoxide, ozone, and nitrogen oxides than any other type of source. These pollutants can cause headaches and dizziness among healthy people and trigger heart attacks and lung failure among those who suffer from heart and lung disease. A 1995 and 1996 study of heart attack patients in Boston found that the risk of heart attack is 48 percent higher when the atmosphere has elevated levels of particulate matter 2.5. Particulate matter 2.5 – known as PM2.5 – is fine air pollution produced by internal combustion in automobiles, power plants, and other industry.<sup>21</sup> Sulfur dioxide and suspended particulate matter are other common, harmful air pollutants.

Air quality in Boston's heartland has received attention from grassroots neighborhood groups, the EPA, the Boston Public Health Commission, and a range of non-profits. Local activists have pressured the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) to clean up its diesel buses and honor its "no idling" policy. In April of 2002, the MBTA switched all of its 980 diesel buses to a cleaner diesel fuel that will reduce airborne pollutants by an estimated 50 tons each year over the next four years. The MBTA is also incrementally retrofitting its buses with pollution-trapping diesel fuel filters that will reduce particulate emissions from 89 tons per year in 2001 to 12 tons per year by 2003. In 1996, the MBTA committed to replacing its oldest diesel buses with 358 Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) buses. Each CNG bus costs

\$100,000 more than a new, clean diesel bus, and CNG buses require new fueling and maintenance infrastructure as well. Debate about the relative costs of CNG buses and new diesel buses continues. Other small-scale improvements in emissions in recent years include the installation of new, cleaner technology at the Shattuck Hospital power plant.

In and of themselves, however, these efforts are unlikely to have a demonstrable impact on air quality in the Heart of the City. While the effect of MBTA bus emissions on air quality is higher in areas such as Roxbury than in Greater Boston as a whole, it is also true that MBTA buses contribute less than one-half of 1 percent of the total pollution in the metropolitan area.<sup>22</sup> Personal automobiles, which are far more diffuse and difficult to influence or regulate, emit the great majority of the pollution in the Heart of the City and throughout the region. Sport utility vehicles (SUVs), vans, and trucks, which emit up to three times as much pollution as cars, made up almost half of all new vehicles sold today nation-wide, and comprise a growing proportion of vehicles in the Heart of the City.<sup>23</sup> Residential areas in the immediate vicinity of major roads in the Heart of the City – such as Warren Street, Blue Hill Avenue, the Arborway, and Washington Street, and Seaver Street – are at particular risk.

**Soils and Erosion:** Urban soils are often contaminated, compacted, eroded, or covered over by asphalt. Some soils in the Heart of the City have been replaced by fill materials with little or no nutrients where plant life can grow. Soil problems have had repercussions ranging from lead poisoning among young children to millions of dollars of damage in flooding.

Land that is bare of vegetation, with open piles of soil or fill, and steep, unvegetated slopes, are all highly vulnerable to erosion. Wind and rain wash soil into local water bodies where it can pollute, clog, and silt up river, streams, and stormwater systems. Land that is bare puts topsoil and water bodies at particular risk. For example, construction work on the east campus of the Boston State Hospital site began in the fall of 2001, before decisions about how the land would be used had been finalized. In November 2002, the 792,000 square foot parcel remains bare, exposed, and highly vulnerable to erosion. The site lies in the immediate vicinity of Canterbury Brook.

Erosion and the resulting siltation of local waterways can require costly remediation efforts or else risk even costlier floods. The Muddy River, which is part of the Emerald Necklace just north of the Heart of the City and is the outlet for Jamaica Pond, has flooded three times since 1996. Due to erosion and silting, underground pipes no longer have the capacity to pass major flood flows. Brookline and Boston estimate that the \$92 million remediation project will be significantly less expensive than the costs associated with even one serious flood.

The problem of impermeable surfaces has been a focus of various watershed stewardship organizations within the Charles River Watershed. When large chunks of the cityscape are covered in soil and vegetation, the land can absorb and slowly process and clean rainwater. When land is covered by impermeable surfaces such as sidewalks, parking lots, and buildings, rainwater is unable to seep into the ground. Water runoff collects quick and flooding can be rapid and devastating. Rainwater flows quickly over pavement and other impermeable surfaces, picking up wastes along the way.

Soil lead levels on residential plots of land where wooden homes stand or have stood tend to be high. Research in Boston shows that the older the house, the more likely it is that the yard

will have high lead levels. In 2000, 3.6 percent of Boston children had elevated blood lead levels of 10 micrograms per deciliter or higher, a level that the Boston Public Health Commission considers unsafe. In comparison, 5.6 percent of children in South Dorchester had elevated blood lead levels; 5 percent of children in North Dorchester, 4.6 percent of children in Mattapan, and 4.1 percent of children in Roxbury had blood lead levels of 10 micrograms per deciliter or higher.<sup>24</sup> Although removing lead from soil can be prohibitively expensive for many homeowners, a relatively inexpensive test shows where the lead is particularly high. This testing helps families with small children to place play equipment and shrubbery such that contact with the contaminated soil is minimized.

**Trees:** Many of the most cherished street trees and woodlands in the Heart of the City are at risk due to old age, inadequate management, and tree diseases. With the possible exception of extraordinarily hardy tree species such as *Ailanthus altissima* – “the tree of heaven” – street trees struggle to survive in the harsh urban environments along traffic corridors, to small tree pits, compacted soil, and poor drainage. Without careful management, most street trees will decline and eventually die. In the Heart of the City, even people who appreciate the many environmental and aesthetic values of street trees often see them as poor investments. While the trees tend to survive the contractor’s one-year guarantee, they often die quickly thereafter and fail to realize their potential benefits.<sup>25</sup>

Success with street trees requires that they be selected from appropriate species, planted in deep, well-drained soil, protected from soil compaction, and well maintained. Frederick Law Olmsted often planted street trees in pits that were two to three times larger than the tree pits used today.

In 1991, ecologists estimated that tree density in the woodlands of Franklin Park was three to five times as high as in a healthy forest and recommended the removal of 2,400 trees from the park. In recent years, a small insect has wreaked havoc on young hemlock twigs and



Canterbury Brook along American Legion Highway.

threatens to annihilate hemlock trees throughout the Heart of the City, just as Dutch Elm disease wiped out cherished elms in the 1900s. Trees planted by Olmsted and others before the turn of the century are now approaching the end of their natural life cycle and threaten to die simultaneously without younger age classes of trees to replace them.

Outside of the Arnold Arboretum and the Forest Hills Cemetery, both of which employ trained arborists and follow a detailed plan for woodland management, trees in the Heart of the City face challenges that are going largely unmet. Trees planted before the turn of the century are particularly vulnerable to old age and death. Oak trees along the Arborway have

already succumbed to old age. Oncoming traffic has struck and injured virtually every towering oak along the Jamaica way and the Arborway. Several have already died, leaving gaping holes in the streetscape. Old and dying trees in the woodlands of Franklin Park pose potential hazards to park users and obscure the rocky-top views Frederick Law Olmsted intended to extend for miles.

**Water:** When people spill pollutants onto Heart of the City streets, the toxins make a journey from the street to storm drains to local brooks to the culverted Stony Brook, to the Charles River, and out into Boston Harbor. The oil, antifreeze, salt, sand, gasoline, and pet waste on our streets directly harms fish and other aquatic life and thwarts earnest efforts to make the Charles River and the Bay fishable and swimmable.

In 1995, the Charles River Watershed received a “D” rating on an A to F scale. Since that time, hundreds of agencies and organizations have invested effort and extraordinary resources into improving the quality of the watershed. Their overarching goal has been to make the river and its many tributaries safe for fishing, swimming, and wildlife. As a result, the quality of the Charles River has improved dramatically since 1995 – moving to a “B” rating by 1999. Since 1999, however, the rating has remained constant at a “B.” The Charles River Watershed Association attributes this plateau in water quality to contaminated runoff – the pollutants on our streets and parking lots that wash into storm drains.

The frontier for improving water quality is therefore no longer industries along the shores of the Charles, but rather on the streets of urban and suburban neighborhoods in the larger watershed. When Dorchester residents change their oil near storm drains, when Roslindale businesses dump illegal materials into Bussey Brook or pave a parking lot along the banks of a river, they collectively, measurably contribute to pollution of the Charles River and the Harbor as well as their own local water bodies. Water quality in the Charles River depends on the awareness and decisions of hundreds of thousands of individuals.

Today, underground water supplies and local brooks are contaminated. The Canterbury Brook – sometimes referred to as Old Brook – flows along American Legion Highway and through the new Boston Nature Center and Nature Sanctuary. The brook has high levels of lead, and the state agency Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) reports elevated polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) levels in the brook as well. In some sections, bottles, cans, and other trash completely cover the surface of the murky water. Children cannot safely fish, swim in, and explore polluted, trash-strewn brooks and streams such as the Canterbury Brook. Few people know the name of the brook. And polluted water in local streams does not simply “go away,” but impacts the entire watershed of which it is a part.

**Dumping:** Uncared for areas such as Canterbury Brook attract illegal dumping. One such dumping area lies along a two-way access road that connects Morton Street and American Legion Highway. Drivers pull over, get out of their cars and trucks, and dump their shopping carts, kitchen appliances, car seats, barrels, rusty cans, cardboard boxes, tires, car parts, and anything else they do not want or find costly to dispose of legally. A tributary of the Canterbury Brook flows beside the dumping ground at the bottom of the steep southern slope, carrying with it any hazardous materials that may wash down from the dump site above.

Trash on the banks of a river or in a vacant lot deepens the impression that an area is dangerous and uncared for, attracts crime, and makes people feel unsafe. Even normally law-

abiding people sometimes feel justified in plundering or dumping in an area that looks as though no one cares about it.

Throughout the Heart of the City, vacant lots and buildings are used as dumping grounds. Three examples are the retirement facility on Brookley Road in Jamaica Plain, vacant lots north of Franklin Field in Dorchester, and vacant lots west of Archdale Village housing in Roslindale. Other dumping sites include the Austin Street alley off American Legion Highway, Canterbury Street southeast of Forest Hills Cemetery, the city compost facility on American Legion Highway, the perimeter of the Boston State Hospital property, the access road connecting American Legion Highway and Morton Street, the riparian zone of the Canterbury Brook, and Paine Street along the western edge of Mount Hope Cemetery. Many of these sites are in close proximity to the former Boston State Hospital.

Strategies to counteract illegal dumping have included investment in protective fencing, murals on boarded-up windows of abandoned homes, police signage, and increased vigilance from security and police forces. The Massachusetts Audubon Society attests to the challenges of reclaiming a place for the public good once illegal dumpers have used it for an extended period of time. Julie Brandlen, director of the Boston Nature Center, says some illegal dumpers in the vicinity of the former Boston State Hospital consider it their right to dump and challenge anyone who denies them this entitlement. Brandlen and others are cultivating a sense of pride and ownership in the land that will, they hope, turn the tide of public perception of the Boston State Hospital and surrounding areas.



Grove Hall Mecca Mall in Roxbury built on a former brownfields site.

**Brownfields:** According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, exposure to hazardous wastes (defined as toxic, corrosive, ignitable, or reactive materials) can result in birth defects, respiratory problems, infertility, childhood leukemia, and heart disease.<sup>26</sup> Thus the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) requires responsible parties to address hazardous soil and water contamination before redevelopment takes place.

Before a contaminated brownfield site can be redeveloped, its polluted water and soil must be excavated, cleaned, or contained – a process that can be expensive and difficult to accurately appraise in advance. Brownfields represent serious risks to potential developers who may have the option of building on pristine sites with no hidden costs. In 1999, 600 brownfields remained in Heart of the City neighborhoods – 73 in Jamaica Plain, 26 in Mattapan, 280 in Dorchester, 56 in Roslindale, and 195 in Roxbury.<sup>27</sup>

Some brownfield sites in the Heart of the City have been successfully redeveloped. The City of Boston, communities in Roxbury and Dorchester, developers, and remediation experts created the Grove Hall Mecca Mall in a blighted, long abandoned, contaminated site with 11 leaky, underground gasoline tanks. Plans are underway to redevelop contaminated sites such as the Arborway Yard in Jamaica Plain, the Boston State Hospital site in Mattapan, and a

former car junk shop near the corner of Columbus Avenue and Washington Street in Egleston Square.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), funding for brownfield redevelopment is available from state agencies and federal programs and agencies ranging from the Empowerment Zone /Enterprise Community program to the National Park Service to the Department of Transportation's Livable Communities program. The redevelopment of a brownfield typically requires a complex mix of public and private funding, tax incentives, and tax increment financing from local government.<sup>28</sup>

In 1998, residents and business owners formed a task force to pursue the redevelopment of a high profile brownfield in Roslindale Village. The brownfield – a three story substation built in 1911 – has been vacant for more than 30 years. The task force sought state funding for redevelopment and hired a consultant to complete a feasibility study for redevelopment. The MBTA, which owns the property, chose the highest bidder on the property, despite the fact that the bidder had no plan for the redevelopment of the property, had not visited the building, and had not read the feasibility study.<sup>29</sup> A second contaminated substation is located in Egleston Square on Washington Street in Roxbury. Urban Edge Community Development Corporation and residents have may also seek creative financing for the redevelopment of this building, which is also owned by the MBTA.

Brownfields and other environmental “hotspots” are concentrated in cities and extractive industrial areas such as mines. Polluted rivers and groundwater, smog-choked air, lead-laden soils, and blighted dumping grounds are detrimental to human health and quality of life in urban neighborhoods. In the Heart of the City, poor environmental quality has translated into higher rates of respiratory disease, asthma, and dangerously high blood lead levels. Public health problems, as well as contaminated groundwater, eroded topsoil, and hazardous waste, also negatively impact economic development.



### 3

## INFRASTRUCTURE

A city is not only built on natural assets, but takes form with a complex physical infrastructure — streets and highways, sewers and utility lines, information systems, and more. The quality of a community’s infrastructure depends on two things. First, the infrastructure’s physical qualities affects how efficiently it allows people to travel, carry materials, communicate, and otherwise move about and use the city.

Second, the design affects how well people and places are connected throughout the city. A well-designed street system, for example, accommodates both drivers and pedestrians seeking to get to work, shop, participate in recreational and community activities, and more. Architects and planners use the word “legibility” to describe the coherence and connections of roadways, sidewalks, and railways. In a highly legible urban area, people find their way around easily – whether on foot, on a bike, on public transportation, or in a private vehicle. In a legible area, the transportation system overlaps in a sensible way with where people live and shop and go to school. Visitors seldom become truly lost. Residents find it easy to interact with neighbors, buy a cup of coffee on the way to work, or pick up a book at the library. They are lured beyond familiar territory to explore new places.

Several clear patterns help make Heart of the City neighborhoods legible places to live and work. Jamaica Pond is visible and accessible from the most heavily traveled road in the area and only few blocks from the area’s major commercial area. The pond serves as a central gathering point and defining feature of the neighborhood, drawing people from a wide radius. Major transportation corridors such as the Orange Line, Columbus Avenue, and Blue Hill Avenue/ Warren Street orient people northward toward downtown Boston, while Columbia Road heads east to the Boston Harbor and islands. The Emerald Necklace strings parks together with walking and biking trails. Continuous paths connect one neighborhood to the next and draw people out beyond familiar territory, facilitating exploration. Meanwhile, dense centers of commercial activity lie within walking distance of residential communities. Egleston Square, Grove Hall, Roslindale Village, and Centre Street are becoming increasingly legible, inviting places for people to gather, eat, and shop.

Yet some of the physical systems in the neighborhoods are fragmented and disconnected. Transit centers are surrounded by vacant land and low density housing. Poor signage fails to engage and inform visitors and residents alike of the historic, natural, and educational resources in the area. Some of the area’s greatest treasures are isolated and underappreciated. Transportation systems do not provide equally good service to all communities, and an ever-increasing number of vehicles on the roads has overextended the capacity of roadways.

## INTEGRATING PHYSICAL SYSTEMS

Transportation systems facilitate many types of movement. Streets, paths, rail, and bus routes intersect at “multi-modal” transportation centers and overlap with commercial centers and densely populated neighborhoods.

Perhaps more than any other part of the Heart of the City, Forest Hills has the potential to integrate the transportation, natural, residential, and commercial activities. At Forest Hills, bus riders travel to and from the station on one of more than a dozen bus routes. Drivers and



Forest Hills Station from above.

bikers come and go from Forest Hills on one of four major city streets. Pedestrians reach the station via one of three special pedestrian pathways. The station offers rapid rail access to downtown Boston, a commuter rail, and perhaps in future years a light rail trolley line. A large “Park and Pay” lot lies adjacent to the station, and temporary parking is available at the Arborway Yard, making it possible for people to use public transportation without completely giving up the convenience their cars. The Forest Hills Station exemplifies a multi-modal transportation center. It is the transportation hub of the Heart of the City. Forest Hills also lies in close proximity to

four major open spaces and two emerging commercial districts. It connects to the Arnold Arboretum via a new pedestrian trail through the Bussey Brook Meadow – a wetland with a wide diversity of plants and animals. It is part of the Emerald Necklace, between the Arnold Arboretum and Franklin Park. And the Southwest Corridor Park originates at Forest Hills. Shops and restaurants along Hyde Park Avenue and South Street, as well as within the station itself, are beginning to create a sense of liveliness on the streets.

Forest Hills has all of the component pieces to become the premier mixed-use, transit-oriented center in the city. Its connections to buses, rail, open space, commercial spaces, and vibrant neighborhoods are unparalleled. And as architects, planners, and residents have recognized, Forest Hills has great potential to absorb infill housing.

But although Forest Hills Station is in many ways exemplary, certain physical connections remain weak or non-existent. A pedestrian and bike path leading from the station to Franklin Park is incomplete and underutilized. The pathway changes from a green, tree-lined corridor to broken, narrow sidewalk that dumps onto a faded crosswalk. There is no clear pedestrian entrance to the Franklin Park. Meanwhile, Washington Street makes a bizarre, disorienting zig-zag at Forest Hills Station, breaking up the northern and southern sections of this major road and luring all but the most vigilant southbound drivers onto Hyde Park Avenue.

Like other Orange Line transit stations, Forest Hills is surrounded by industry and parking lots, including the Arborway Yard, and low-density development to the east and west. Yet a 2000 planning exercise by the Boston Society of Architects found that 7,000 residential units could be built in the Forest Hills commercial district, providing the density needed for a lively commercial district in an area where open space is plentiful and personal vehicles all but unnecessary. Although the study group did not recommend this level of density, it did suggest building residential apartment buildings between four and seven stories, with stores at the base.<sup>30</sup>

The Green Street and Stony Brook Orange Line Stations both connect to rare east-west through streets in Jamaica Plain and are connected to the paths, gardens, playgrounds, and courts of the Southwest Corridor Park. At the same time, both stations lie in close proximity to paved, underutilized lots and are disconnected from nearby commercial districts and high density housing. Residents around Stony Brook Station in particular have resisted the mixing of residential and commercial land uses.

In contrast, transportation networks and commercial and residential areas are highly integrated along Centre and South Streets. In 2003, Centre and South Streets are served by Bus No. 39, the most traveled bus route in the area, with 17,400 riders daily. Heavy usage of this corridor by cars and buses makes Centre and South Streets one of the most vital areas for

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## FOREST HILLS

Forest Hills means different things to different people. For many, Forest Hills is a regional transit station - a crossroads of four major streets, a hub for buses, a commuter rail stop, and the terminus of the Orange Line and perhaps some day the Green Line trolley. For others, Forest Hills is an egregious broken piece of what famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted designed to be Boston's continuous park system. For some, Forest Hills is synonymous with a bitterly contested planning process for the Arborway Yard - an 18-acre expanse of vacant land adjacent to the station along Washington Street. For still others, Forest Hills is an ill-defined residential neighborhood with a burgeoning commercial district; an annoying hiccup in their daily commute from the southern suburbs into the city; a place to hang out after school; a place to park; a blighted industrial area; and a convenient new gateway to the Arnold Arboretum.

Forest Hills is all of these things. Perhaps more than any other part of the Heart of the City, Forest Hills provides a crossroads where people of all ages, income levels, and ethnicities pass through on a daily basis. Forest Hills deserves careful, integrated planning that honors and improves upon its various rich and enduring legacies.

In earlier days, the multiple legacies of Forest Hills were complementary rather than competitive and incompatible. Forest Hills has been a transportation hub since 1806, when it became a way station and tollgate for carts and wagons traveling on the private Norfolk and Briston Turnpike. The tollgate received its name from the Forest Hills Cemetery, which was popular from the time it opened in 1848.

The legacy of Forest Hills as part of the Emerald Necklace park system began in the late 1800s. When Franklin Park and the Arnold Arboretum opened, these vast public spaces became the needed justification for pushing rail service to the edge of residential development. On Sundays, thousands of Bostonians journeyed south to the end of the line to cavort in the extraordinary pleasure grounds accessible to them from Forest Hills. At that time, the parks would never have been able to realize their potential as regional resources without the Station. The Station would not have existed but for the parks.

Today, these legacies are perceived as competing, but opportunities exist for the various components of Forest Hills to again become greater than the sum of its parts.

economic activity in the city's neighborhoods. Relative to other commercial streets such as Blue Hill Avenue and Washington Street, Centre Street is safe and welcoming to pedestrians. In addition, the MBTA plans to bring the light rail Arborway Green Line trolley back to Centre and South Streets, potentially enhancing public access. As they plan for the return of the green line, residents, business owners, and the MBTA struggle to make tough trade-offs between environmental quality, traffic flow, parking, safety, and cost.

Communities east of Franklin Park rely on public transportation as much or more as communities to the west. But bus routes east of Franklin Park are poorly integrated into the system of streets and neighborhoods. Tree-lined walking and biking paths do not connect buses to residential areas and commercial centers as they do along the Southwest Corridor Park. No parking lots offer dedicated parking to bus riders. Far more often than not, bus riders wait for their bus standing on the edge of a street, braving the elements. System-wide, only 400

of the MBTA's 8,500 bus stops provide shelter. With the exception of Blue Hill Avenue, bus shelters are rare in the Heart of the City.

A rail line in fact runs through the communities east of Franklin Park. The Fairmount Commuter Rail runs through the most transit dependent section of the Heart of the City, but it makes only one stop there – on an isolated section of Morton Street in Mattapan. A weather-beaten black-and-white "T" sign on an overpass and a small, illegible sign behind a chain link fence are the only indications that the station exists. The waiting area is unprotected from the elements and adjacent to a sprawling vacant lot. Michael Mulhern, the general manager of the MBTA, said in September of 2002 that the MBTA plans to make the Morton



National Center for Afro-American Artists.

Street station more visible, comfortable, and attractive, to add three new commuter rail stations in Dorchester and Roxbury, and to increase the frequency of service on the Fairmount Commuter Rail. Whether or not a single rail line can simultaneously address the needs of the suburban commuter and the more mobile city resident remains to be seen.

Other transportation infrastructure is in the wrong place – isolated from the centers of activity it is intended to facilitate. Only about a quarter of a sprawling Metropolitan District Commission parking lot near the intersection of Morton Street and American Legion Highway is regularly used. The lot is disconnected from any local institutions, business centers, transit stations, or walking paths. The rectangular shelter designed for a ticket collector at the entrance to the lot lies dilapidated and covered in graffiti. Likewise, a parking lot off of Talbot Avenue just north of Franklin Field is vacant except for rare occasions when the Russell Auditorium is filled.

**The concept of “charm bracelets”:** Cultural, educational, historic, and recreational resources are scattered throughout the neighborhood – the Afro-American artists museum, the Loring-Greenough estate, the Jamaica Pond boathouse, the Walter Street historic burying ground, Mother Caroline Academy, Doyle’s Café, the Boston School of Modern Languages, the Brewery Small Business Center, Elm Hill Park, and the Blue Hill Boys and Girls Club to name a few. These distinctive places reflect the history and character of the neighborhoods. Some are isolated dots on the map. Others are linked to one another and form “charm bracelets” with visible connections between each distinct treasure.

As part of the Boston 400 planning process, the Boston Redevelopment Authority developed the concept of “charm bracelets” to connect the disparate resources in communities across the city. Borrowing from the larger vision of the Emerald Necklace, the idea of the charm bracelet is to create strong visual and physical connections between civic spaces – such as parks and playing fields, gardens, shopping districts, schools, transit stations, community centers, health centers, churches – so that those spaces reinforce each other and create a cohesive identity for the community. Building on the work of the Boston main Streets program, which creates a strong “look and feel” for neighborhood commercial districts, charm bracelets can foster a greater sense of community and connectedness.

The desirability of charm bracelets can be found near some of the finest public spaces in the Heart of the City. The Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists (NCAAA), is housed in a High Victorian Gothic style mansion called Abbotsford, was built at the top of a grassy hill in 1872 out of Roxbury Puddingstone in the style of a medieval castle mansion. The museum is a visually stunning public resource surrounded by schools. Yet it is also disconnected from major pedestrian and vehicular thoroughfares, geographically isolated, and less well utilized than other Boston museums. Like many community facilities in the Heart of the City, the NCAAA remains isolated and underutilized.

If not designed and built well, infrastructure can isolate people and places. The Fairmount Commuter Rail and the Needham Branch Commuter Rail, on the other hand, are walls between the people on either side. Blue Hill Avenue, Morton Street, and American Legion Highway also divide rather than unite communities. Each of these roads is difficult and dangerous to cross on foot (Blue Hill Avenue and American Legion Highway were among the top locations for automobile accidents in the Metropolitan Planning Organization between 1996 and 1998).<sup>31</sup> The streets do not have clear pedestrian zones. Residents have described them as “moats” and “barriers.” Even Franklin Park – designed to be common ground where all people in the city can come together – has functioned, at times, as a dividing line or buffer between ethnic groups and socio-economic groups.

Many areas of the Heart of the City show how communities facilities can be brought together. For example, public spaces are clustered at Monument Square in Jamaica Plain. Historical resources such as the Soldiers’ Monument, the First Church of Jamaica Plain, the historic Loring-Greenough house, and the Footlight Club – the oldest community theater in the nation – come together with a public library and community center. At Roslindale Village, churches, businesses, medical resources, and a library surround a public square.

Similar clustering might also be possible at the intersection of Talbot Avenue and Blue Hill Avenue, where the George Robert White Youth Development Center, Franklin Field, the Sportsman Tennis Center, and dense low-income housing developments have already begun to create an exciting sense of activity. Today, residents complain that businesses within a few blocks of Franklin Field are unable to meet their basic needs and must travel by bus to find the most basic supplies. New restaurants, shops, and grocers, and public facilities such as a library or school could fill the vacant and paved land and buildings within a block of the Talbot and Blue Hill intersection. Safer pedestrian crossings and new benches could help transform the street into a vibrant, walkable area similar to the Monument Square and Roslindale Village.

Some historic connections between public resources have been lost or forgotten. The original pedestrian link between Franklin Park and the Forest Hills Cemetery – a stone staircase leading from Cemetery Road to Circuit Drive – is overgrown, trashy, and bounded by crumbling stonework. At certain times of the year the stairway is completely hidden by dense vegetation. The corridor of cliffs, fields and flowers that once connected Franklin Field and Franklin Park along Angell Street is all but forgotten.



Coordinated bus shelters on Blue Hill Avenue in Roxbury.

**Streets:** Commuters' and residents' demands for fast, efficient roadways often come to odds with residents' demands for safe streets and pleasant parkways.

In recent years, neighborhood associations near heavily traveled roads such as Seaver Street and the Arborway have lobbied for measures to “calm” traffic in their neighborhoods. The groups wish to reinforce the residential character of the streets, restoring the century-old vision of Frederick Law Olmsted for pleasure parkways, particularly on Circuit Drive and the Arborway. But residents are greatly outnumbered by employers, workers, and visitors who depend on arterial roads to reach their destinations as quickly as possible.

Experiences in Cambridge and other towns in Greater Boston have shown that when one community passes measures to redirect traffic outside its boundaries, other communities bear the burden of diverted traffic. Boston residents and southern suburbanites depend on the Jamaicaway and the Arborway to get to the Longwood Medical Center and other major centers of employment. Suburbanites claim their right to get to work, while residents resist the burden of an ever-growing army of private vehicles racing through their neighborhood.

No single transportation mode operates independently of the others. All are interdependent and interconnected. A change in one part of the system affects all parts of the system. A reduction in funding for police and maintenance along the Southwest Corridor Park, for example, may ultimately translate into greater pressure on the Jamaicaway and Seaver Street on weekday mornings as would-be transit riders choose to take their cars. Traffic calming measures on a Roxbury street might mean greater safety at pedestrian crossings but

could result in increased pressure on residential “short cut” side roads. Ideally, each transportation mode responds to and accommodates the others. (*For information on daily travel on bus lines in the Heart of the City, see Appendix 3: Travel on Major Roadways in the Heart of the City.*)

**Buses:** The importance of buses to public transportation in Boston generally, and in the Heart of the City in particular, can hardly be overstated. In Boston in 2001, 32 percent of rides taken on all MBTA vehicles were on buses. More people boarded the top fifteen MBTA bus routes than boarded the entire commuter rail system. Several of the most popular bus routes are concentrated in Roxbury, and the most popular bus route in the city runs on Centre and South Streets in Jamaica Plain.

Buses are often derided as “second-class” transportation. But with well-designed busways, cleared of traffic, buses can provide 10 times as much transportation for the dollar than fixed-rail transit — particularly in communities without the public rights of way. At 75 cents per ride for an adult and 35 cents for a child, fares are affordable to residents. It is possible that if buses were safe, efficient, connected to other types of transportation, unhindered by city traffic, comfortable to wait for, and harmless to the environment and public health, then they too might be considered first-class transportation.

The City of Boston made some progress toward the goal of making buses first class transportation when it authorized the construction of new street furniture along major thoroughfares, including Blue Hill Avenue, Talbot Avenue, and other scattered locations. The handsome, clear plastic shelters are emblazoned with the name of the street and completely paid for by the ample advertising space on the shelters. These improvements continue. But without multi-modal connections at major bus stops, even new bus shelters and compressed natural gas buses will fail to fully address existing inequities.

**Walking and biking paths:** Certain elements of a transportation system deserve special attention, including the extent to which an area is safe and enjoyable for pedestrians and cyclists. Walkable, bikeable neighborhoods get people out of their cars and onto the street.

Two paved walking and biking paths weave through parkland in Jamaica Plain – the Southwest Corridor Park path and the semi-continuous Emerald Necklace greenway. Both pathways continue for several miles, surrounded by trees and grass, for the most part protected from street traffic. One connects to downtown Boston and transit stations. The other connects expansive parkland and runs through the Longwood Medical Area to the Back Bay Fens.



New signage for the Boston Nature Center on Morton St.

The Southwest Corridor Park runs through the Heart of the City with only minor breaks in continuity, while the Emerald Necklace pathway is interrupted in at least three places. Along the Arborway between Jamaica Pond and the Arnold Arboretum, pedestrians face an intimidating scene – a steady stream of cars, many lanes to cross, and often no lit crosswalk to guide the way. At the western end of Casey Overpass, which arches over Forest Hills Station, the sidewalk abruptly comes to an end, leaving walkers and bikers a choice of darting across the street or picking their way along the edge of the road as cars whiz by. Finally, bikers and pedestrians face a difficult, dangerous set of street crossings in the vicinity of Forest Hills Station.

While Roslindale Village, Centre and South Streets, and part of Egleston Square receive relatively slow moving traffic and are generally not intimidating for pedestrians and bikers, other commercial areas are poorly designed for people outside of their cars. There are no walking or biking paths in the neighborhoods east and northeast of Franklin Park. Few people bike in and around the neighborhoods, and those who do feel vulnerable to traffic. In general, the communities north and south of Franklin Field, as well as central Jamaica Plain between the Southwest Corridor and Centre Street, are a maze of narrow one-way streets that can be disorienting to walkers, bikers, and drivers alike.

**Signage:** Good maps and signage are critical tools of navigation for residents and visitors alike. They are particularly important at transit stations, major commercial districts, parking areas, and entrances to public spaces. Good maps quickly give the user a sense of where she is, where she can go, and what she might want to do while she's there.

Inadequate signage can lead not only to disorientation, but also to lost economic opportunity. While commercial districts at Egleston Square, Grove Hall, and Roslindale Village lie on major commuter arteries, Centre/ South Street is located on a congested city street. Commuters who zoom down the Arborway and suburbanites who visit the Arnold Arboretum are often unaware of the restaurants and shops on Centre Street just a few blocks away. Existing signage directs drivers to Dedham and other southern suburbs, but not into the main commercial district of Jamaica Plain just around the corner.

Poor signage chokes off access to important public spaces. One lone sign hangs on Seaver Street for the Museum of the National Center of Afro-American Artists. And that sign is virtually impossible to read from the street. Forest Hills Station and Green Street Station do not direct people to a new pedestrian connector to the Arnold Arboretum or to the most direct route to Franklin Park. Visitors to the Arnold Arboretum may be unaware of the small interactive museum just inside the doors of the institution's main administrative building. Three major entrances to Franklin Park are unsigned: at the end of Glen Road, the entrance to White Stadium, and along Morton Street. Signage is almost non-existent at the 90-acre Allandale Woods in Jamaica Plain/ West Roxbury, which the city has described as the most critically important urban wild in the city. Many residents are unaware the urban wild exists.

In some cases, inaccurate and incomplete signage also proves problematic. Signage on Morton Street in front of an MDC parking area near American Legion Highway advertises a non-existent zoo shuttle. Zoo visitors park here and begin the futile wait for a shuttle bus. No

sign directs them along the edge of the highway into Franklin Park. Likewise, signage for Franklin Park and the Franklin Park Zoo can be found up and down Blue Hill Avenue Corridor, but there is no clear indication of where to turn to access the main entrance of the park. Old, illegible, unattractive signage on streets outside the Heart of the City referring to places within also send a negative message about the neighborhoods within.

Maps of the Orange Line and the Southwest Corridor Park, on the other hand, orient users to the locations of transit stations and the location of key cross-streets, as well as possible activities in the park itself. Each of the four city-designated Main Streets districts displays signs, banners, and ornamental streetlights. These features tell people they are entering a place with special significance to the community. The Boston Nature Center and the Forest Hills Cemetery made improvements to their public signage in 2002.

**Sewers:** While modern sewer systems separate rainwater and sewage, older systems such as those in Roxbury, Roslindale, and Dorchester handle both together. Most of the time, the pipes are able to deliver both types of water to treatment plants. But during periods of heavy rain, the sewers release the wastewater from the pipes into open bodies of water, combining sewage and rain water. During period of very heavy rain the sewers can overflow completely, flooding streets and basements and causing millions of dollars in damage.

In both 1996 and 1998, the outdated high level sewer system that runs from Framingham to Deer Island exploded in Roslindale. Millions of gallons of sewage poured into the streets and homes of the neighborhood, filling basements with up to eight feet of waste and damaging hundreds of businesses and homes. The flooding primarily affected low-income minority families in the Archdale area of Roslindale.<sup>32</sup>

## **UNDERSTANDING THE HEARTLAND'S INFRASTRUCTURE**

No street, building, transit line, bus stop, or bike lane exists in isolation. Each contributes to or detracts from the whole. Plans for the area should facilitate integration and connectivity whenever possible. Improved signage, more legible connections between community resources, a richer street and residential life around the Forest Hills T, and greater accessibility to green space resources would immeasurably enhance existing networks in the Heart of the City at minimal cost.



## 4

### **BUILDINGS**

People live, work, shop, and learn in buildings. Heart of the City buildings include libraries, community centers, transit stations, and public squares that belong to everybody; office buildings, shops, and industrial warehouses owned by individuals and corporations; and houses and apartments people rent and own with friends and family. Well-designed and sited public buildings encourage and enrich community life, creating the right kind of spaces for a basketball game between ten-year-old girls, a heated debate among classmates, story time in a quiet corner of the library, or a local art exhibit. Shops, office space, and industry can bring convenience, economic vitality, and a vibrant sense of activity to an urban neighborhood. A mix of apartments, condominiums, single, and multi-family house provides room for people of diverse backgrounds and income brackets to live in the same communities. Meanwhile, abandoned buildings and uncared for vacant land can detract from the liveliness, value, and safety of surrounding homes and businesses.

People instinctively know what makes the difference between buildings that are alive with activity and ones that languish unused and unnoticed. Parents appreciate the entrance of the Blue Hill Boys and Girls Club on Talbot Avenue, where they can drop their children off right in front of the entrance and watch them walk up the steps and go through the door. Shoppers and library visitors prefer buildings with clear, inviting, well-lit entryways, outdoor courtyards, landscaping, and good signage.

Residents are increasingly savvy regarding construction issues that relate to environmental quality and energy efficiency. Not only are they able to articulate what makes a good and environmentally responsible public space, they are also willing to devote the time and energy necessary to get the design right. Thus they have the capacity to develop exceptional buildings.

Ten accomplished non-profit community development corporations (CDCs) work in the Heart of the City. The CDCs are rooted in the local communities and have become experts in navigating public processes and piecing together funding sources for the creative rehabilitation and building of housing and commercial spaces. Other developers in the Boston area specialize in the rehabilitation and redevelopment of historic homes and brownfields.

Despite the availability of land, rich community capacity, and exceptional local development expertise, residents, developers, and public officials are often enmeshed in negotiations and conflict regarding the mix of buildings that belong in each neighborhood. Streets and lots in the Heart of the City become battlegrounds for those who argue passionately for one type of building or land use over another.

Residents often disagree about the need for human density as opposed to open space, commercial buildings as opposed to residential or industrial land uses, affordable housing as opposed to market-rate dwellings, and public facilities as opposed to commercial

development. Even without local political skirmishes, tax-title and environmental laws, zoning and building codes, and permitting processes all encumber the building process. And as the battles rage on, costs increase. Communities face tough trade-offs between public processes and efficiency, cost and quality. Few buildings are built, some planning processes have spanned years and even decades, despite the availability of land and spiraling costs that are putting homes out of reach for an increasing number of current residents.

## **PUBLIC BUILDINGS**

Public buildings are part of our everyday lives. They belong to everybody. They are places where people of all ages, ethnicities, and incomes can interact. Yet public facilities including schools, libraries, and community centers are not equally available to people throughout the Heart of the City. And while some public buildings are designed to welcome visitors and make their experience pleasant, others are underutilized and neglected.

**Schools, Community Centers, and Libraries:** More than other city neighborhoods, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury have a large and growing demand for schools and community centers. In some census tracts to the west of Franklin Park, as few as 13 percent of residents are under the age of 18. But in most census tracts east and southeast of Franklin Park, more than 30 percent of residents are under 18 years old. In these census tracts, the percentage of young people grew between 2 percent and 5 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 2000, 48 percent of all of Bostonians under age 17 lived in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan. (For census information, see Appendix 5.)

Dorchester and Roxbury alone account for almost half of the students at Boston Public Schools. State and local government face an increasingly significant challenge: to prepare the facilities these children will need to flourish.

In 2003, the distribution of community centers, schools, and libraries in the Heart of the City is inequitable. Three community centers operate in central Jamaica Plain, and three operate in Roslindale between Forest Hills and Roslindale Village, where there are relatively few children. Yet a gap in community centers stretches from Egleston Square to Franklin Field, where the percentage of youth is far greater. There is no library along the Blue Hill Avenue Corridor between Grove Hall and Mattapan Square – a stretch of almost two and a half miles. Grove Hall and northern Mattapan have only one and two schools each, compared to central Jamaica Plain and the Archdale/ Roslindale Village area, which have four schools each. In 2003, there are no charter schools in the Heart of the City around Franklin Park and the Arnold Arboretum. Over the past decade, state has identified some school facilities in the area – most notably the Jeremiah Burke High School – as particularly lacking. No new school has opened in the area in decades. (*For information on schools, libraries and community centers in the Heart of the City, see Appendix 6.*)

This imbalance in youth facilities dates back to the period between 1960 and 1980, when the total population of the neighborhoods was in decline and many of the facilities that existed for children in the Heart of the City were demolished or converted into housing – particularly

east of Franklin Park but also in Roslindale and Jamaica Plain. Since that time, as the number of children has rebounded, the City of Boston has worked to address the increasingly urgent demands of this growing demographic. Mayor Thomas Menino pledged to build five new schools within walking distance of children in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury by 1999. By 2002, the City was constructing two new middle schools in the area: one on Columbia Road near the Dorchester-Roxbury border, and another near Mattapan Square on the outskirts of the Heart of the City. The state's fiscal crisis — which has resulted in a freeze in state funding of local school construction for two years or more — has slowed the city's plans for new school-building initiatives.

Yet ground is also being lost. In the spring of 2003, in response to emergency state and city budget cuts, several Boston Public Schools were ordered to close at the end of the 2003 school year, including the William Endicott and Margaret Fuller elementary schools in Dorchester and Jamaica Plain.

**Grove Hall** - The Grove Hall area more children relative to other areas, and in 2002 had the highest youth crime rate in the city according to area police. Yet facilities for youth are lacking in the neighborhood, which has only one school, no community center, and a poorly utilized library.

Jeremiah Burke High School on Washington Street in Grove Hall has long been a source of concern among parents and other residents. Disaccredited between 1995 and 1998, in 2003 the Jeremiah Burke High School is bordered in part by trash filled vacant lots, underutilized buildings, a Burger King, and a poorly maintained, privately owned urban wild. There are no trees on the street. After school, young people play basketball on a derelict cement half court outside the school. In the census tract immediately adjacent to the Burke, 61 percent of residents are under the age of 18 – by far the highest percentage of any census tract in the Heart of the City. Property owners, parents, students, teachers, and city administrators recognize the potential for Burke High to continue its transformation from a disaccredited school to a beautiful, high-quality institution of learning that contributes to the neighborhood's revitalization.

An additional facility built on the vacant lots that surround the school could meet the needs of students and serve as a community center for the larger community.

**Central Jamaica Plain** - The schools, libraries, and community centers in Central Jamaica Plain provide excellent, well-connected resources to local youth. Curtis Hall Community Center on South Street in Jamaica Plain is inviting from the street and well integrated into the surrounding community. Children walk safely from the community center to the library next door. Both buildings are well signed and are situated in front of a blinking yellow light that slows traffic in the vicinity of multiple crosswalks.

Less than three blocks away, the Agassiz Elementary School and Community Center is surrounded by protected playing fields, a tot lot, and a mural. Although Agassiz lacks the inviting and design of Curtis Hall, shade trees, grass, and bushes create an attractive buffer between the street and the building. The youth facilities in central Jamaica Plain can be considered a model for public facilities elsewhere in the Heart of the City.

**Franklin Field** - The George White Youth Development Center on Talbot Avenue in Dorchester is also visible and inviting from the street. Stairs to the Boys and Girls Club lead directly from the street, through the main doors, to a desk staffed with administrators who immediately make children and their parents feel welcome. The center provides the children with a range of activities – from swimming to arts and crafts to computer resources – and has a long waiting list of young members. Trees, grass, and attractive stone walls line the edge of the building. The youth center cannot meet the needs of the youth in the area, and with the William Endicott Elementary School closing, the area has precious few schools and no library.

**Egleston Square** - The modest YMCA and alternative high school at Egleston Square on Washington Street have undergone incremental improvements since they opened in 1991 and 1992. Most recently, local organizations have worked together to transform a vacant building behind the school and the YMCA into a shared recreational space for both organizations and to create the Egleston Square Peace Garden in a vacant lot across the street. The Rafael Hernandez School and Ellis Schools both provide colorful, creative play equipment to students and local children, while the library in Egleston Square presents a somewhat shabby face to the neighborhood.

**Mattapan** - The Mattahunt Community Center – the only such center in all of Mattapan - is hidden away in a sparsely populated section of the neighborhood just east of New Calvary Cemetery. Northern Mattapan has few other public buildings for young people – no library, and only two schools. One bright light is the new environmental conservation building at the center of the former Boston State Hospital in Mattapan.

Although the community center is almost completely isolated from the life of the community, it models sustainable land use for the entire city. This bright yellow center for environmental education uses photovoltaic roof shingles and solar panels to generate electricity. The climate control system pumps in water from thousands of feet below the surface of the earth to cool the building in summer and warm it in the winter. The designers – collaborators from Boston’s Primary Group and Steven Winters and Associates – used recycled materials whenever possible. They achieved a high level of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability for a competitive price, and the building serves as a model and learning opportunity for Mattapan youth and for the city as a whole.

Vibrant, exciting public buildings such as the George Robert White Environmental Conservation Center in Mattapan, the Blue Hill Boys and Girls Club in Dorchester, and Curtis Hall in Jamaica Plain can become models for new and rehabilitated facilities in the Heart of the City. New demographic realities of the neighborhoods require a new distribution of public facilities to meet the needs of residents today and tomorrow. Schools, libraries, and community centers are needed east of Franklin Park.

## TRANSIT STATIONS

Rapid transit is a part of everyday life for thousands of residents. Transit stations are the first experience many visitors have of the neighborhoods. The best stations orient visitors and residents and are strategically situated so that people can easily get where they need to go when they leave the train. They are safe and well lit.

Orange Line stations in the Heart of the City integrate green space, art, and orientation into the station design. Each station includes one or more outdoor sculptures engraved with prose or poetry from local artists, as well as a map of the Orange Line, surrounding parkland, and major neighborhood cross streets. Each Orange Line station is part of the Southwest Corridor Park, the linear greenspace with a smattering of gardens, playgrounds, and playing courts that follows the train from Forest Hills to downtown Boston.

Green Street Station engages transit riders with a street-level art gallery that can be enjoyed by people within and outside the station. The popular gallery features the work of diverse local and regional artists. Signage in each station is clear and colorful, in some cases featuring local attractions such as Franklin Park and the Arnold Arboretum.

While Forest Hills Station offers transit riders a coffee and doughnut shops, newspaper stands, fruit and flower kiosks, and a range of other conveniences, Green Street and Stony Brook stations do not offer riders as much as a cup of coffee. Groceries and other types of supplies are available within two blocks of both stations, but the stores are not visible from the station. A number of underutilized, paved lots surround Green Street station, and Stony Brook T riders have even fewer shopping options than Green Street T riders. No signage points the way from the stations to Franklin Park, Egleston Square, or Centre Street. The Jackson Square T station, long a focus of political conflict, has recently developed a strategy under the leadership of the Boston Redevelopment Authority.



Signage for Morton St. Commuter Rail

Meanwhile, Morton Street commuter rail station in Mattapan is the only transit stop east of Franklin Park, and the most inadequate station in the Heart of the City. A weather-beaten black-and-white “T” sign on an overpass and a small, illegible sign behind a chain link fence are the only indications that the station exists. The waiting area is little more than a strip of asphalt, unprotected from the elements and adjacent to a sprawling vacant lot. Most residents are not aware the station exists, much less where the train goes.

Michael Mulhern, general manager of the MBTA, recognizes that the Morton Street stop is uninviting and rarely used. According to Mulhern, the MBTA plans to improve the Morton Street station through improvements in lighting, signage, architecture, and benches. The MBTA also hopes to add three new Fairmount commuter rail stations in Dorchester and Roxbury, and to increase the frequency of service, creating a transit line that is a hybrid of transit and traditional commuter rail. Whether or not a single rail line can simultaneously address the needs of the suburban commuter and the more mobile city resident remains to be seen.

**PRIVATE COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS**

Shops, office space, and industry bring convenience, economic vitality, and a vibrant sense of activity to an urban neighborhood. But demand for specific kinds of economic activity changes over time. Flexibility is needed with industrial buildings in particular. Yesterday’s brewery may become today’s software company office and upscale bakery. At the same time, industrial buildings and the jobs and revenues they represent should not be lost to increasing demand for residential spaces. Meanwhile, local shops and restaurants must gauge local demand and out-compete larger discount shopping conglomerates.

Breweries, tanneries, and other industries along the banks of the Stony Brook in Roslindale, Jamaica Plain, and Roxbury drove the settlement patterns of much of the Heart of the City in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Workers and managers lived in close proximity. Industries provided the glue that connected neighborhood families one to another, giving rise to parishes and other community activities.

Today, although the Stony Brook flows underground, it still flows through the main industrial corridor in the Heart of the City. A number of industrial buildings lie between the Southwest Corridor and Washington Street – particularly in the vicinity of Lochdale Road in Roslindale and the Arborway Yard in Jamaica Plain. But many have been converted for new residential and commercial uses. Other industrial buildings remain partially or completely vacant.

Since 2000, the City of Boston has established a “Back Streets” initiative, and set a goal of no net loss of industrially-zoned land in the city. The Back Streets program seeks to encourage new businesses to locate in the city and provides a toolkit of resources and incentives to facilitate this process. In the Heart of the City, the Back Streets initiative has focused on industry in Jamaica Plain, where 303 businesses provide 2,000 jobs and total annual revenue of \$200 million – mostly along the Washington Street Corridor.

**RENTAL RATES IN THE HEART OF THE CITY**

From *Commercial Trends Boston 2001* Issue 4, and *Commercial Trends Boston 1st half of 2002* Issue 6.

<b>Retail Space</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>Office Lease Rates</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>Centre Street</b>	\$20—27	Jamaica Plain	\$15—25
<b>Roslindale Square</b>	\$14—18	Mattapan	\$15
<b>Egleston Square</b>	\$12—20	Roslindale	\$10—15
<b>Mattapan Square</b>	\$16—23	Roxbury (Blue Hill Avenue)	\$16– 18

Problematic vacant industrial buildings dot the neighborhoods and razing or converting the buildings has in many cases proven a positive alternative to inaction. Large blighted industrial buildings in the Heart of the City include a warehouse on Blue Hill Avenue in Mattapan adjacent to Wellington Hill, a building on Westminster Street in Egleston Square, and several buildings and lots in Roslindale along the southeastern edge of the Arboretum.

In some cases, innovative, adaptive reuse of blighted industrial land in the Heart of the City has retained jobs and business in the city. The most prominent example: Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC), which redeveloped the Haffenreffer Brewery in the Brookside area of Jamaica Plain. The sixteen multi-story buildings that comprise the complex – once the largest brewery in Jamaica Plain and Roxbury – were closed in 1965 and lay unproductive for more than 15 years. In 1983, after five years of sustained effort, the JPNDC successfully rehabilitated the buildings and opened the Brewery Small Business Center, which encompasses businesses and non-profits including a furniture-making business, an international non-profit, a landscape company, a software group, a chocolate producer, and a consortium of design firms.

**Shops and Office Space:** Since 1995, the City has leveraged investments in commercial buildings in its Main Streets districts, which today include Egleston Square, Grove Hall, Centre and South Streets, and Roslindale Village. The City has also invested in buildings along Blue Hill Avenue through its Blue Hill Avenue Initiative and other programs.

Businesses along Centre Street have been particularly effective at creating a streetscape with a distinct local character. Creative, colorful, often three-dimensional street-level signage and outdoor seating at local restaurants and ice cream shops contribute to an active street life. Outdoor vendors and a Saturday farmer's market in the summertime complement commerce within the buildings.

Commercial buildings in Roslindale Village cluster around a well-maintained public square known as Adams Park. As in Egleston Square and along Centre Street, the businesses in Roslindale Village are closely spaced and set close to the street, rather than hidden behind parking lots. Roslindale businesses are working to reclaim not only the fronts of their buildings, but also the backs. They are transforming an area once dominated by trash, parking, and unsightly dumpsters into a jointly-owned and maintained courtyard with public seating.

Egleston Square and sections of Blue Hill Avenue use coordinated store fronts and bright new signage to create a sense of continuity and connectedness between individual commercial buildings. Between 1995 and 2000 community groups, including Urban Edge CDC and the Jackson Coordinating Group, worked to generate a comprehensive plan for the area between Jackson and Egleston Squares, a plan that was synthesized by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in a 2001 report.

Many businesses along Blue Hill Avenue and Washington Street, however, continue to appear disjointed, isolated, and shabby. The businesses along Blue Hill Avenue are dominated by beauty salons, liquor stores, corner grocers, and auto parts shops. The commercial district along American Legion Highway lies behind a vast parking lot that is seldom if ever filled, and many of the outmoded discount stores struggle to survive. Meanwhile, new businesses along South Street, Hyde Park Avenue, and Washington Street south of Forest Hills Station are

beginning to create a sense of activity in commercial areas that have languished for many years.

Office buildings are scarce in the Heart of the City, although chunks of office space are available in isolated areas such as Amory Street in Jamaica Plain and along many of the major commercial corridors, including Blue Hill Avenue, South Street, and Washington Street. The MBTA offices at 500 Arborway in Jamaica Plain represent one of the largest office complexes in the Heart of the City.

## PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

The Heart of the City offers diverse housing stock, with a mix of grand single-family homes on ample lots, wooden triple-deckers, dense apartment complexes, and modest one- and two-family homes. As a result of shrinking household size, regulatory laws, and community resistance to housing construction, demand continues to increase, housing prices continue to rise, and new housing construction has met only a fraction of demand. Rising housing costs affect Heart of the City residents differentially depending on whether or not they rent or own their homes.

**Housing types:** Housing styles in the Heart of the City include Victorian, Colonial Revival, and Second Empire, as well as the ubiquitous triple-decker, which the City of Boston considers to be the most affordable property type for homeowners over time.

In Roxbury, the three-family home is the most common housing type. (*For more information on Boston's "triple-deckers," see Appendix 7.*) The median price in 1998 for a three-family was \$103,000. By 2000 that number had rise 94 percent to \$200,000. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment rose 66 percent between 1995 and 2000 from \$688 to \$1,100. The median sale price for a one-bedroom home rose 48.2 percent from 2000 to 2001 to \$214,950.

In Jamaica Plain, the condominium is the most common housing type. The median price in 1998 for a condominium was \$143,000. By 2000 that number had risen 22 percent to \$175,000. The median sale price for a one-bedroom home rose 34 percent from 2000 to 2001 to \$400,000.

In Roslindale, the single family home is the most common housing type. The median price in 1998 for a single family was \$155,250. By 2000 that number had rise 38 percent to \$215,000. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment rose 66 percent between 1995 and 2000 from \$725 to \$1,200. The median sale price for a one-bedroom home rose 12 percent from 2000 to 2001 to \$252,000.

In Mattapan, the single family home is the most common housing type. The median price in 1998 for a single family was \$114,000. By 2000 that number had risen by 39 percent to \$159,000. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment rose 55 percent between 1995 and 2000 from \$775 to \$1,200. The median sale price for a one-bedroom home rose 18.7 percent from 2000 to 2001 to \$189,900.

In Dorchester, the three-family home is the most common housing type. The median price in 1998 for a three-family was \$145,000. By 2000 that number had risen 52 percent to \$220,000. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment rose 67 percent between 1995 and 2000 from \$675 to \$975. The median sale price for one-bedroom home rose 25.5 percent from 2000 to 2001 to \$207,000.

**Housing affordability:** A house or apartment is considered “affordable” if annual mortgage or rent payments total no more than 30 percent of the income of a family of four whose annual income is no more than 80 percent of the median income of the area. In 2002, this income limit was \$64,650, making payments of \$1,615 per month for housing “affordable.”

In 2000, more than 41 percent of housing units in Roxbury were defined as “affordable.” Affordable housing units comprised 13, 14, 16, and 26 percent of the units in Dorchester, Roslindale, Mattapan, and Jamaica Plain, respectively, in 2000.<sup>34</sup> The portions of local housing stock that qualify as affordable are high relative to many other Boston neighborhoods. But the demand for affordable housing in the Heart of the City far outstrips the supply. In 2000, 1,600 people applied to live in 50 units of new affordable housing in the Erie Ellington neighborhood of Dorchester. Approximately 800 people applied to live in 15 units developed by on Rockvale Circle in Jamaica Plain in 2002.

At the same time that housing prices are soaring throughout the Heart of the City, contracts for 2,800 existing units of subsidized housing under Section 8 are expiring. Landlords of “expiring use” units can either choose to renew their contracts with the federal government and continue to provide qualified tenants with subsidized housing, or they can make their units market rate – an option that has become increasingly attractive in the context of a booming housing market.<sup>35</sup>

Demand for housing is increasing even in places where the population is declining. Between 1990 and 2000, the populations of Jamaica Plain and Roxbury decreased by 8 percent and 6.5 percent. Yet while the total number of people is decreasing, the number of households is increasing. With the exception of Mattapan, fewer people are living in each housing unit. Three-decker buildings that served three families with three to five people on each floor a generation ago, today may house as few as three to five residents in the whole building. Given the decline in household size throughout the Greater Boston region from 3.2 persons in 1970 to 2.47 persons in 2000, every 1,000 homes hold 730 fewer people — meaning that local transit, parks, and businesses have significantly fewer customers and users.<sup>36</sup>

Even when the demand for housing has declined, the cost of housing has increased. Between 2000 and 2001, in all Heart of the City neighborhoods for single family, two family, three family, and condominiums, median sales prices increased even as the volume of sales decreased markedly. In Roxbury, the median sales price for a single family home rose by 36 percent even as the volume of sales dropped by 44 percent.

Trends in housing prices have not been identical across the neighborhoods. Housing prices have tended to increase dramatically over short periods in lower income communities, and increase slowly and consistently over the course of many years in middle- and upper-income communities. In relatively affluent sections of Jamaica Plain, real estate prices increased steadily over the course of much of the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1970s, young, upwardly mobile people began moving to Jamaica Plain; between 1970 and 1980, people living in Jamaica Plain between the ages of 25 and 34 increased by 43.3 percent. The average price of two and three-family homes in Jamaica Plain increased in value by 72 percent between 1995 and 1998. (*For more housing prices, see Appendix 8.*)

Real estate prices in the lower-income neighborhood of Roxbury made only modest gains in the 1980s and early 1990s. Then they exploded. During the third quarter of 1999 alone, the median monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Roxbury rose by 41 percent, creating instability for renters. Housing researchers find it difficult to put numbers on displacement, but community leaders and housing experts report that residents are increasingly being forced to move to cities and towns where they can still afford to pay the rent. One former Roxbury resident refers to Brockton as “Roxbury relocated.”

**Housing Tenure:** Heart of the City residents are divided into two distinct categories: those who rent, and those who own. Renters and owners form a clear geographic pattern: High home ownership to the west, and very low home ownership to the east. Up to 80 percent of residents in western census tracts own their homes (Jamaica Hills; Roslindale west of South Street). Between 80 percent and 90 percent of residents in some eastern census tracts rent their homes (North of Talbot Avenue in Dorchester; east of Humboldt Avenue in Roxbury; north of School Street in Egleston Square). Heavily minority census tracts tend to have much lower home ownership rates than the census tracts where whites are the majority.<sup>37</sup> As property values have risen in the neighborhoods an average of 87 percent between 1998 and mid-2002, residents to the east have been at ever-increasing risk of displacement while western home owners have grown wealthier. (*For rental vs. housing numbers, see Appendix 9.*)

**Public housing:** A host of organizations and agencies provide low-income housing. The Boston Housing Authority provides subsidized housing at four major public housing complexes in the area: Archdale Village (283 units), Franklin Field (400 units), Franklin Hill (364 units), and South Street (132 units).<sup>38</sup> Units range in size from one to five bedrooms. The City’s Department of Neighborhood Development builds new housing and helps people repair their aging homes. But the overall quality of low-income units varies widely. In March of 2003, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), two Franklin Field properties were in the lowest remedial range for housing quality and a third Franklin Field property was also substandard.<sup>39</sup>

The state and federal governments also subsidize the construction or renovation of a range of housing developments. In 2002, Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (known as MassHousing) broke ground on 236 housing units at Academy II homes on Washington Street in Roxbury through the federal Demonstration Disposition program. The Demonstration Disposition program has been responsible for improvements to federally owned housing in many parts of Roxbury and Dorchester, including Theroch Apartments in Grove Hall and the Franklin Park Apartments near Seaver Street.

The federal government also offers renters subsidies. Federal Chapter 8 affordable housing vouchers provide people with a greater range of housing choices. The federal government also provides grants to local development organizations.

**Community Development Corporations:** Close to a dozen community development corporations (CDCs) work to increase the supply of affordable housing by rehabilitating run-down units and building new ones in the Heart of the City. While development organizations such as the Mattapan CDC are young and have yet to build or rehabilitate a significant number

of housing units, Urban Edge CDC has been a major force in the Egleston and Jackson Square areas, managing 724 apartments of affordable rental housing – many of which Urban Edge rehabilitated or built – and helping hundreds of residents to purchase their own homes. On Westminster Avenue, Urban Edge rehabilitated a historic multi-family home amidst a sea of vacant land, creating new opportunities for affordable home-ownership while making a strong statement about the future of the street. In 2002, Community Developers of Grove Hall and the City of Boston used city-owned vacant land on blighted Stanwood and Devon Streets to build 19 units of housing. The homes are available through an affordable home ownership program.

The Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation (CSNDC) has participated in a movement that green organizations throughout the city are enthusiastically encouraging. In 2000, the CSNDC partnered with a non-profit environmental organization to develop energy efficient housing units known as the Erie Ellington Homes in the area of Dorchester just east of Franklin Park. The units are tightly sealed with superior insulation, use energy-saving windows and appliances, and downsized heating and cooling equipment. Housing units save roughly \$1,000 a year in water, heating, lighting, and electricity costs. They use 42 percent less space heating energy, 27 percent less domestic hot water heating energy, and 58 percent less electricity than other homes in the area – without compromising air quality. These units are also 25 percent less expensive to build than most affordable housing. Developers saved money by building multiple units at once, and by cashing in on rebates offered through the purchase of Energy Star appliances. The developers tied environmental performance to the payment process by requiring that all work pass the “blower door test” – the ultimate trial of whether a building is tightly sealed against air leakage – before payment was received.<sup>40</sup>

Heart of the City CDCs are joined by faith-based groups and nondenominational non-profits such as Habitat for Humanity and the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO). Such organizations have received greater federal funding from the Bush administration since 2001, as well as funding from foundations and through organizations such as the Black Church Capacity Building Program. Habitat for Humanity plans to construct 22 affordable homes on a large vacant lot north of Intervale Street on Blue Hill Avenue, while the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, with 98 member churches in 2002, has long worked towards the construction of up to 170 units of affordable housing in Mattapan.<sup>41</sup>

**Vacant land and buildings:** Vacant lots and buildings in residential neighborhoods offer plentiful opportunities for new housing construction in the Heart of the City. Some of these vacant parcels are available through the City’s Department of Neighborhood Development. As of April 2003, these properties, which are often obtained by the City through tax foreclosure, are clustered between Warren Street and Elm Hill Park (10 parcels), within approximately three blocks of Almont Park in Mattapan (more than 30 parcels), between Sigourney Street and the Orange Line in Jamaica Plain (10 parcels), and in Roslindale south of the Arnold Arboretum and west of Walter Street (21 parcels). The City’s Department of Neighborhood Development markets city owned vacant land with an easy-to-use map inventory on the web.<sup>42</sup>

Smaller clusters of private and government-owned vacant lots are also scattered throughout the Heart of the City, but concentrated in the area between Grove Hall Mecca Mall and Talbot Avenue in Roxbury and Dorchester. Clusters of vacant lots not available through the Department of Neighborhood Development lie on Westminster Avenue and Geneva Street in Roxbury; and on Glenway Street, Ellington Street, Old Road, Wales Street, and Nightingale, Kingsdale, and Browning Streets in Dorchester. Gaps remain on Goodale and Ormond Streets in the Wellington Hill area of Mattapan, as well as on Leston and Hansborough Street off of Blue Hill Avenue in Mattapan. Trash filled vacant lots on Elven Road and Claxton Street – both adjacent to the Archdale Village public housing development in Roslindale – detract from the clean, well-landscaped grounds of the complex itself. Much of the Mattahunt area of Mattapan has never been developed, including land along Savannah Avenue, Kennebec, Alabama, and Colorado Streets. Numerous vacant lots and buildings can also be found along Blue Hill Avenue north of the Grove Hall Mecca Mall.

Landowners pay property taxes based on the present value of land and buildings rather than on the value the property would have if it were redeveloped. It is cheap to hold on to land. Thus property owners have had the luxury of waiting for the best possible return while their lots, warehouses, and vacant buildings languish. Not only do local tax policies create disincentives for private landowners to sell, but the process of making vacant state and city land available for housing development is often time-consuming and complex.<sup>43</sup>



Arborway Yard, outside of Forest Hills Station.

Many of the vacant lots and buildings in the area have become dumping grounds that attract crime and detract from neighborhood stability. A vacant lot or building that is not being cared for sends others a signal that it is acceptable to destroy, dump on, and degrade the site itself and the neighborhood in general. Common experience tells us that a house with one broken window will quickly become a house of nothing but broken windows. In response to this problem, residents have “filled” many formerly vacant lots in the Heart of the City – not with buildings – but with fencing, landscaping, rope swings, benches, and walking paths. The City has

facilitated such investments by holding “yard sales” to make vacant lots available at special prices to adjacent neighbors.

Areas without vacant lots per se are not built up to their potential. In particular, the land along the Orange Line and Southwest Corridor Park is dotted with parking lots and underutilized industrial land that could be put to better use as high density mixed development. The Boston Society of Architects identified the area around Forest Hills Station as having the necessary infrastructure to support 7,000 new residential units in multi-story apartment buildings above low-scale retail buildings.

Three properties could offer major opportunities in development of housing, commercial, industrial, and community facilities. The 175-acre former Boston State Hospital property in Mattapan is the largest parcel of developable land in the city. The planning process for this land has stretched out over almost eighteen years and consensus between community groups, the City, and the State about how much of the property should be developed remains elusive. Plans for the second large parcel of developable land – the 18-acre Arborway Yard – are also controversial. The MBTA, which owns the land, plans to use part of the land for a storage facility for compressed natural gas buses and part of the land for residential, commercial, and open space purposes to be determined by the community. A third chunk of open land in the Mattahunt section of Mattapan. Between 12 and 14 acres of land along theoretical stretches of Alabama, Colorado, and Cannan Streets are forested and have never been developed. Multiple groups have expressed interest in developing this land as affordable housing.

**Understanding the buildings in the Heart of the City:** From community centers and schools to triple-deckers and abandoned industrial warehouses, construction and maintenance of buildings in the Heart of the City presents a major challenge to the Heart of the City's people.

Securing the land, rights, and capital to meet growing demand for housing, business, and public use is extraordinarily expensive and time-consuming. Competing community values can put open space advocates on the opposite side of the table from those who support affordable housing and economic development. Yet each urban community must strike such a balance between competing claims on land — and understand that a healthy mix of activities is mutually supportive. Sometimes, for example, providing housing for more people creates the potential for more park users and supporters. Expensive, drawn-out battles over individual plots of land waste resources and other types of community capital.

Comprehensive, balanced planning for the area as a whole may help communities and planners navigate these decisions together.



Girls preparing for a performance at the Puerto Rican festival.



## 5.

### PEOPLE

Ultimately, the life of a community involves the everyday activities of people. Strong local organizations and governance bodies provide the organizational structure to realize community plans and goals. But local organizations, plans, projects, and initiatives are often pursued in isolation, with individual communities. Connections between people and organizations in Dorchester and Jamaica Plain, between public health workers and greenspace advocates, or environmentalists and housing advocates, are rare.

Boston's heartland neighborhoods are home to Haitians and Puerto Ricans, Greeks, Cape Verdeans, Mexicans, Irish, English, Vietnamese, Jamaicans, Somalis, and Dominicans – among many others. Communities of artists and gays thrive. People gather to worship in storefronts, mosques, cathedrals, gymnasiums, and private homes. At a time when segregation persists in many places throughout America, these neighborhoods offer an opportunity for the coexistence and sharing of a rich variety of cultures. Yet by some accounts, the neighborhoods continue to be highly segregated, and certain groups may be at risk of displacement.

In his landmark how-to book about creating beautiful, usable, “living” neighborhoods and cities, architect Christopher Alexander argued that homogeneous and undifferentiated communities kill the life of cities. He argued that cities should be a heterogeneous jumble of people of all cultures and ethnicities and suggested that the greatest cities were mosaics of small, particular subcultures, each with its own distinct style and flavor, each overlapping and interacting with others.<sup>44</sup>

Eastern Jamaica Plain near Franklin Park perhaps comes the closest to embodying the “mosaic of subcultures” ideal that Alexander espoused. Along Washington Street, Irish bars give way to Latino grocery stores, which give way to businesses owned by a mix of blacks, Latinos, and Asians in Egleston Square. Low-income apartment complexes are a block away from a largely white upper-middle class neighborhood of Victorian homes. Likewise near Roslindale Village, a strong subculture of Greek immigrants has thrived since the 1980s in close proximity to rapidly growing black and Hispanic populations along Washington Street. These communities, in turn, lie across the street from a stable, largely white, middle-class area along South Street. Distinct cultures coexist, interact, and overlap.

Ethnic groups express their cultural distinctiveness in churches, restaurants, and meeting rooms, through special events such as the Dominican and Caribbean Festivals, and through organizations such as the Haitian American Public Health Initiative and Casa Nueva Vida. El Oriental Cuban restaurant in Jamaica Plain, the former G&G kosher deli in Jewish Mattapan, and the First Haitian Baptist Church in Roxbury are or were physical anchors for particular

ethnic groups. Ethnic festivals in Franklin Park offer the entire community an opportunity to share in the food, music, and traditions of one ethnic group. Other community events, such as the Wake-Up the Earth parade held at Southwest Corridor Park each May, celebrate all cultures in the neighborhood simultaneously.

But by some measures, the myriad ethnic groups in the Heart of the City remain isolated from one another. Open spaces such as Franklin Park are considered by many to be “buffer zones” between ethnic groups rather than common ground for diverse groups of neighbors to come together. More than 90 percent of Mattapan and Roxbury residents are who live on the eastern side of the park are minority. On the other side of the park, more than 85 percent of the upscale Jamaica Hills neighborhood in Jamaica Plain and the Longfellow area of Roslindale are white.

Even within communities known as “predominantly” black or Hispanic, there is a great diversity of nationality and language. In 2000 more than 84 percent of Mattapan residents had black skin. Yet a full one third of all Mattapan residents were born in Haiti, and Haitian Creole is spoken widely in Mattapan Square and elsewhere in the neighborhood. Among the black population were significant numbers of Cape Verdeans, Jamaicans, Trinidadians and Tobagians, Somalians, and other Africans, as well as black Americans. Thus Mattapan is at once one of the most homogenous and heterogeneous parts of Boston. Likewise, although Roxbury remains a largely minority neighborhood, the number of Hispanics and Asians is growing, the number of whites is stable at 15 percent, and between 1990 and 2000 the number of blacks dropped from 63 percent to just over half the total population. *(For information on ethnic breakdowns of the Heart of the City communities, see Appendix 10.)*

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

The Heart of the City is rich in community organizations and active member participants. Hundreds of organizations work diligently to improve the neighborhoods and quality of life. Yet they often operate in fragmented ways. Information and experience gained by one group is often unavailable to the others.

Non-profit organizations in the area provide everything from bicycles for children, health care and housing, to education and theater. Their impact can scarcely be overestimated. They provide jobs, training, a voice for the community, gathering places, and staff to implement any number of ideas relating to community development and quality of life. Often funded by private donors and government, non-profits have played vital roles in the development of these neighborhoods over time. Today, organizations such as Project Rebuild and Improve Grove Hall Together (Project RIGHT) and the Mattapan Community Partnership help to bridge gaps between community organizations working in inefficient isolation towards similar goals. Organizations such as the Footlight Club and Spontaneous Celebrations provide a space and events for people to build community.

Neighborhood churches are integrated to varying degrees. They range from largely Irish and Latino Catholic parishes, to Haitian Baptist, Greek Orthodox, and African Methodist

Episcopal churches, to a Nation of Islam mosque. More than a dozen store-front churches line main streets such as Blue Hill Avenue and Washington Street in Dorchester. These religious organizations are not simply places of worship. Faith-based groups such as the Ten-Point Coalition and the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization work to leverage power and influence in the public realm for the good of their constituencies and local communities in general.

Community life is also cultivated by good local news sources. At their best, newspapers and radio inform communities, hold elected officials, businesses and community groups accountable for their actions, and celebrate community successes. They also galvanize neighborhood activism and community involvement, providing community members with a voice for their concerns and drawing them closer together when a united front is needed. The Haitian community in Mattapan and Dorchester is particularly reliant upon radio both to connect them to their friends and family in Haiti and to keep them informed about the news and issues in Boston.

*The Dorchester Reporter, the Jamaica Plain Gazette, Dorchester Community News, the JP Bulletin, Roxbury.com online, and the West Roxbury Transcript* cover specific Heart of the City neighborhoods. Newspapers such as the *Boston Haitian Reporter, The Boston People's Voice,* and the *Bay State Banner* include many stories that relate to the Heart of the City, as do *The Boston Globe* and *Boston Herald*.

In light of such urban issues as brownfields, air quality, and energy efficiency, a growing number of groups have focused their attention on the challenges of improving the health, beauty, and stability of densely populated urban ecosystems. These organizations include New Ecology Incorporated, the Harvard School of Public Health, Alternatives for Community and Environment, the EPA's Urban Environmental Initiative, Codman Square CDC, and the Ecological Cities Project at University of Massachusetts-Amherst. Efforts to improve the urban environment have ranged from the construction of energy-efficient housing and advocacy for clean fuels to the rehabilitation of urban parks. Meanwhile, primary and secondary school educators from places like the Boston Nature Center and the Urban Ecology Institute are redefining nature and bringing new energy into urban environmental education by helping children discover the abundance of plants and animals in schoolyards, city parks, and vacant lots.

Neighborhood organizations in the Heart of the City work at many levels and rely entirely on the work of volunteers. They range from highly organized, elected neighborhood councils to smaller, informal groups of crime watches. The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council plays a major role in planning processes, zoning, and governance in the neighborhood. The Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association, which operates in Roxbury in the vicinity of Humboldt Avenue, has approximately 400 members and has been organizing in the community for more than 23 years. Neighborhood Governance Boards in Grove Hall, Franklin Hill/Franklin Field, and Mattapan have undertaken work specifically to support youth in the communities along Blue Hill Avenue. Organizations such as Project Rebuild and Improve Grove Hall Together (Project RIGHT) and the Mattapan Community Partnership have built coalitions of neighborhood organizations and guided community decision-making processes. Well-

**TENTH GRADE PERCENTAGE PASSING THE MCAS TEST IN ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS  
CITY-WIDE BY ETHNICITY**

(data courtesy of Boston Public Schools and The Boston Foundation)

	Math		English	
	1998	2002	1998	2002
<b>Black</b>	18 percent	36 percent	42 percent	56 percent
<b>Asian</b>	57 percent	87 percent	63 percent	86 percent
<b>Hispanic</b>	14 percent	39 percent	38 percent	57 percent
<b>White</b>	60 percent	75 percent	77 percent	85 percent

established neighborhood organizations such as the Longfellow Area Neighborhood Association in Roslindale and the Jamaica Hills Association in Jamaica Plain have strong voices in their particular areas. Other smaller, less formal neighborhood organizations galvanize when trouble hits the neighborhood. These neighborhood associations are often named after one or more major streets in the neighborhood.

**EDUCATION**

Education is the critical issue in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, where almost half of the City’s children live. According to the 1999 Boston Public Safety Survey, Boston residents consider public education the most critical challenge facing the city. Yet in 2003, state and local budgets for education will be cut dramatically, two Heart of the City schools will be closed, and an estimated 1,300 Boston Public Schools staff will be laid off. Almost thirty years after United States District Court Judge W. Arthur Garrity called for an end to segregation in the schools, concerns about racial balance continue to be an issue in federal courts.

Today, the youth population in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury in general, as well as the demand for schools and youth programming, are on the rise. More than 63 percent of the youth between ages five and 18 in the city lived in Heart of the City neighborhoods in 2001.<sup>45</sup> In 1998, unmet need for after-school care for children was higher in Dorchester than in any other Boston neighborhood. Unmet need was second highest in Roxbury, then in Mattapan. And while two new schools on the periphery of the Heart of the City will open in the fall of 2003, two more schools in the area are closing. In March 2003, Boston Public Schools announced that Endicott Elementary School in Dorchester and Margaret Fuller Elementary School in Jamaica Plain, as well as two more schools in Roxbury and Dorchester, would close.

Test scores reveal a gap between the performance of elementary and middle school students living in the Heart of the City relative to students in the city as a whole. In 1998, for every census tract immediately east of Franklin Park in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury, average Stanford 9 math scores among sixth, seventh, and eighth graders were below the city

median. Math scores among children living in eastern Jamaica Plain were also lower than the city median. Stanford 9 reading scores for middle school students were lower than the city average for children living in census tracts around the entire perimeter of Franklin Park. In 2001, out of fourteen elementary schools in the area, only students at the Rafael Hernandez School came close to meeting or exceeding the state average MCAS score for both English and Mathematics (41 percent of Hernandez students passed the English section and 44 percent passed the Math section, compared to an average of 44 percent and 24 percent state-wide). Students at the Philbrick School also scored better than the state average in English. The lowest achieving elementary schools in terms of MCAS scores in 2001 were the Greenwood, Manning, Agassiz, Young Achievers, Fuller, and Endicott schools.<sup>46</sup> Citywide, there is also a gap in test scores based on ethnicity.

Meanwhile, in the 2000-2001 school year, only 13 percent and 9 percent of English High School and Jeremiah Burke High School students passed the English section of the MCAS respectively; 7 percent and 13 percent of English and Burke High students passed the math section (the state-wide average in 2001 was 36 percent for English and 27 percent for math). The MCAS scores at English High School, as well as Solomon Lewenberg Middle School, were low enough to trigger emergency state audits.

Teachers and students in Heart of the City schools also face special challenges because of the high number of students for whom English is a second language. Large populations of Haitian children in Mattapan, Cape Verdean children in Grove Hall, and Spanish-speaking children in Jamaica Plain and Roxbury, require special classes and cost about \$500 more per child per year to educate.

Yet amongst these challenges, exciting new developments have also taken place. The Greater Egleston Community High School was founded in 1992 to provide neighborhood youth who are not succeeding in traditional school programs with a second chance for a high

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**NUMBER OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED  
IN VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE HEART OF THE CITY**  
(FROM THE BOSTON TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT'S PUBLICATION "ACCESS BOSTON 2000"):

Columbus / SW Corridor (Roxbury)	3,200
Egleston Square (JP/ Roxbury)	2,300
Roslindale Village (Roslindale)	2,150
Jamaica Plain Center (JP)	2,000
Lower Washington Street (JP)	1,550
Hyde Park Avenue (JP/ Roslindale)	1,500
Blue Hill Avenue (Mattapan)	1,300
Grove Hall (Roxbury/ Dorchester)	1,200
Forest Hills (JP/ Roslindale)	650
<hr/>	
Total jobs in major Heart of the City job centers:	15,850

school diploma. The Boston Schoolyards Initiative has worked with parents, teachers, and administrators from the Ellis, Fuller, Sumner, Trotter, Hernandez, and Haley schools to transform these historically neglected open spaces into creative, exciting places for fun and learning.

Since 1999, teacher naturalists from the Boston Nature Center have brought inquiry-based, hands-on environmental education to 35 public, parochial, and charter schools – many of which are in the Heart of the City. The two new Boston Public Schools that will open in the fall of 2003 in Roxbury and Mattapan are state-of-the art facilities where local residents will have priority placement. School choice has expanded in the neighborhood with the introduction of pilot schools such as the Young Achievers in Science and Mathematics School. And in the winter of 2003, the Boston Charter Preparatory School was granted a charter to open a new middle school in 2004 in either Dorchester or Mattapan.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Good jobs and economically viable commercial and industrial areas are vital to the stability of any urban community. Major improvements in commercial areas throughout the Heart of the City have demonstrated the transformative power of successful commercial districts in a neighborhood. Yet despite this progress, as well as several strong job sectors in the Heart of the City, the potential for inner-city commerce is far greater than what has been realized up to now. In particular, the Heart of the City's greenspaces could be leveraged collectively to make the Heart of the City more prominent on the region's mental map of Boston and to increase economic opportunities for residents.

Boston is one of three cities in the nation with more jobs than residents (Washington D.C. and San Francisco are the other two). Yet in 2000, all nine major commercial areas in the Heart of the City offered a total of only 15,850 jobs. The Longwood/ Kenmore area of Boston provided 52,600 jobs, the North and West End provided 33,300 jobs, and Alston-Brighton provided 31,750 jobs).<sup>47</sup>

Unlike earlier times in the history of the area, most adult residents must now travel outside of Boston's heartland to find employment. At the same time, rich employment opportunities do exist in the Heart of the City in the realms of non-profits, health care, informal businesses, and industry. In April 2003, the Codman Square Health Center employed more than 300 people, most of whom lived in Boston's heartland, while smaller health centers such as Greater Roslindale and Southern Jamaica Plain employed between 45 and 65 people. A Boston Redevelopment Authority survey in 2001 found that Faulkner Hospital was one of the largest private employers in the City, employing 1,166 people. Mattapan in particular has a thriving entrepreneurial informal business sector through which many residents run small businesses out of their homes. And Jamaica Plain's main industrial corridor between Washington Street and the Southwest Corridor provides 2,000 jobs.

Untapped opportunities exist to increase inner city commerce. Research carried out by the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

revealed significant unrealized economic opportunity in the neighborhoods. For example in 2001, Jamaica Plain residents spent \$15 million on clothing outside Boston's inner city and only \$2 million on clothing in Boston's central neighborhoods. Grove Hall residents spent virtually none of the \$8 million they spend yearly on clothing in the inner city. ICIC argues that with a sound plan for economic development, retail spending could be more effectively captured in the inner city and translate into more local jobs. The organization argues that the inner city offers numerous advantages for business of all kinds: a large workforce, high levels of retail demand in densely populated neighborhoods, and financial incentives from government programs such as Boston Connects.

Efforts to create jobs and stimulate economic development in the Heart of the City have included job training, redevelopment of old industrial buildings, and complex strategies to use the area's greenspaces as leverage for economic revitalization.

Planning councils, community health centers, community development corporations, and organizations that serve the homeless all offer job-training programs. The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPND) equips Heart of the City residents with qualifications for jobs in the health-care sector and has partnered with Boston's largest health care provider to train entry-level workers on how move up the career ladder. The JPND also combined job creation with neighborhood revitalization when it transformed the largest abandoned brewery in the area into a small-business incubator that employs more than 200 people.

The potential for jobs and economic development connected the area's extraordinary greenspaces is well recognized. ICIC estimates that Boston's Franklin Park Zoo alone has the opportunity to serve 1 million visitors annually, employ approximately 210 people, and drive economic development along Blue Hill Avenue. The Green Triangle Group – a coalition of greenspace and educational organizations – met regularly for more than two years to discuss how institutions such as the Franklin Park Zoo, the Arnold Arboretum, and the Boston Nature Center could become something greater than the sum of their parts for the benefit of the neighborhoods. The group collaborated with the City's Department of Parks and Recreation, as well as ICIC and the Boston Consulting Group, to develop an image for the area as a whole and begin a visioning process for how the Green Triangle could attract tourists, create jobs, and drive economic development in the neighborhoods.

## **MAIN STREETS**

Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development coordinates 21 designated Main Street districts with funding and technical assistance throughout the city. Four of these city-designated commercial districts are located in the Heart of the City. They are Grove Hall, Egleston Square, Roslindale Village and, most recently, Centre and South Streets. In each area, coalitions of merchants and citizens work together with a main street director to foster the kind of development the community deems appropriate for each area. Between 1994 and 2001, a total of \$70 million in public and private investments were made in the four main streets

districts.

The Main Street program has had particularly dramatic success in Egleston Square and Grove Hall, two of Boston's most blighted neighborhood centers in the 1970s and 1980s. Both areas were characterized by substandard housing, boarded-up buildings, and youth gang activity. The clattering elevated Orange Line rained dirt on Washington Street, keeping Egleston Square in the shadows. Local businesses as well as large chains such as McDonalds and a bank are now well established in Egleston Square and have made good on their promises to hire workers from the immediate area.

The City publishes exhaustive lists of the businesses in each Main Street district, sponsors holiday events, and helps coordinate a development strategy for each main street district. Increasingly, residents recognize that they can enhance the vitality of their neighborhood by spending their dollars at local businesses as opposed to suburban malls.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Public health and public safety influence and are influenced by virtually every aspect of community life. When people feel unsafe walking through their neighborhood, they do not visit the Franklin Park in the morning before work, buy milk from the corner store on Washington Street, or ride the Orange Line at night. Constant concern about safety keeps people in their homes and can compromise both their cardiovascular fitness and their engagement in neighborhood concerns. Children sick with asthma must avoid going outside on days when air quality is poor. Disparities in health and safety have far-reaching impacts throughout the urban system, but root causes of crime and violence in these communities – such as poverty and low educational attainment– can be difficult to assess and even more difficult to address.

Every few years, researchers at the Boston Public Health Commission tally up health and safety data by neighborhood and ethnicity and publish the results. Across almost every measure of public health, people of color in Boston are significantly more likely to experience health problems. And almost across the board, Heart of the City neighborhoods east of Franklin Park top the “most likely to” charts.

Between 1998 and 2001, Roxbury residents have been most likely to contract Hepatitis C, most likely to be admitted to the hospital, and have tied with residents of South Dorchester as most likely to die before the age of one. Roxbury residents younger than five years old have been most likely to go the hospital for acute asthma. South Dorchester and Mattapan children ages five to fourteen top the list of older children most likely to be admitted to the hospital for acute asthma.

Disparities in both health and safety fall along sharp racial and ethnic lines. Black and Hispanic Bostonians – who are concentrated in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan – are far more likely than white residents to suffer from a wide range of health maladies, including asthma, AIDS, heart disease, obesity, stroke, high blood pressure, sexually transmitted disease, and diabetes. The health gap between white and minority populations increases over time. Between 1995 and 2000, blacks have been about three times more likely than whites and

Hispanics to be victims of violence-related injuries.

**Infant mortality:** Public health experts recognize the infant mortality rate as the best single measure of how well a society cares for its most vulnerable citizens – namely women and children. In Roxbury, South Dorchester, and the South End between 1996 and 2000, 11 infants died for every 1,000 live births – the highest rates in the city. And while the overall Boston population experienced a 34 percent reduction in the infant death rate between 1990 and 2000, the rate among Boston’s black population rose during the same period, reaching 13.6 deaths per 1000 live births in 2000. The infant mortality rate among whites in the city had dropped to its lowest level ever (2.8 deaths per 1000 live births). Black infants in the city of Boston are less likely to survive childbirth than infants born in the developing nations of Costa Rica (11.18 deaths per 1,000 live births) and Cuba (7.39 deaths per 1,000 live births).

**Stroke rates:** In 2000, the stroke mortality rate was highest among Hispanics and blacks, whose rates were 18.9 percent and 13.2 percent higher than the rate for Boston residents as a whole.<sup>49</sup> Stroke rates for Hispanic residents increased 62 percent between the 1993-1995 period and 1996-1998. The stroke rate in Mattapan was higher than any other Boston neighborhood (33.2 percent higher than the Boston average). North Dorchester had the second highest stroke rate, while Roxbury and Roslindale had higher death rates related to stroke than did the city overall. Roxbury also has a higher heart disease death rate than the overall Boston average, while Jamaica Plain has rates lower than the Boston average.

**Exercise and weight:** Blacks and Hispanics living in Dorchester or Mattapan are less likely than other Bostonians to exercise regularly or to weigh within the range that doctors consider healthy. According to the Boston Public Health Commission, only 15.1 percent of Hispanics in Boston receive regular physical activity compared to a citywide average of 31.4 percent.<sup>50</sup> Being overweight increases a person’s chances of developing a host of health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, and several kinds of cancer. Diet and exercise are powerful and inexpensive points of leverage for improvements in public health.

While 33.2 percent of males and 29.8 percent of females in Boston participated in regular physical activity in 2001, only 15.1 percent of Hispanic Bostonians – many of whom live in Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, and Dorchester – report getting significant exercise on a regular basis.<sup>51</sup> While 46 percent of all Boston residents are overweight or obese, more than 50 percent of people in Dorchester and Mattapan are overweight. In the city as a whole, 62 percent of black residents and 56 percent of Hispanic residents reported being overweight or obese.<sup>52</sup>

The Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey showed that nationwide, black women in particular are more likely than any other demographic to be overweight. Through a community-based study that took place between 1994 and 1998, the Weight Control Information Network found that black women in Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester are more likely to become physically active when they have a reliable partner or group. The researchers found that the women perceived “exercise” as limiting and time consuming, but were open to the idea of “moving more” and eating better as part of a group of like-minded women. The research also showed that black women in Boston prefer to receive health

information through family and neighborhood networks rather than the news media. The study led to the creation of a coalition of women's groups in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester called "Sisters Together."<sup>53</sup>

**High blood pressure:** While 17 percent of Boston residents report having had hypertension or high blood pressure in 2001, 22.7 percent of Dorchester and Mattapan residents have high blood pressure.<sup>54</sup>

**Diabetes:** According to the Boston Public Health Commission in 2001, Dorchester and Mattapan have had the highest percentage of residents reporting diabetes of any neighborhoods in the city. While the citywide average for people with diabetes is 3.6 percent, a full 8.3 percent of black residents have diabetes.<sup>55</sup>

**Asthma:** Asthma is the leading cause of childhood emergency hospitalization in Boston and the number one cause of school illness and absenteeism in the Boston Public School System. In 1997, Heart of the City neighborhoods had the highest incidences of asthma attacks leading to the dispatch of Boston Medical Emergency Services. Dorchester had 30.5 percent of the total incidences in the city, Roxbury had 21.0 percent, Jamaica Plain had 9.4 percent and Mattapan had 9.0 percent.<sup>56</sup> Children in these four neighborhoods experienced 70 percent of the most serious asthma attacks in the city. A Roxbury resident is six times more likely than the average American to have asthma.

High asthma rates are partly a consequence of poor air quality both inside and outside. According to the Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking (EMPACT) project, sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Harvard School of Public Health, cars, trucks, and buses emit about half the outdoor air pollution in Boston. The dirtiest 10 percent of these vehicles are responsible for about half the total vehicle pollution. In Roxbury, where research on outdoor air pollution has been focused, a 1996 study revealed a concentration of more than 15 truck and bus depots within a one-mile radius of the neighborhood that collectively garaged more than 1,150 diesel vehicles.<sup>57</sup> Other sources of air pollution include off-road diesel engines, power plants and other industrial facilities, and commercial and residential sources. These sources contribute to ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter (also known as smog and soot), which aggravate asthma, increase the risk of respiratory infections, and coughing or discomfort breathing.<sup>58</sup>

**Lead:** When children under the age of six have blood lead levels of levels of 10 micrograms per deciliter or over, their intelligence, behavior, and development may be permanently affected.<sup>59</sup> Nationwide, minority and poor children are disproportionately affected by childhood lead poisoning. Research in Boston showed that higher average concentrations of lead in soil are found adjacent to wood-frame structures. Small paint chips in the soil typically indicate the highest soil lead values.<sup>60</sup> The older the house, the more likely it is that the yard will have high lead levels. In 2000, 3.6 percent of all Boston children had elevated blood lead levels of 10 micrograms per deciliter or higher. By comparison, 5.6 percent and 5 percent of children in South and North Dorchester had elevated blood lead levels; 4.6 percent of children in Mattapan, and 4.1 percent of children in Roxbury had elevated blood lead levels.<sup>61</sup> A soil study conducted by the EPA on a representative street in Dorchester showed that all but two of the 24 yards studied required soil intervention.<sup>62</sup>

## **ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE**

Public health agencies seek strategic, low-cost interventions in these high-risk communities to achieve concrete advances for underserved communities of color. But a range of environmental, behavioral, and inherited factors influence public health, including culture, eating and exercising habits, accessibility of health care, public safety, quality of the physical environment, genetic disposition, stress, and income level. Addressing complex causes of poor health among medically underserved minority communities in Boston presents community health centers with a great challenge.

Community health centers serve much of the Heart of the City. The centers offer comprehensive primary and preventive health care to all residents, regardless of a person's medical status or ability to pay. Most centers struggle to secure the resources from government programs such as Medicare and from private foundations and donations necessary to attract and retain physicians, and to meet the needs of their patients.

Heart of the City residents are served by at least eight community health centers. Some are independently licensed through the city, while others are connected to larger health care conglomerates such as Brigham and Women's Hospital. Many community health centers lack the basic equipment they need to diagnose and treat patients. Others, such as the Codman Square Health Center, lie outside the Heart of the City but attract residents from Boston's heartland.

Community health centers root themselves in particular neighborhoods. They offer a range of programs that extend beyond traditional medical care. Centers describe themselves as pursuing the general well being of their patients. They recognize the myriad ways peoples' overall health relates to the health of their physical environment and community, as well as to their opportunities for empowerment, education, and economic mobility. Low-income communities in the Heart of the City perceive health centers as opportunities for community empowerment and development as well as improved medical care.

The centers offer traditional medical, dental, and mental health services. But the centers often offer services beyond primary care such as financial counseling, counseling to pregnant teens, stress-management, nutrition groups, and substance abuse counseling. At their best, the centers practice holistic, cost-efficient preventative medicine that addresses root problems as well as acute symptoms. Unfortunately, many residents live under such strict financial constraints and heavy demands from family that they are unable to address health issues until they have become acute and often receive primary medical care in the emergency room.

Throughout the Commonwealth, more and more patients now depend on community health centers. The number of uninsured patients grew from an estimated 5.9 percent of the population in 2000 to 6.7 percent in 2002.<sup>63</sup> In Massachusetts as a whole in 1998, 41 percent of health centers lost money. In 1999, seven health centers in the Commonwealth faced a serious risk of financial collapse. Health centers in the Heart of the City faced major budget cuts in 2002. The State budget crisis forced a \$7.8 million decrease in funding for community health

**CITIZEN PERCEPTION OF SAFETY BY NEIGHBORHOOD**

Boston, 1997, 1999 & 2001 percent responding “very safe” or “somewhat safe” to being out alone at night  
 Source: Boston Police Department, Public Safety Citizen Survey and The Boston Foundation

	1997	1999	2001
<b>Dorchester</b>	65 percent	70.3 percent	67.8 percent
<b>Jamaica Plain</b>	86.8 percent	74.3 percent	80.2 percent
<b>Mattapan</b>	69.8 percent	74.2 percent	71.2 percent
<b>Roslindale</b>	82.1 percent	80.6 percent	82.5 percent
<b>Roxbury</b>	63.6 percent	66.7 percent	67.4 percent
<b>Boston</b>	76.1 percent	77.9 percent	77.9 percent

centers throughout Massachusetts in October 2002 and reduced funding for everything from AIDS services to early intervention to programs for women and infants. Cuts to Medicaid general fund budgets are particularly devastating to community health centers; for each \$1 that states cut from Medicaid general fund budgets, the total amount of spending on the program drops by \$2.33 because of federal matching requirements.<sup>64</sup>

Because of their focus on preventative medicine, community health centers are more cost effective than the alternative of emergency hospital treatment. The centers also provide hundreds of good jobs to local residents and generate business for nearby shops and restaurants. While community health centers receive the majority of their funding from patients and insurance companies, approximately a third of their income may come from public and private grants, contracts, and donations (Codman Square Health Center in fiscal year 2001). In the context of rising unemployment, increasing numbers of uninsured in the neighborhoods, and deep state budget cuts, community health centers are increasingly vulnerable.

Health services such as the Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital’s Family Van have attempted to meet the medical needs of the poor by bringing the health center to the patient. In the past, the mobile health care unit has traveled to public places in Heart of the City neighborhoods and low-income neighborhoods throughout Boston, stopping at parking lots, libraries and shopping centers. Caregivers have provided free and confidential health services to children and adults, although in 2002 funding for the van is insecure.

**Public safety:** For many people in Greater Boston, the names Franklin Park, Roxbury, and Blue Hill Avenue evoke a sense of fear rather than images of trees, animals, and thriving commercial centers. Organizations from the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Boston Main Streets to the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City cite public perceptions of safety as the

major obstacle to greater use of the area's exceptional resources. Yet while public safety is certainly a concern in the Heart of the City – as in all urban neighborhoods – actual crime has in fact decreased significantly over the course of the past decade.

Under the leadership of Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Police Commissioner Paul Evans, Boston and the neighborhoods of the Heart of the City have been recognized as a national model for community policing. Between 1996 and 2000, violent crime decreased 20 percent in the city of Boston as a whole, 31 percent in Roxbury and Mission Hill (District B2), and 22 percent in Mattapan and South Dorchester (District B3). Only in Jamaica Plain did violent crime increase (by 15 percent). And although the total incidence of crime increased slightly in Dorchester between 1994 and 1998, the total number of incidents decreased in Jamaica Plain, Mattapan/ Franklin Field, Roslindale, and Roxbury over this same time period. In the 1990s, community leaders and law enforcement officials met with great success in improving the safety of the streets in the neighborhoods, particularly among young people involved in gang activity. Since 1990, when rates of youth homicide and drug related crime reached their peak, disparate groups have come together, formed partnerships, and addressed these complex issues together, achieving nationally recognition in the process.

According to Boston Public Safety Surveys, an increasing number of residents also feel safe in their neighborhoods. Between 67 percent and 83 percent of neighborhood residents felt themselves to be "very safe" or "somewhat safe" in their neighborhoods in 2001.

Although crime rates have indeed declined in almost all Heart of the City neighborhoods over the past decade, some types of crime are concentrated in communities east of Franklin Park. The geography of homicides in the Heart of the City is particularly striking. In 1998, all nine homicides committed in Heart of the City neighborhoods occurred east of Franklin Park in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan.<sup>65</sup> In 2000, five of the seven homicides in the Heart of the City occurred east of Franklin Park. In 1998, violent crimes and property crimes in Dorchester and Roxbury per 100,000 residents were among the highest in the city.<sup>66</sup> And between 1999 and 2001, the Grove Hall area had the greatest incidence of drug crimes, vehicle thefts, and burglaries per reporting area of any of the major commercial centers in the Heart of the City.<sup>67</sup>

Other types of crime, such as burglary and attempted burglary, were committed more evenly through the area in 2000. Robbery and attempted robbery were concentrated along major roads in all the neighborhoods – Centre/ South Street, Washington Street, and Blue Hill Avenue.<sup>68</sup>

The lesson of the past decade in relation to crime and public safety in the Heart of the City is clear: Addressing the needs of youth is critical to public safety – particularly in neighborhoods with large populations of youth and returning offenders. Non-traditional partnerships are an effective means to counteract crime.



## 6

### CHOICES

Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static “snapshots.” It is a set of general principles – distilled over the course of the twentieth century, spanning fields as diverse as the physical and social sciences, engineering, and management.... During the last thirty years, these tools have been applied to understand a wide range of corporate, urban, regional, economic, political, ecological, and even psychological systems. And systems thinking is a sensibility – for the subtle interconnectedness that gives living systems their unique character.

— Peter Senge<sup>86</sup>

Cities are systems, which require attention to innumerable small pieces and how those pieces form larger wholes. Urban areas thrive when they create conditions for diversity to thrive. Every act of improving the city – getting children involved in after-school activities, recruiting fixing a dilapidated park fence, improving traffic flows, leasing office space for start-up businesses, creating partnerships for community policing – creates the possibility for improvement of the larger whole.

Malcolm Gladwell, a journalist with a sharp eye for the hidden patterns of modern life, has noted that making small improvements in cities and other complex systems can “tip” the overall order of the system. Even when small improvements do not seem significant, they can combine to produce a “critical mass” that transforms the system. To produce that critical mass – or reach the “tipping point” – it is important to find and fix the system’s gaps and broken pieces.<sup>87</sup> An example: A neighborhood block be filled with a number of well-maintained homes but suffer from the handful of vacant properties; fixing and inhabiting those vacant properties can strengthen the whole block significantly. Another example: Studies have found that young people get into trouble in the hours after school more than any other time, but play positive roles in a wide range of activities when offered the opportunity. A third example: The ecological quality of a park could be determined by small sections of the park, which, if maintained well, contribute to seamless water, plant life, and wildlife – and also determine whether the park gains users necessary to the overall stewardship of the park.

Finding the right “points of entry” for the continued revitalization of the Heart of the City requires a hard-headed analysis of issues at the level of the environment, the built environment, and social and economic life. Here’s an overview of the visions and challenges that Boston and its Heart of the City face in the next decade:

## ENVIRONMENT

The urban environment has great potential for new life and growth. Over the course of the next 10 to 20 years, degraded environmental systems can be restored to health, aging urban forests regenerated, and the greenspace resources of the area revitalized.

The environment operates at several different levels. The city's natural systems of land, water, and air are often beyond the sight of consciousness of people who use them. Underground water systems like the Stony Brook, for example, play critical roles in the city's water tables, drainage of water from homes, and maintenance of larger and more visible water systems like the Charles River. Land parcels provide important habitats for plant life, which affects the area's climate and overall healthfulness. The urban forest not only affects the temperature of areas, but also the healthfulness of the air. Embedded into this most elemental natural environment is what might be called the "sculpted" environment – the parks, gardens, playgrounds, and other spaces designed and built for human recreation and edification. These places have important environmental properties, but also must operate as part of a larger man-made environment and meet the social and other needs of people. Their design must be inviting to potential users near and far, have proper maintenance, and deal with a number of outside pressures.

Maintaining and improving both levels requires a citywide – indeed a regional, statewide, and nationwide – commitment to making environmental issues integral to other realms. Housing, transportation, economic life, education, and community affairs all must help to sustain the environment – and, to make that easier, the environment must be serve to sustain these human endeavors.

**Principle 1 – Increase accountability through information:** Monitoring and information are cheap. When used effectively to educate the public, information can have extraordinarily leverage. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) investigated the length of time MBTA bus drivers left vehicles running in Roxbury and published the results. Without expensive litigation or penalties the EPA held the MBTA accountable for its role in contributing to air pollution in Boston neighborhoods, and the MBTA made a change. Likewise, soil lead testing, "top ten polluters" lists, and publicity for illegal dumpers and owners of brownfields and trashy vacant lots can bring about changes in behavior for little or no cost. The Charles River Watershed Association and AirBeat in Dudley Square have improved public knowledge and accountability by providing timely, easy-to-use water and air quality data online.<sup>69</sup> The many universities, local papers, and academic think-tanks in Greater Boston can also pressure polluters through education, research, and outreach.

**Principle 2 – Grow smart:** Smart growth links public transportation, pedestrian-friendly streets, and neighborhood stores and restaurants. It is associated with relatively high human density, and an attempt to lure people away from their cars. And in either case, human density is essential to the creation of vibrant local economies such as those in San Francisco and New York City.<sup>70</sup> Dense urban areas are the nation's greatest hope for the environment.<sup>71</sup>

Wherever and whatever people build or renovate in the Heart of the City can be built or renovated with energy efficient technologies and recycled materials. Wastes can virtually al-

ways be recycled. By pursuing energy efficiency, people save money on energy and materials and produce fewer greenhouse gases. The Boston Nature Center and Erie Ellington Homes have pointed the way. Housing and buildings throughout the Heart of the City should follow their lead, with help from environmental groups such as New Ecology, Inc, which provides services for “green CDCs.”

**Principle 3 – Practice watershed and greenspace stewardship:** The Heart of the City is an integral part of the Charles River Watershed. Point-sources of pollution have been largely eliminated, and it is up to residents to make take water quality to the next level. Conserve water. Minimize use of road salt, sand, salt, and fertilizers. Reduce permeable surfaces through the use of gravel, vegetation, and porous concrete. Keep storm drains clear. Plant trees to shelter the land from stormwater. Know the names of the brooks, streams, and rivers in the Heart of the City.

**Principle 4 – Knit greenspaces of all kinds into the fabric of the neighborhood:** Often, in community debates about development, residents and advocates call for the creation of new parks instead of use of land for housing and commercial development. In areas where families and schools do not enjoy ready access to parks and playgrounds, creating new parks makes sense. But the Heart of the City also needs to repair and revive the many parks, playgrounds, and gardens. Many places for active and passive recreation lie dormant because they do not invite users.

Under the “charm bracelet” model, each community would make a number of physical and visual improvements to connect a long chain of parks, playgrounds, schools, community centers, libraries, houses of worship, historic sites, transit stations, and other public spaces. This model, developed by the Boston 400 process of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, has many virtues. First, it takes advantage of existing resources. Second, it identifies gaps between these resources and fills them. Third, it can be done one piece at a time. Fourth, it brings people into the process and creates a sense of ownership. Fifth, it strengthens the overall identity of the area in a way that speaks to both local and citywide concerns.

A final virtue is that the City of Boston has already initiated similar piece-by-piece programs that have added up to systemwide improvements. The Main Streets Program has revived local business districts in 21 neighborhoods by fostering partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit entities. The Boston Schoolyards Initiative has done the same for playgrounds in public schools. The model exists and needs only to be applied for parks and other neighborhood treasures.

Yet another program – this one based in New York City – provides additional know-how. The Partnerships for Parks program provides a wide range of financial resources, technical support, logistical capacity to improve parks in all five boroughs of New York. Many of the tools could be imported with minimal tweaking to help foster a revival of neighborhood parks through out Boston.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Connections between public resources such as libraries, transit stations, parks, commercial districts, and community centers enhance public mobility, encourage use, and enliven a neighborhood. But such connections are not naturally occurring. They do not materialize when people choose to see only their particular park, building, or isolated street. Rather, connections are made when people choose to see each place as part of a larger whole and work together with people from other agencies, institutions, organizations, and neighborhoods to make improvements.

To imagine a set of spatially integrated neighborhoods people must see beyond the boundaries of their own communities. The rewards of caring about places beyond our own back yards could be great.

**Principle 1 – Use existing resources:** Plans that build on or enhance existing infrastructure are usually more cost effective and easier to implement than plans that require the construction of entirely new facilities. The Grove Hall Library, the Mattahunt Community Center, the Boston Nature Center, and the Morton Street station on the Fairmount Commuter Rail (as well as the Fairmount Commuter Rail as a whole) are among the public facilities that residents could utilize more extensively. These facilities could be made more visible and available to residents through improved signage, bike lanes, sidewalks, and advertising.

**Principle 2 – Integrate the community’s pieces:** Connections between existing public facilities can have a multiplier effect. An attractive path linking a library to a park causes the path, the library, and the park to amount to more than the sum of their parts. The best cities are dense networks of parks, stores, schools, and transit. For the first time, in 2002, the Arnold Arboretum links directly to Forest Hills Station via the Bussey Brook Meadow and a new pedestrian path. However the Southwest Corridor Park does not connect to the Emerald Necklace pathway. The National Center of Afro-American Artists (NCAAA), Allandale Woods, and the Boston Nature Center are currently somewhat isolated from the whole. And planning for the Forest Hills area is fragmented.

**Principle 3 – Create common ground and special places:** Few public squares exist to provide common ground for people from more than one neighborhood, ethnic group, or socio-economic level. The Heart of the City needs more places like the golf course clubhouse at Franklin Park, the Egleston Square Peace Garden on School Street, the Southwest Corridor Park, and Adams Park in Roslindale Village. Additional “common ground” could be created in Franklin Park, Grove Hall, near Forest Hills Station, and along Centre and South Streets. Likewise, each cultural group should have a physical center – a gathering place set aside for their own specific activities.

**Principle 4 – Pay attention to the edges:** Conditions along the periphery of a development, open space, or public building often determine its success. The edges of the Boston State Hospital Site require major repair and attention along American Legion Highway and Morton Street. Many edges of Franklin Park are overgrown, blocked, uninviting, or unap-

proachable. The edges of the Fairmount Commuter Rail in Dorchester, the Arborway Yard, and the Arnold Arboretum along South Street are in poor condition. Clean fencing, attractive entrances, clear signage are critical to creating an exciting public space.

**Principle 5 – Balance transportation infrastructure:** The low-income, transit-dependent, largely minority neighborhoods east of Franklin Park (Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan) are underserved by transportation infrastructure. Warren Street, Blue Hill Avenue, Washington Street south of Forest Hills, and Seaver Street are major bus corridors with inadequate transportation infrastructure. With the exception of Blue Hill Avenue, these streets offer virtually no shelter from the weather, or maps for orientation. Few bus stops offer adequate pedestrian pathways or transit connections.

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE

Diversity and a strong sense of community are primary reasons many people choose to live in neighborhoods such as Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and Roxbury. But today, all ethnic groups are not full participants in the civic life of Boston. And as rents increase and available land becomes increasingly scarce, racially and economically integrated neighborhoods may be at risk. Residents are not powerless to preserve and nurture the rich diversity in their midst. Communities that are dedicated to maintaining a diverse mix of housing types, sizes, and prices and that are not adverse to areas with high residential density may be able to stave off displacement, segregation, and gentrification.

Home ownership creates stability in a neighborhood and gives residents a vested interest in their homes. Affordable home ownership opportunities are currently more difficult to come by than affordable rental housing, even when the public subsidy is equivalent. These opportunities should be more widely available. Housing construction in the Arbutus, Balsam, Lucerne area of Franklin Field, along Stanwood Street in Grove Hall, and on Westminster Avenue in Egleston Square provides models for affordable home ownership in the Heart of the City. Less than a quarter of residents own their own homes in areas north of School Street in Jamaica Plain/ Roxbury, on either side of Humboldt Avenue in Roxbury, and both north and south of Franklin Field in Dorchester.

People in the Heart of the City – particularly people of color – bear a disproportionately high burden of health problems. A commitment to the health of all Heart of the City residents points the way to important choices: choices for better access to and use of greenspaces – particularly among Latinos. Choices for asbestos-free housing with good ventilation that reduce risk from asthma-inducing indoor air pollutants. Choices for equitable placements of bus storage facilities, dumps, and power plants. Choices that support community health centers.

Good medical care, healthy buildings, clean air, and environmental justice are critical to the health of families and neighborhoods. Imagine that the inner city of Boston is as well known for the quality of care it provides its poorest citizens as for the quality of care it provides the wealthy at its fine research hospitals. Human health in the Heart of the City has improved through better funded community health centers, as well as a proliferation of walking groups, safer parks, clean buses, and soil lead remediation efforts. People receive care before the health crisis hits.

Community health centers have targeted Hispanics – the least likely ethnic group to get regular exercise – and established popular walking groups in the Arnold Arboretum, Franklin Park, Forest Hills Cemetery, and the Boston Nature Center. Other walking paths connect dense residential areas, parks, and commercial areas. People throughout the Heart of the City walk more and feel better.

Any choice relating to the future of the Heart of the City must figure in the needs of the area's growing population of young people. Youth are the future of the city. They have a major impact on public safety for all residents. In 2003, all Heart of the City youth do not enjoy equal access to public services. If quality opportunities are to be equally available to all youth across the Heart of the City, difficult, often unpopular choices relating to the distribution of resources will be required.

**Principle 1 – Provide a wide range of community facilities for all:** The Franklin Field area has no library. Grove Hall has no community center. In the coming years, Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan will not have the quality or quantity of school facilities they will need to adequately provide for the neighborhood's children. The schoolyards and grounds of the Greenwood, Philbrick, and Jeremiah Burke schools need major improvements. As the number of youth in the neighborhoods continues to grow, these needs become ever more pressing.

**Principle 2 – Invest in young people:** With funding for police, schools, community centers, and summer jobs for youth at risk due to tight budgetary constraints at the state, city, and federal levels, community investment in youth becomes ever more critical to public safety and the future of the neighborhoods. Whether you are tutoring seventh graders at a Boston Community Center, hiring a high school student for six weeks in the summer, helping a Haitian youth with her language skills, forming a neighborhood watch, or volunteering at a church youth group, an investment in youth will pay dividends for the entire community over the short and long term.

Unmet demand exists for charter schools, pilot schools, and other types of specially enriched schools in the Heart of the City that expand school choice for parents and students. In 2003, there are few pilot schools and no charter schools in the Heart of the City, despite the high number of children in the area and the rising demand for such alternatives to the traditional Boston Public School system.

**Principle 3 – Promote housing opportunities for all:** With a range of housing types, no part of a neighborhood has the look and feel of an isolated low-income housing project or the look and feel of an austere suburb/ a white, upper-class suburb/ a colorless, shapeless suburb/ a bland, homogenous suburb. Near Elm Hill Avenue and Humboldt Avenue in Roxbury, in the Forest Hills section of Jamaica Plain, and in certain sections of Central Jamaica Plain, one finds a mix of housing that provides something for almost everyone. Dense apartment complexes lie next to grand two-family Victorian homes, which lie next to strings of triple-deckers. Upwardly mobile residents can stay in the neighborhood as their families grow and their incomes increase. Older people have a place to retire.

Boston contains close to 1,500 lots suitable for housing across the city – and more of them are located in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan than in other neighborhoods. These lots need to be opened for private as well as nonprofit development. As long as developers pro-

vide a share for affordable housing – say one-quarter of all units – the property should be given to developers for no fees. By unleashing the power of the marketplace, the city can not only increase the overall supply of housing but also provide critical units for low-income families. During the Roxbury master planning process, coordinated by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, residents regularly complained about low-income housing being “dumped” in their neighborhood. By letting go of unutilized parcels, the city can both meet the demand for a mix of housing types and insure that at least some units are developed for low-income families. The trick is to reduce the bureaucratic haggling over use and sale price by providing the land for free in exchange for set-asides for below-market units.

**Principle 4 – Support community health centers:** Community health centers are critical to the health and well-being of the neighborhoods and should become an even higher funding priority for government, foundations, and non-profits. Today, as the centers gain more patients and receive less income and lower subsidies, even as the costs for care per person increase, the centers face a critical need for new sources of income. Community Health Centers in the Heart of the City include Brookside CHC, Greater Roslindale Medical and Dental Center, Harvard Street NHC, Mattapan CHC, Southern Jamaica Plain HC, and Dimock CHC. The Codman Square CHC is also used by Heart of the City residents.

Effective preventative medicine costs less than emergency medical services once health problems have become acute. Effective exercise and diet programs, maternal health programs, and asthma education programs should be prioritized. Neighborhood health centers, as well as organization such as the Haitian-American Public Health Initiative (HAPHI) play a key role in this.

**Principle 5 – Get physical:** On average, more Hispanic residents are overweight or obese than any other ethnic group in Boston. Yet health programs have not yet targeted these individuals for walking and other types of exercise. Sisters Together has provided a model for walking groups that could be implemented elsewhere in the Heart of the City. Greenspace groups such as the Franklin Park Coalition and the Arboretum Park Conservancy could play a stronger role in improving public health in their communities by encouraging park access and use.

## A NEW VISION FOR THE CITY'S HEARTLAND

In a provocative and hopeful new book, the historian Alexander von Hoffmann shows that urban revitalization comes from the countless, clustered, small-scale improvements in city neighborhoods. Rather than developing a comprehensive master plan that uses a “heavy hand” to direct development, von Hoffmann’s approach depends on creating capacity at the lowest level of the city to create change.

The character of these improvements varies, but generally falls into two categories. The first approach might be called the “make it happen” strategy. These efforts require tireless planning and deal-making by city agencies, state authorities, private developers, nonprofit organizations, churches, environmentalists and others. Such efforts have been at the center of the work of health centers, community development corporations, faith-based coalitions, cleanup

and reuse plans for major land parcels, transit improvements, and the like. Boston excels that this approach and can continue to use it to revive the still-broken pieces of the Heart of the City.

The second approach might be called the “let it happen” strategy. Under this approach, public agencies and advocacy groups look for ways to remove impediments to local enterprise and social improvements. By simplifying regulations for land disposition, zoning, building, start-up businesses, chartering new schools, and other activities, the community creates an open field for the energy of the marketplace. When common interests are at stake, it often makes sense for the government to set simple and transparent standards. But the let-it-happen approach fundamentally wants to create basic conditions for creative activity – and then get out of the way.

Both the make-it-happen and let-it-happen approaches are essential for the continued revitalization of the Heart of the City. The long journey toward a diverse, open, and prosperous community has already begun with the work of countless people with a stake in these communities – residents, advocates, businesses, public agencies, churches, and others. The work is endless. So, too, are the possibilities.

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## APPENDIX 1: TIMELINE OF FRANKLIN PARK

- Before -1630** – A Native American footpath between Boston and Plymouth runs through Franklin Park.
- 1823 - 1825** Ralph Waldo Emerson lives here on a farm and teaches school in Roxbury.
- 1881** - Boston Parks Commission selects the West Roxbury site for Franklin Park and hires Olmsted to design the park. The land belongs to 34 owners.
- 1883** - Franklin Park opens to the public (without the land for the park formally acquired). The park has 527 acres and includes 10 miles of driveway, 19 miles of walks, 2 miles of bridle paths, and 10 entrances, including 6 for carriages.
- 1885** - Average Sunday visitation is 11,000 people, with some Sundays up to 20,000.
- 1890** - George Wright receives permission to set up a golf course – a departure from the Olmsted plan.
- Early 1890s** - Scarborough Pond is built.
- 1897** - John Pettigrew becomes Boston Park Superintendent and begins removing rustic structures from the park and abandoning Olmsted's naturalistic planting style.
- 1900** - The Parks Department takes over the wildly popular Franklin Park golf course. An estimated 40,000 people play golf at Franklin Park over the course of the year.
- 1911-1912** - Boston Mayor John Fitzgerald initiates the construction of a zoological garden in Franklin Park in another departure from Olmsted's plan.
- 1914** - American Athletic Union holds its first track meet in Franklin Park.
- 1925** - Circuit Drive is widened for motor vehicles.
- Late 1930s** - The separate Park Police unit for Franklin Park is disbanded. Parks Superintendent Bouteliers later called this the worst blow of all to the park.
- 1949** - The Playstead Stadium is constructed.
- 1954** - Lemuel Shattuck Hospital is built in Franklin Park. Plans are made to abandon the Bear Dens at Long Crouch Woods.
- 1950s and 1960s** - A dramatic demographic shift occurs in the neighborhoods east of Franklin Park.
- June 1, 1967** - Riots in Grove Hall; 1,700 police mobilize in Franklin Park to quell the disturbances.
- 1969** – Three workers tend Franklin Park.
- 1970** - Roxbury activist Elma Lewis establishes the Franklin Park Coalition.
- 1980** -Three rapes occurred on Glen Road.  
Nine holes of the golf course are unusable.  
The Parks Department closes Glen Road to all traffic and places stone blocks at entrances to prevent vehicular traffic from accessing the park.
- 1982** - The Playstead is entirely blocked to vehicles. Vehicle abuse, dumping, and crime drop dramatically. Elderly residents begin to use the Sigourney Street entrance again.
- 1984** - The first Olmsted park restoration program in the nation is initiated in Massachusetts.  
Park Rangers are assigned to Franklin Park for the first time.
- 1985** - Franklin Park Coalition raises \$2 million for restoration projects in Franklin Park
- 1988** - The Franklin Park Zoo has 35,000 visitors.
- 1989** - The Tropical Forest Pavilion is completed at the Franklin Park Zoo.
- 1990** - The Franklin Park Zoo has 200,000 visitors.

## APPENDIX 2: THE FUTURE OF THE ARNOLD ARBORETUM

In the fall of 2002, the Arnold Arboretum completed a yearlong planning process that will guide the institution through the next decade. Arboretum faculty and staff grappled with two major questions: What should the educational mission the Arnold Arboretum be, and should the institution work to reclaim its historic reputation as a center for scientific research? They also came up with a plan to maintain and improve park infrastructure.

**Research:** Faculty and staff are concerned about the respectability and status of the Arnold Arboretum as a research institution. In 1879, Charles Sprague Sargent, the first director of the Arboretum, declared that “[T]he Arboretum...should be a center of dendrological investigation and research.”<sup>72</sup> For Sargent, and for each director who followed him, the Arnold Arboretum has been a research institution first and foremost – even though its grounds are open to the public.

In 2002, Robert Cook, current director of the Arboretum, acknowledged that over the past half century the Arboretum has shifted its focus. It now operates “largely as a curatorial and educational organization,”<sup>73</sup> – not as a place where resident scientists carry out ground-breaking research. Cook and his colleagues would like to reverse this trend.

**Education:** The long-range plan for the Arnold Arboretum affirms the importance of education to the institution. It does not, however, provide a coherent philosophy to guide and prioritize the Arboretum’s disparate educational efforts. In 2002, educational offerings ranged from public tours and lectures, to programs for 2,700 children from Boston area schools, to public exhibitions, publications, and visitor center displays, to formal classroom teaching at Harvard’s professional schools. In the future, the Arboretum hopes to unify its educational offerings by merging several programs and focusing its efforts on the creation of a professional school.

**Infrastructure:** The long-range plan also recognizes the importance of visitor perception and reaction to the landscape. Physical infrastructure along the edges of the park is particularly visible to the surrounding community. The Arnold Arboretum plans to provide special maintenance and improvements to park edges in the coming years. The institution will accomplish this goal by first compiling a comprehensive inventory of infrastructural elements and how each contributes to the public’s image of the Arboretum. This inventory will become the basis for a restoration plan, which will be jointly crafted by the City of Boston and the Arnold Arboretum.

**APPENDIX 3:**

**TRAVEL ON MAJOR ROADWAYS IN THE HEART OF THE CITY**

(information courtesy of the Boston Transportation Department and *Access Boston 2000-2010*)

<b>Name of Road</b>	<b>Number of bus routes</b>	<b>Daily number of bus riders</b>	<b>Daily number of vehicles</b>	<b>Number of driving lanes</b>	<b>Bus Shelters</b>
<b>Warren St. (Rox)</b>	4	>31,700	13,000	2	None
<b>Blue Hill Ave, (Rox/Dor.)</b>	4	26,150	19,000	4—6	Many
<b>Centre/South St. (JP)</b>	3	19,600	16,000/9,000	2	None
<b>Washington St.(Ros)</b>	8	17,100	10,000	2	None
<b>Seaver St. (Rox)</b>	2	2,250	30,000	4	One
<b>Arborway (JP)</b>	0	0	41,000	4	-
<b>Morton St. (Mat)</b>	2	9,000	34,000	4	None

## APPENDIX 4: BARRIERS TO GREENSPACE

Unless the infrastructure that surrounds a public park – the roads, sidewalks, signs, and entrances – make it easy for people visit, even the most beautiful and well-designed park will not be used and enjoyed to its full potential. While some barriers to access are physical, such as fences, blocked entrances, trash, and above-ground railroads, other barriers are psychological in nature. These include trash-strewn edges, busy roads with fast-moving traffic, and rusty, derelict signs, gates, and fences.

People come from all over to walk or run around Jamaica Pond. And they can enter the park from almost any place around its perimeter. Likewise, anyone who lives along the entire length of the Southwest Corridor Park can easily find a place to step onto the path and find the garden or tot-lot they are looking for. The Arnold Arboretum and Franklin Park have 14 and 17 entrances respectively, and Massachusetts Audubon Society has made tremendous improvements to the fence around the edge of the Boston Nature Center. The Forest Hills Cemetery has dramatically improved the quality of its signage since 2001. Yet the Boston Nature Center, Franklin Park, the Arnold Arboretum, and the Forest Hills Cemetery each have major barriers to access ranging from blocked entrances to discomfort between ethnic groups.

**Barriers to access to the Boston Nature Center:** Cemeteries, urban wilds, and underutilized urban wasteland surround the Boston Nature Center on all four sides, making good access to the public a major challenge.

- ◆ Morton Street carries fast-moving traffic between forlorn edges of Franklin Park, the Boston Nature Center, and Forest Hills Cemetery. Broken walls and fencing, trash, and fast, heavy traffic intimidate many potential visitors to the Boston Nature Center.

- ◆ Rusty, broken fencing, trash, and cement blockades line parts of the perimeter of the Boston Nature Center along Morton Street and American Legion Highway. Crumbling stone walls, dumpsters, and the Shattuck Hospital towers and power plant along Morton Street mar the approach to the nature center along what could otherwise be considered an extension of the Emerald Necklace, making people feel unsafe and insecure.

- ◆ Signage for the nature center along Morton Street is small and difficult to read. It is contradicted by a state sign that says “No Trespassing.”

**Barriers to access to the Arnold Arboretum:** One of urban America’s great natural places, the arboretum is surrounded by hard edges. Access from the Arborway is strong for cars and pedestrians alike, but traffic and physical barriers makes access difficult for many people. Some specific trouble spots:

- ◆ A *commuter rail* runs along the eastern edge of the Arboretum and almost entirely blocks access to the Arboretum for the working class community along Washington Street in Roslindale.

- ◆ *Arboretum Road*, which leads through a pedestrian tunnel that was once well used by neighborhood children, is *currently clogged with tires, planks, cardboard, and corrugated tin* piled high on either side. The tunnel connector is rarely, if ever, used.

- ◆ There is *no signage or formal entrance at Archdale Road* in Roslindale, the one point of access to the Arboretum for the Archdale community.

**Barriers to access to Franklin Park:** As the biggest natural space in the Emerald Necklace, Franklin Park has the potential to be the signature piece of the whole area. But access is uneven. Specifically:

- ◆ The *Morton Street entrance* to the park at Scarborough Pond is *blocked*. Other blocked entrances at Blue Hill Avenue and Walnut Avenue inhibit access to the park to a lesser extent.

- ◆ A zoo fence blocks entrance to Franklin Park between Blue Hill Avenue and Elm Hill Avenue in Roxbury.

- ◆ *Blue Hill Avenue, American Legion Highway, and Circuit Drive* carry two to eight lanes of fast-moving traffic, creating a barrier to the park.

- ◆ Many residents fear the unkempt, *poorly signed woodlands*, in particular the former bear dense at Long Crouch Woods.

- ◆ *Signage* for the park is lacking at important entrances along (for example at Schoolboy Stadium, Glen Road, and along Morton Street).

- ◆ The *Lemuel Shattuck Hospital*, its associated high-security prison, and the *Shattuck Shelter* (a care center for the homeless men and women) require a heavy police presence and intimidate some visitors. The hospital also presents a messy, unattractive face to the community on Morton Street.

**APPENDIX 5:  
PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE BY CENSUS TRACT**

<b>Census Tract</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Percent under 18 years</b>	<b>Rank (highest to lowest percent of youth)</b>	<b>Percent increase since 1990</b>
<b>813</b>	Northern Egleston Square	Roxbury	29 percent	8	
<b>819</b>	NE of Franklin Pk. To Blue Hill Ave.	Roxbury	33 percent	6	+2 percent
<b>821</b>	North of Seaver St.	Roxbury	34 percent	5	+3 percent
<b>901</b>	Columbia Road; Erie/ Ellington	Dorchester	35 percent	4	+5 percent
<b>902</b>	N. of Washington Street; E. of Blue Hill Ave.	Roxbury	61 percent	1	
<b>924</b>	N. of Franklin Field	Dorchester	38 percent	2	+5 percent
<b>1001</b>	S. of Franklin Field/ Harambee Park	Dorchester/ Mattapan	37 percent	3	+2 percent
<b>1010.10</b>	Mattahunt	Mattapan	27 percent	9	
<b>1011</b>	Wellington Hill	Mattapan	33 percent	6	+3 percent
<b>1101</b>	Forest Hills	Jamaica Plain	24 percent	11	
<b>1106.02</b>	Peters Hill/Longfellow	Roslindale	16 percent	12	
<b>1201</b>	Jamaica Hills	Jamaica Plain	16 percent	12	
<b>1202</b>	Stonybrook	Jamaica Plain	13 percent	14	
<b>1203</b>	Parkside/southern Egleston	Jamaica Plain/ Roxbury	27 percent	9	
<b>1204</b>	Pondside/central Jamaica Plain	Jamaica Plain	13 percent	14	

**APPENDIX 6: YOUTH FACILITIES BY HEART OF THE CITY AREA**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Public Schools</b>	<b>Boston Community Centers</b>	<b>Libraries</b>	<b>Other Public Buildings for Youth</b>
<b>Grove Hall (Roxbury/Dorchester)</b>	1 (Burke, Brunswick Gardens in 2004)	0	1	
<b>Central/Southern Jamaica Plain</b>	4 (Fuller through 2003, Agassiz, Manning, English)	3	2	Boathouse (Jamaica Pond)
<b>Egleston Square (Jamaica Plain/Roxbury)</b>	3 (Hernandez, Mendell, Egleston)	0	1	YMCA
<b>Franklin Field (Dorchester)</b>	3 (Endicott through 2003, Greenburg, Lee)	1 (Boys and Girls Club)	0	Sportsman Tennis Center; Lena Park CDC
<b>Archdale/Roslindale Village (Roslindale)</b>	4 (Sumner, Haley, Philbrick, Lyndon)	2	1	
<b>Northern Mattapan</b>	2 (Lewenberg, Mattahunt)	1	0	Boston Nature Center
<b>Walnut (Roxbury)</b>	3 (Ellis, Higginson, Latin Academy)	0	0	

## **APPENDIX 7: TRIPLE-DECKERS: DEMOCRATIC ARCHITECTURE OR A DISGRACE TO THE STREET?**

Every Heart of the City neighborhood contains blocks, streets, and whole areas of wooden triple-decker homes. Originally built to allow low and moderate income families the opportunity to combine the benefits of suburban and urban living, three-decker homes allowed extended families to live close to but not with one another. With their characteristic flat tops, wood frames, narrow shape, and back porches, triple-deckers are easily recognizable but variously described.

One history of the triple-decker called the buildings "democratic architecture" and "good solid housing."<sup>74</sup> In a report for the Boston Landmarks Commission, Arthur J. Krim called three-decker streets "highly creative," and "a marvelous expression of the builder's art and a major source of Dorchester's appeal."<sup>75</sup> Many triple-decker residents today describe a sense of closeness and neighborliness in these homes that is lacking elsewhere.

But in the 1890s when the first triple-deckers were built in the Forest Hills area of Jamaica Plain, residents so despised the new housing type that they created covenants among themselves to sell land only to those who could afford to build single family homes.<sup>76</sup> In 1967, a young mother on Weld Hill Street in Jamaica Plain called the triple-deckers in her neighborhood "a disgrace to the street."<sup>77</sup> And today, community development corporations in the Heart of the City report intense resistance among neighbors to the construction of new triple-decker homes.

Between 1890 and 1920, 15,000 triple-deckers were built in the city as a whole. More than 5,000 were built in Dorchester alone between 1900 and 1925 and the neighborhood has been strongly associated with the triple-decker since that time.<sup>78</sup> In the 1970s, when the popularity of the triple-decker reached an all-time low, the City launched a marketing campaign on their behalf, arguing that in 1978, buyers could live on one floor, pay the mortgage with rent from the other two, and benefit from a year-end tax deduction of \$1400-\$1700. In 1999, according to the City's Department of Neighborhood Development, triple-deckers comprised 35 percent of housing units in Dorchester and 44 percent of housing units in Roxbury. Although the City at times facilitates renovations of existing triple-deckers such as 15 units of affordable, cooperative housing in Rockvale Circle of Jamaica Plain, the City does not allow the construction of new triple-decker homes in the city.

### **A FEW HEART OF THE CITY AREAS WITH LARGE NUMBERS OF TRIPLE-DECKERS**

- ◆ Weld Hill and Walk Hill (JP)
- ◆ Forest Hills Street (JP)
- ◆ South of Morton Street (Mattapan)
- ◆ Child Street area (JP)
- ◆ Stony Brook neighborhood (JP)
- ◆ Franklin Field (Dorchester)
- ◆ North of Talbot (Dorchester)
- ◆ Healy Playground area (Roslindale)

**APPENDIX 8: MEDIAN HOME PRICES BY NEIGHBORHOOD  
BETWEEN 1998 AND MID-2002**

SOURCE: CITY OF BOSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT  
AND THE BOSTON INDICATORS PROJECT

	1998	1999	2000	2001	Mid-2002	Percent increase between 1998 and mid-2002
<b>Dorchester</b>	\$140,000	\$164,950	\$194,500	\$240,000	\$265,000	89 percent
<b>Jamaica Plain</b>	\$165,500	\$188,000	\$241,000	\$278,000	\$315,950	90 percent
<b>Mattapan</b>	\$130,000	\$149,450	\$180,000	\$210,000	\$221,250	70 percent
<b>Roslindale</b>	\$167,000	\$182,250	\$217,000	\$239,000	\$280,000	68 percent
<b>Roxbury</b>	\$119,000	\$136,000	\$176,000	\$225,000	\$259,000	118 percent
<b>Citywide</b>	\$162,500	\$182,000	\$231,000	\$263,000	\$300,000	85 percent

**TWO-BEDROOM MEDIAN ADVERTISED ASKING RENT  
BY NEIGHBORHOOD FROM 1995 TO MID-2002**

SOURCE: CITY OF BOSTON DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT  
AND THE BOSTON INDICATORS PROJECT.

	1995	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Percent increase 1995-mid-2002
<b>Dorchester</b>	\$675	\$800	\$975	\$1200	\$1275	\$1300	93 percent
<b>Jamaica Plain</b>	\$775	\$1000	\$1200	\$1300	\$1400	\$1500	94 percent
<b>Mattapan</b>	\$688	N/a	N/a	N/A	\$1250	N/a	N/a
<b>Roslindale</b>	\$725	\$900	\$1100	\$1200	\$1300	\$1300	79 percent
<b>Roxbury</b>	\$688	N/a	\$1100	\$1400	\$1300	\$1400	103 percent

**APPENDIX 9: NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF RENTER  
AND OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS BY CENSUS TRACT**  
(CENSUS TRACT 2000. ORDERED FROM HIGHEST TO LOWEST PERCENTAGE OF RENTERS)

<b>Census Tract</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Number of Owner Occupied Units</b>	<b>Number of Renter Occupied Units</b>	<b>Percent of Owner Occupied Units</b>	<b>Percent of Renter Occupied Units</b>
<b>813 (Roxbury)</b>	N. of School St.	163	1433	10.2 percent	89.8 percent
<b>821 (Roxbury)</b>	E. of Humboldt Ave.	181	1531	10.6 percent	89.4 percent
<b>924 (Dorchester)</b>	N. of Humboldt Ave.	279	929	23.1 percent	80.1 percent
<b>819 (Roxbury)</b>	W. of Humboldt Ave.	279	929	23.1 percent	76.9 percent
<b>1001 (Dorchester)</b>	S. of Talbot Ave.	427	1389	23.5 percent	76.5 percent
<b>901 (Roxbury/ Dorchester)</b>	Grove Hall, S. of Washington St.	407	1200	25.3 percent	74.7 percent
<b>1011.02 (Mattapan)</b>	E. of Blue Hill Ave, S. of Morton	416	1145	26.6 percent	73.4 percent
<b>1202 (Jamaica Plain)</b>	Stony Brook and South St.	433	1157	27.2 percent	72.8 percent
<b>815 (Roxbury)</b>	Westminster Ave.	183	404	31.2 percent	68.8 percent
<b>1002 (Dorchester)</b>	Woodrow to Morton St.	271	577	32.0 percent	68.0 percent
<b>1101 (Jamaica Plain)</b>	Woodbourne	750	1464	33.9 percent	66.1 percent
<b>1203 (Jamaica Plain)</b>	Egleston Sq./ Parkside	525	1015	34.1 percent	65.9 percent
<b>1011.01 (Mattapan)</b>	Wellington Hill	397	644	38.1 percent	61.9 percent
<b>1104.01 (Roslindale)</b>	Hyde Park Ave.	606	661	47.8 percent	52.2 percent
<b>1106.02 (Roslindale)</b>	Longfellow/ Peters Hill	1068	1052	50.4 percent	49.6 percent
<b>1201.02 (Jamaica Plain/ Roslindale)</b>	Jamaica Hills to South St.	1169	301	79.5 percent	20.5 percent

## APPENDIX 10: POPULATION AND ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF JAMAICA PLAIN

Population of Jamaica Plain			
1990: 40,995		2000: 38,196	
Ethnic Breakdown of Jamaica Plain			
	1980	1990	2000
<b>White</b>	59 percent	49 percent	50 percent
<b>Black</b>	18 percent	19 percent	17 percent
<b>Hispanic</b>	20 percent	26 percent	23 percent
<b>Asian/PA</b>	2 percent	5 percent	7 percent
<b>Multiracial</b>	-	-	3 percent

## POPULATION AND ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF MATTAPAN

Population of Mattapan (includes Franklin Field & Franklin Hill, areas generally considered Dorchester)			
1990: 36,135		2000: 37,486	
Ethnic Breakdown of Mattapan			
	1980	1990	2000
<b>White</b>	15 percent	8 percent	4 percent
<b>Black</b>	79 percent	84 percent	77 percent
<b>Hispanic</b>	5 percent	7 percent	13 percent
<b>Asian/PA</b>	-	1 percent	1 percent
<b>Multiracial</b>	-	-	4 percent

## POPULATION AND ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF ROSLINDALE

Population of Roslindale			
1990: 32,959		2000: 34,618	
Ethnic Breakdown of Roslindale			
	1980	1990	2000
<b>White</b>	91 percent	77 percent	56 percent
<b>Black</b>	4 percent	8 percent	16 percent
<b>Hispanic</b>	20 percent	26 percent	23 percent
<b>Asian/PA</b>	1 percent	3 percent	4 percent
<b>Multiracial</b>	-	-	3 percent

**APPENDIX 10 CONTINUED :  
POPULATION AND ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF ROXBURY**

<b>Population of Roxbury (includes Erie-Ellington, the area north of Talbot Ave. and southern Grove Hall, areas generally considered Dorchester)</b>			
<b>1990: 58,893</b>		<b>2000: 56,658</b>	
<b>Ethnic Breakdown of Roxbury</b>			
	1980	1990	2000
<b>White</b>	8 percent	6 percent	5 percent
<b>Black</b>	76 percent	71 percent	63 percent
<b>Hispanic</b>	13 percent	19 percent	24 percent
<b>Asian/PA</b>	-	-	1 percent
<b>Multiracial</b>	-	-	4 percent

## APPENDIX 11: MURIEL AND OTTO SNOWDEN AND FREEDOM HOUSE OF GROVE HALL

In the early 1950s, Grove Hall was a stable, ethnically mixed, middle class neighborhood at the center of what was then a segregated, racially polarized city. In 1950, approximately 50,000 Jews were still within walking distance of the Mishkan Tefila Temple on Seaver Street on the northern edge of Franklin Park.<sup>79</sup> African American social workers Muriel and Otto Snowden valued the stability and diversity they found in highland Roxbury. Throughout the tumultuous years of the mid to late 1900s in Grove Hall, the Snowdens dedicated their lives to preserving these qualities and improving the neighborhood's public spaces.

Otto grew up in Boston and attended Dorchester High School, while Muriel grew up in New Jersey. Both completed social work degrees and worked in Boston for several years before founding Freedom House in 1949. They founded Freedom House to centralize community activism in the fight for neighborhood improvement, good schools, and ethnic harmony.

The Snowdens believed that strong relationships between blacks and Jews in Grove Hall were key to neighborhood stability. They ran one of a handful of interracial pre-schools in the city and brought black and Jewish young people together to foster camaraderie and communication. Freedom House worked with neighborhood associations to identify and address local problems. A loose coalition of organizations, led by Freedom House, cleaned up parks, vacant buildings, and empty lots, and wielded their collective power to rid the neighborhood of rowdy bars and other blighting influences. Through much of the 1960s, Freedom House also served as a liaison between the community and the Boston Redevelopment Authority, pressuring the city to include upper Roxbury in its plans for urban renewal. In the 1960s and 1970s, Freedom House became the central meeting place where community leaders, parents, and city officials could come together and develop policy for the integration of Boston school children.<sup>80</sup> In 1964, when many in the neighborhoods boycotted Boston Public Schools, Freedom House became a temporary "Freedom School."

Over the course of their 35-year tenure as directors of Freedom House, Muriel and Otto Snowden faced enormous obstacles to their work, including a devastating fire in 1959 that destroyed the newly renovated Freedom House. In 1963, Muriel Snowden remembered the experience of awakening in the middle of the night of the fire:

"When we were phoned, we came running in our pajamas. My tears kept freezing on my face but all I could think about was 'There goes ten years - ten years going up in smoke.' [But then] from all over the city, people called to offer encouragement. 'You must go on' they said. 'There's got to be a Freedom House.' They pledged everything from vacant stores to money for a new building fund. It seemed a miracle. I looked at Otto and my tears started all over again. 'They understand.' I kept crying. 'All these years we weren't working in vain.'" (Freedom House is a dream come true for couple. Boston Herald. July 7, 1963).

The Snowdens did not realize their dream of maintaining an ethnically balanced, middle-class community in Grove Hall (between 1950 and 1960 the number of Jews in Grove Hall plummeted from 50,000 to 7,500), but their legacy remains. Following turbulent institutional years under the leadership of at least nine directors since 1984, Freedom House is again finding stability and direction. Freedom House is located across the street from the Grove Hall Library.

## APPENDIX 12: SEGREGATION AND SCHOOL CHOICE IN BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In 1974, Federal Judge W. Arthur Garrity, Jr. ruled that the Boston School Committee had "knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation" and "intentionally brought about and maintained a dual system [of education]." Garrity ordered Boston to desegregate its schools by busing children to achieve racial balance. White resistance to busing was strong, and the exodus of white families to the suburbs, which began in the 1950s, accelerated. Over the next 25 years, the total share of whites in the Boston Public Schools declined from more than 50 percent to 15 percent.<sup>81</sup> In the wake of the exodus, the city closed or demolished 30 underutilized public school buildings in Mattapan, Dorchester, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain, selling many of them to be developed as condominiums.

Between 1974 and 2000, the city's system for assigning children to schools sought to create a racial balance. By 1999, however, white students comprised only 16 percent of the public school system (down from 52 percent in 1974) and the Boston School Committee voted to drop race as a factor deciding which school a child will attend in favor of a "race blind" system that promotes the idea of neighborhood schools.

While all high schools are citywide, the city's elementary and middle schools are divided into three zones – east, west, and north. Students apply for schools in the zone where they live or apply to the few citywide schools that are open to all students. In most cases, half of the spots in each school are reserved for those who live within walking distance of the school and siblings of current students are given first preference – regardless of the racial makeup of the neighborhoods. The new policy has translated into greater segregation at some schools, greater convenience for some parents and children, and increased frustration among others.

In the Heart of the City, white students are becoming more concentrated in only a few schools. Before 2000, the Manning School in western Jamaica Plain had 60 percent black students. Under the race blind system, incoming classes are 60 percent white. At the Philbrick School in Roslindale, the percentage of white students jumped by almost 16 percent under the new system between 1999 and 2001. At the Lyndon School in Roslindale, the white student population increased by 7 percent.<sup>82</sup>

Yet some parents who are denied their first and second school choices and who support the concept of neighborhood schools argue that the Boston Public School assignment program unfairly denies their children the right to attend school in their own neighborhood. In 2003, a group of white parents whose children were not assigned to their neighborhood schools challenged the City's school assignment plan, arguing that it discriminated against white students.

In April 2003 Federal Judge Richard Stearns ruled the city's school assignment policy to be constitutional, but noted that since minority neighborhoods like Roxbury and Mattapan have the fewest schools, families in these neighborhoods have less school choice than predominantly white neighborhoods.

## APPENDIX 13: THE BOSTON MIRACLE

In Boston, when black clergy, a largely white police force, youth probation officers, and Harvard academics worked together towards a common goal, people called it a miracle. The results of this extraordinary partnership, formed in response to an unprecedented youth homicide rate in Heart of the City neighborhoods, were no less miraculous.

In 1990, 73 young Bostonians were murdered. This number represented a 230 percent increase in youth homicides over the course of three years. The vast majority of young victims and perpetrators lived in Heart of the City neighborhoods. Most victims were gang members. Gangs limited the outside mobility of many residents and caused them to live in fear.

The violence reached its symbolic peak in 1992 at a funeral service for a young gang member at Morning Star Baptist Church on Blue Hill Avenue in Mattapan. During the service, gang members spotted a member of a rival gang, chased him through the church, shot at him, and stabbed him repeatedly while the congregation fled in fear. In the wake of this tragedy, seven black ministers and a church worker formed the Ten Point Coalition, an organization that would become an international model for collaboration between communities and law enforcement agents. The ten points are designed to connect churches with at-risk youth. Churches are encouraged to "Adopt-a-Gang," make their churches safe havens for young people on weekend nights, and carry out nighttime street evangelism. The unprecedented partnership represented a risk for the pastors, who had long been alienated from the police.

Members of the Ten Point Coalition built relationships with gang members and police. Probation officers, who understood the difficult social situations youth were up against, began collaborating with police officers, who saw only the crimes gang members were committing. The pastors, probation officers, and police began sharing information and working together to connect many young people with services while identifying and incarcerating the worst offenders. Police gained insights into the broader context of these teenaged offenders' lives. They saw gang members bringing money home to single mothers who might work two low-wage jobs, and dressing younger siblings for school in the morning. The perspectives of both the clergy and the police began to change.

Through a strategy known as "Operation Cease Fire", the police broadcast their intention to crack down on particularly violent groups of youth. In a coordinated communications campaign, streetworkers and probation officers warned gang members about strict new policies and told them to tell their friends. After warning the youth, police made intense, expedited arrests for what were seen as small infractions. Jail times were long and the youth had no possibility of parole (The Boston Strategy. A Story of Unlikely Alliances).

Scholars attribute the dramatic drop in the homicide rate in Boston over the course of the 1990s – the sharpest in the nation – in large part to these innovative strategies and partnerships.<sup>83</sup> From a highwater mark of 73 youth homicides in 1990, the rate dropped to ten by 1997. Beginning in August 1995, there was a 29-month period during which Boston had no teenage homicide victims. A streetworker named Tracy Litthcutt who experienced the fear generated by gang activity in Heart of the City neighborhoods in the 1980s and early 1990s underscores the transformation of everyday life in the area: Tracy Litthcutt notes: "You can go into those communities now and see grandmothers walking the streets and in the parks that the gangs controlled. I can see now, six-, seven-, eight-year-olds in the park playing again, people out on the streets, in their backyards, having cook-outs, [whereas before] they were nervous about a stray bullet hitting them or their family."

Boston's strategy to prevent youth violence has been emulated in urban areas across the country, including Chester, Pennsylvania, Gary, Indiana, Los Angeles, California, Louisville, Kentucky, Plainfield, New Jersey, and Tampa, Florida. But in 2002, with a fast-growing youth population in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester, and many of the jailed youth returning to their old neighborhoods, new strategies, good planning, and renewed partnerships will be required to ensure peace in the neighborhoods.

Since 2000, as young offenders incarcerated in the 1990s have been released from detention facilities, the youth are returning to the communities where they grew up. These young people may not find the support, jobs, and schooling they will need to stay off the streets. The situation is particularly acute in the Grove Hall and Franklin Field/ Franklin Hill areas, where formerly violent gang members are returning home in significant numbers, according to activists from the Ten Point Coalition and Roxbury Youth Works. In 2000, Boston Police Superintendent Paul Joyce estimated that each month, 200 offenders were being released from the House of Correction and the Department of Corrections into the neighborhoods of Boston, many of whom are former gang members from Heart of the City neighborhoods, now in their late 20s and early 30s.<sup>84</sup> Among youth and adults, the first year back on the streets after incarceration is the most dangerous. Adults released from prison in Massachusetts are most likely to be reincarcerated within the first six months of their return to the streets. Of the Massachusetts state prisoners released in 1995, 44 percent were incarcerated again within three years.<sup>85</sup>

In early 2002, according to the Boston police department, the Grove Hall area again had the highest rate of violent crime among youth in the city. In November of 2002, the *Boston Globe* reported an increase in violence at Jeremiah Burke High School among students, and the City of Boston has been forced to cut summer jobs for high school students. In response, community groups and law enforcement agents are renewing their commitment to cooperation are ratcheting up their efforts toward effective community policing.

# The Heart of the City

## Information for Urban Vitality in Boston

### PROJECT PARTNERS

#### Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University

The Rappaport Institute works with universities, public agencies, and other organizations in the region to improve the governance of Greater Boston. The Institute coordinates activities in five areas to pursue this mission: research that focuses on the policy and governance challenges of the region, service opportunities for the region's graduate and professional school students, forums on a wide range of policy and governance issues, training for public officials and others, and information resources accessible by the Internet. The Rappaport Institute housed and coordinated the project from October 2001 to March 2003 and coordinated the production of the report and web site. The Rappaport Institute can be reached at (617) 495-5091; its web site is [www.ksg.harvard.edu/rappaport](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/rappaport).

#### Arnold Arboretum Harvard University

The Arnold Arboretum is a research and educational institution based at Harvard University. As part of the City of Boston's park system, the Arboretum's Jamaica Plain site functions as an outdoor museum open to the public – a collection of hardy trees, shrubs, and vines located on 265 acres in Boston and associated herbarium and library collections. The Arboretum also coordinates scholarly research and holds major public forums to engage scholarly and law communities in high-level discussions of landscape architecture and the environment. The Arboretum provided major financial and advisory support for the Heart of the City. The Arboretum can be reached at (617) 524-1718; the Arboretum's web site is [www.arboretum.harvard.edu](http://www.arboretum.harvard.edu).

#### Center for Urban and Regional Policy Northeastern University

The Center for Urban and Regional Policy is a "think and do tank" – a place where faculty, staff, and students pool their expertise, resources, and commitment to address a wide range of issues facing cities, towns, and suburbs with particular emphasis on the Greater Boston region. CURP staff are involved in a wide array of projects, all aimed at helping policymakers and citizens better understand the dimensions of urban issues. CURP agreed to take over and update the Heart of the City website on a regular basis in March 2003. CURP can be reached at (617) 373-7080; its web site is [www.curp.neu.edu](http://www.curp.neu.edu).