

Enhance Neighborhoods

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Improve the public realm, strengthen neighborhood services and connectivity, and encourage contextually sensitive development to improve urban vitality and to affirm each neighborhood's distinct identity.

We will strengthen what we love about our neighborhoods in a way that affirms each area's distinct identity. Residents care about making neighborhoods more vibrant places, with great parks, schools, restaurants, buildings, and retail amenities. In workshops, online, and on the street, people who live and work in Boston expressed their desire to strengthen the unique characteristics and identities of their neighborhoods, from the music scene in Allston, to the arts of Upham's Corner, to the strong immigrant community in Chinatown, to the historic district of Beacon Hill, to the independent businesses along Centre Street in Jamaica Plain.

Residents are eager to see job growth in or around their neighborhoods, encourage small businesses on their main streets, and have places where people can gather, such as parks, playgrounds, and coffee shops. There is concern about the rising cost of housing and a

desire to preserve and enhance the unique character of the neighborhoods.

Imagine Boston will guide preservation, enhancement, and growth in neighborhoods to further improve the specific characteristics that make each place vibrant, inviting, and connected to the rest of the city. This means facilitating contextually appropriate residential and commercial development on neighborhood main streets and infill development on residential side streets at the scale of the existing neighborhood fabric. We will undertake this work in close collaboration with residents in each neighborhood to ensure that new development enhances quality of life for existing residents.



"It is important that affordable owner-occupied housing is built for first-time owners"

Resident via draft plan feedback

"Bring stability and opportunity to every neighborhood. Improve business districts and create opportunities for small businesses."

Roxbury resident via text message

"We [need to make sure] that new residential development in low- to moderate-income areas is accompanied by high-quality-of-life amenities, including good, safe multimodal transportation, walking distance parks, preservation of preexisting greenery, especially mature tree canopy, additional greenery where needed, high-quality food and other consumer stores, businesses with good jobs."

Resident via draft plan feedback

This is what we aspire to achieve

Ensure Housing Affordability

Neighborhoods will provide housing for Bostonians of a variety of incomes. Existing housing, especially affordable housing, will be stable, and proactive antidisplacement policies will be implemented. Newly developed housing will be responsive to area incomes and support mixed-income communities.

Enhance Neighborhood Character

The character of our neighborhoods will be strengthened through strategic preservation and enhancement. This preservation will honor our history and neighborhood character, while enabling neighborhoods to evolve to meet new needs.

Encourage Contextually-Sensitive Development

New development will be contextually responsive, focused on filling gaps in neighborhood main-street corridors and complementing the scale and form of existing buildings along residential streets—whether the three-deckers of Dorchester or the mid-nineteenth-century rowhouses of the South End.

Invest in Public Realm & Open Space

Streetscape, open space, arts, and public space enhancements will improve the quality of the public realm and reflect local culture.



Strengthen Job Access

Neighborhoods will connect residents to jobs, by encouraging job growth and small business growth in neighborhoods, by establishing job-training programs in neighborhoods, and by improving transit connections to job centers.

Improve Transportation Connections

Transportation connectivity improvements will provide a range of mobility options to residents, with a focus on proactive investments to improve connections in neighborhoods farther from transit.

Provide Amenities for Everyday Needs

Neighborhoods will have a mix of uses that meet Bostonians' daily needs. Main street retail will enable residents to meet every day needs, including drug stores and grocery stores with healthy food options.

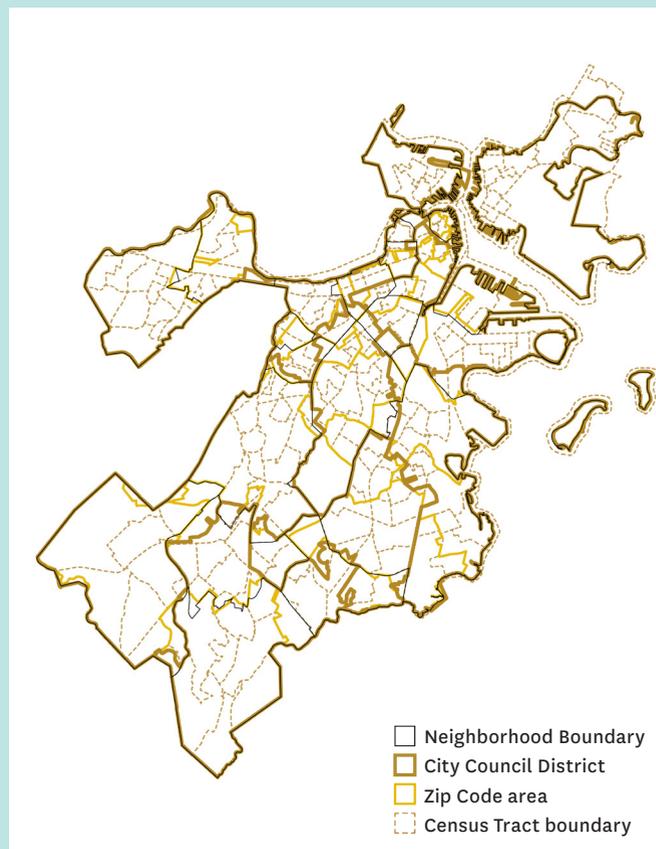
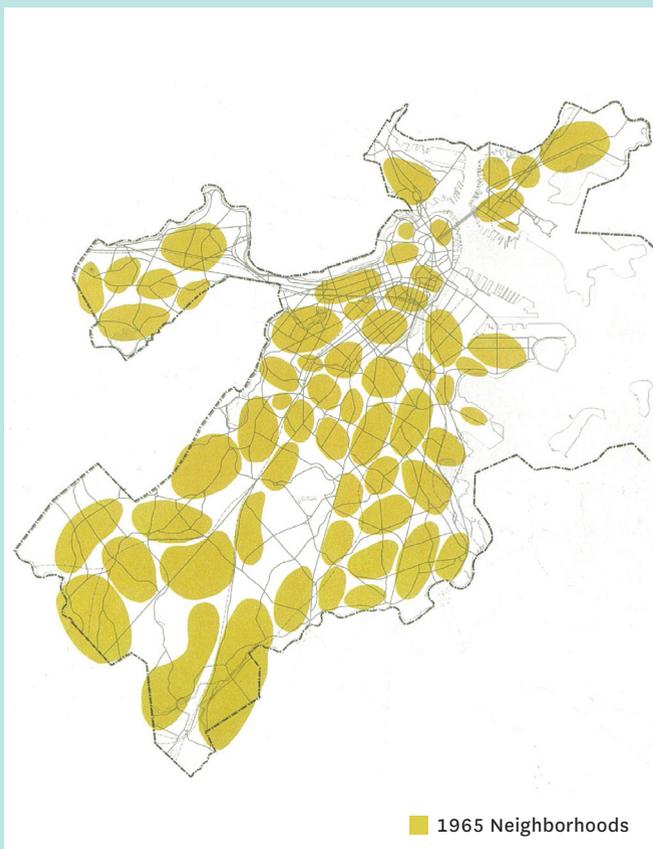
Foster Community Gathering Spaces

Main streets will be places of congregation. Fostering a strong set of community gathering places in every neighborhood will strengthen the social vitality of our communities and city by enhancing relationships and collaboration.

Design Public Spaces for All Ages

By taking into account the practical needs of our young people and elders, we can design neighborhoods that work for residents of every age.

Boston’s neighborhoods are the multiple “centers” of the city and retain a strong local sense of identity.



↑ Boston’s 1965 Neighborhoods

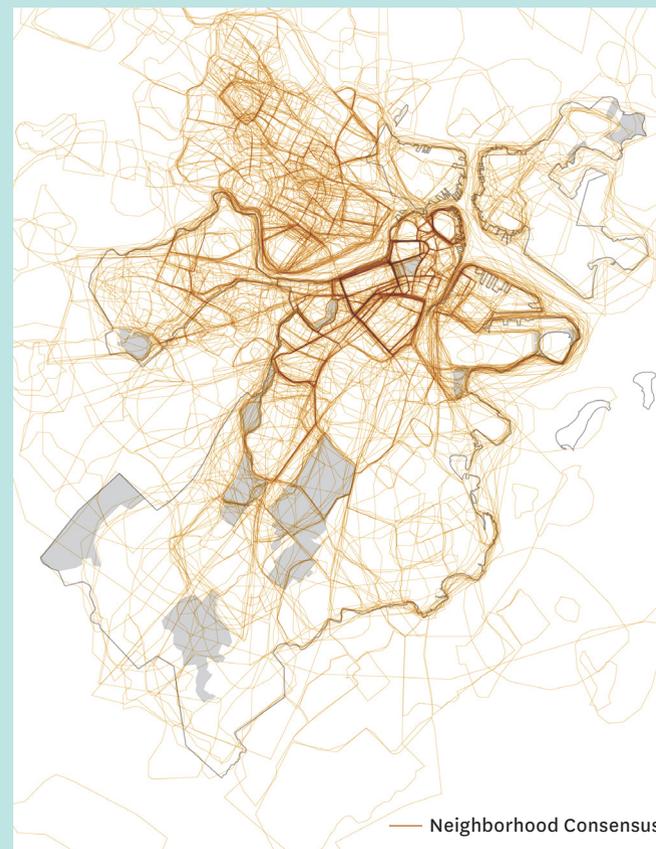
The last citywide plan, from 1965, included this map titled, “Boston’s existing pattern of separate districts and residential neighborhoods.” In some areas, neighborhoods were even more tightly defined than we perceive them today, and entire areas that we now consider neighborhoods—such as Fort Point—were not depicted on the map.

↑ Differing Neighborhood Definitions

Today’s City Council districts and the City’s official neighborhood boundaries overlap but differ, and census tracts—the basis of many of the demographic map analyses—offer yet another layer of geographical boundaries.

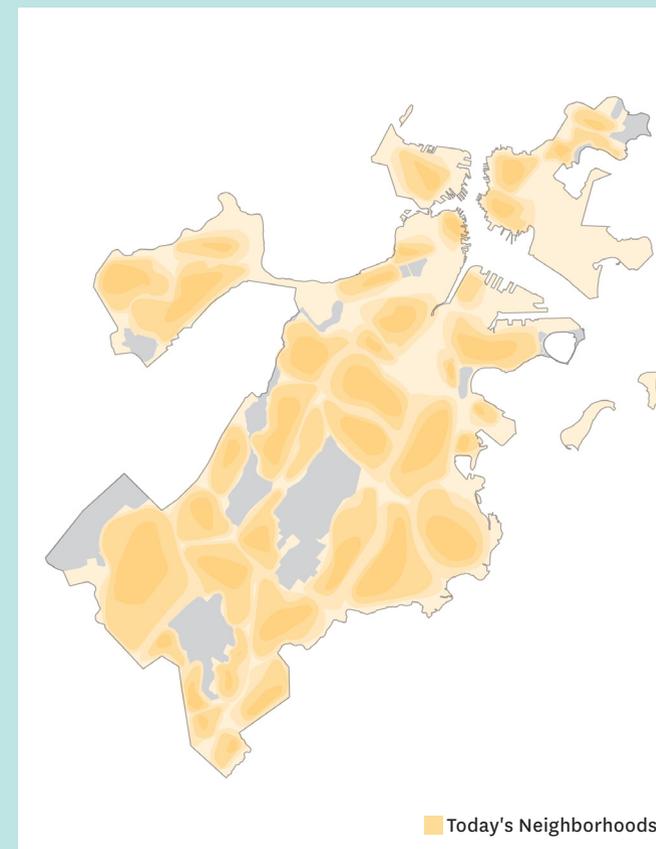
Source: 1965 / 1975 General Plan for the City of Boston; Source: City of Boston Open Data, U.S. Census Bureau TIGER Shapefile

Source: Bostonography.com Map your Neighborhood Again 2015;



↑ Crowdsourced Neighborhood Boundaries

The cartographers at Bostonography.com recently crowdsourced neighborhood boundaries. They sought to know: Where are the areas of consensus? Where are the disputed zones? Where are the no-man’s lands? What they found was general consensus on neighborhood centers but fluid definitions of the boundaries.



↑ Today’s Neighborhoods

A reimagining of the 1965 neighborhood map, based on the crowdsourced neighborhood definitions, shows how perception of the city by residents has changed. What were formerly “no-man’s lands” such as the South Boston Waterfront and Fort Point, are now neighborhoods. Boston remains a city of neighborhoods, but these definitions have evolved and will continue to change.

Different neighborhoods will need different investments to thrive.

City Hall To Go brings neighborhood services to different parts of the city.



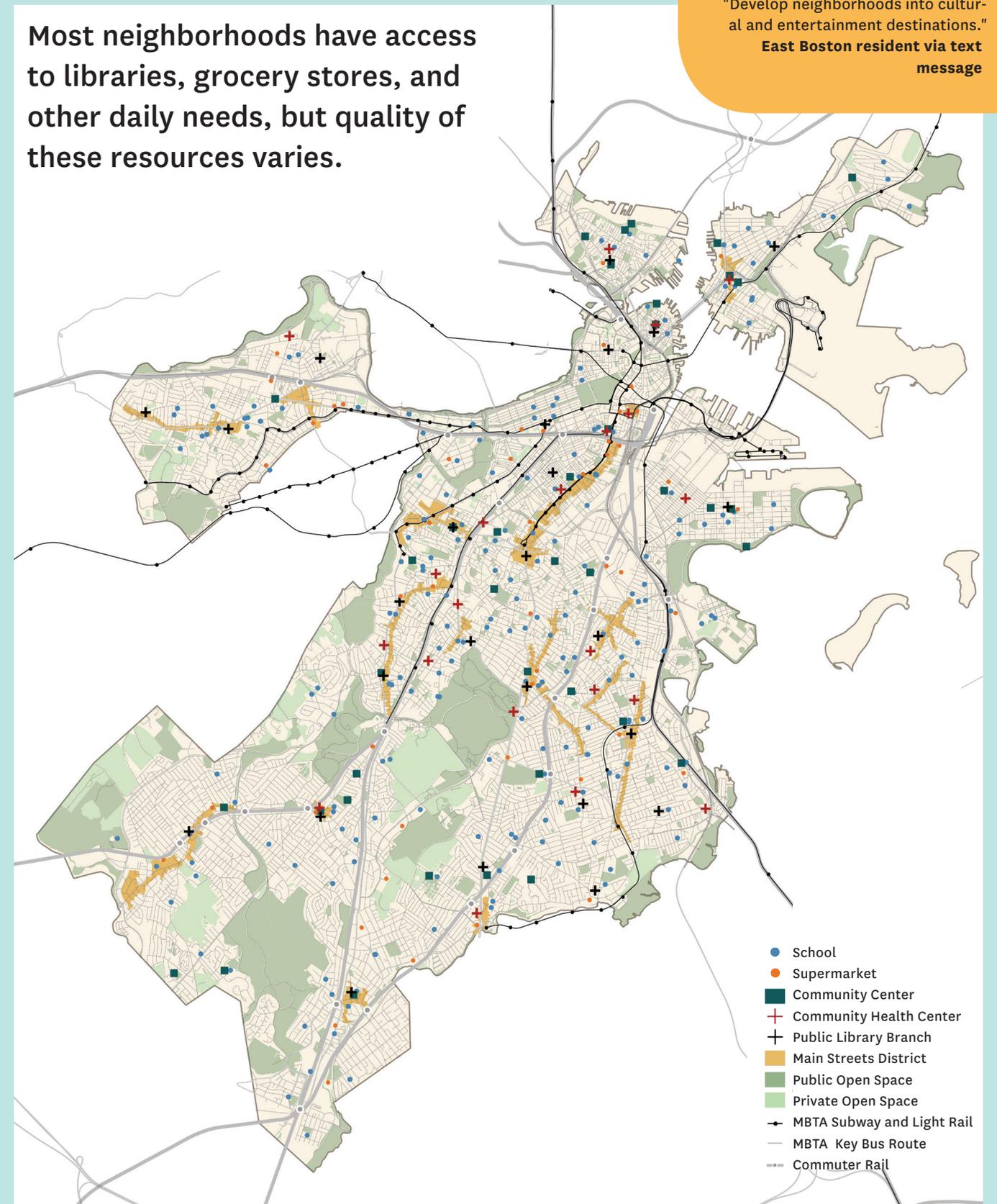
Over the last 50 years, the City of Boston has made a concerted effort to enhance neighborhoods with schools, parks, police stations, libraries, and health centers throughout the city. This goes back to the Little City Halls of the 1970s, which improved local services and access to government, and continues to this day with NeighborHubs and the “City Hall To Go” trucks that make public services more accessible in neighborhoods.

While our civic facilities are largely well distributed, neighborhoods vary in their quality of transportation, open space, main streets, and housing. Access to efficient and reliable transportation has been a recurring theme

in residents' comments. The “hub-and-spoke” model that connects neighborhoods to the commercial core makes it challenging to move between neighborhoods and access our increasingly multinodal distribution of jobs. Bostonians also said that in many neighborhoods, the public realm, from streets to sidewalks to open spaces, needs more investment. Increasing connectivity, transforming the public realm, and encouraging growth on main streets can increase the vitality of neighborhoods. Given the diversity of Boston’s neighborhoods, each area will need different investments to thrive.

Most neighborhoods have access to libraries, grocery stores, and other daily needs, but quality of these resources varies.

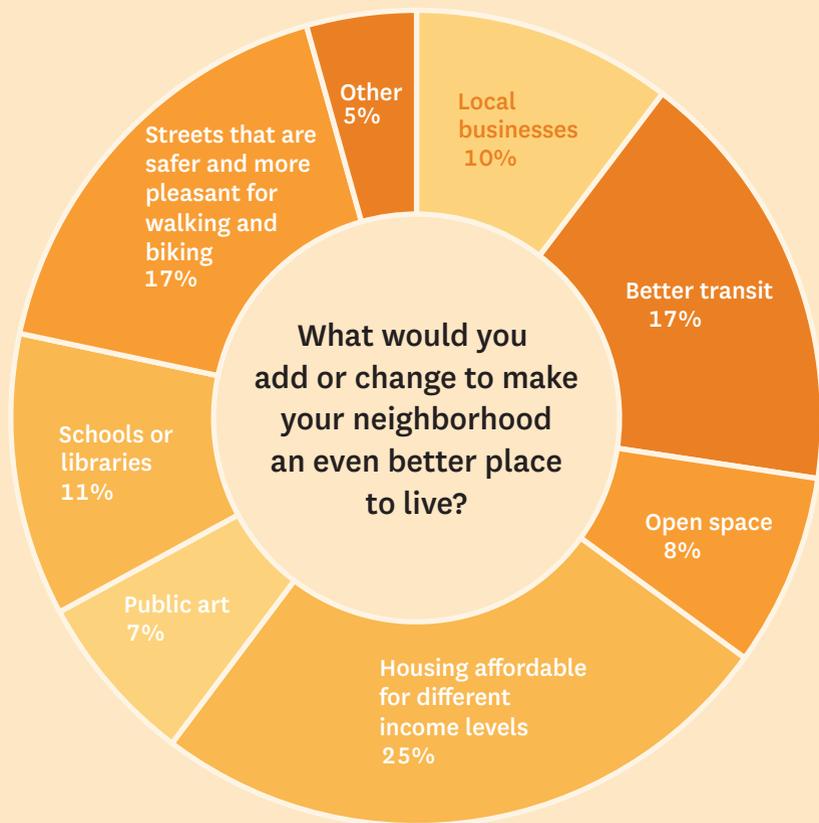
“Develop neighborhoods into cultural and entertainment destinations.”
East Boston resident via text message



Source: City of Boston Open Data, City of Boston 2015 Assessors Data, BDPA, MassGIS City of Boston Open Data

Bostonians have a shared vision for neighborhoods: housing that is affordable at different income levels, reliable and safe transportation, and vibrant main streets.

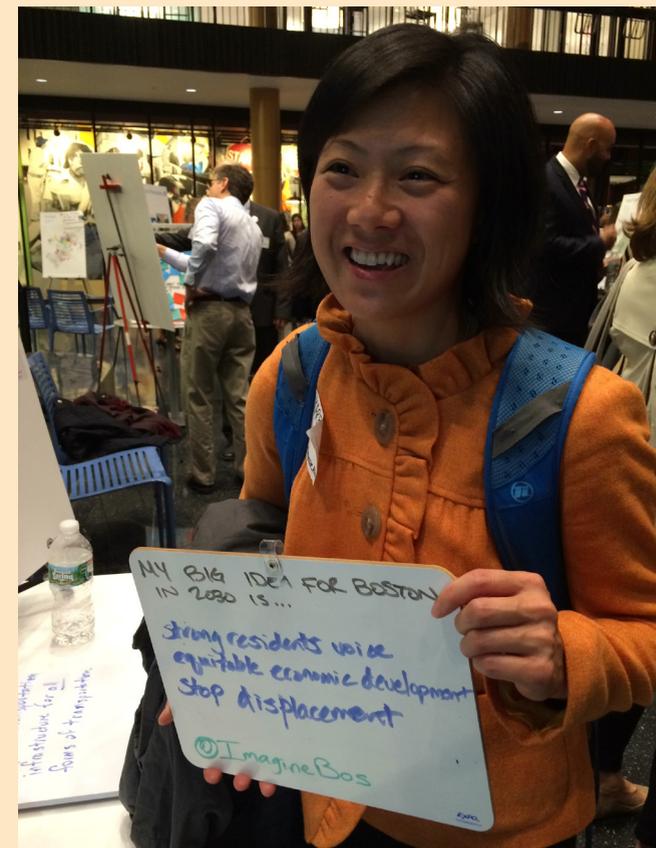
In Spring 2016, nearly 7,500 people responded to a survey on postcards, at the Imagine Boston Forum, and online. When asked, "What would you add or change to make your neighborhood an even better place to live?", housing affordability was ranked first. More walkable, bikeable neighborhoods were also important, as was improved transit access.



The Spring 2016 survey included this question. (Survey source: 7,421 surveys, 7,070 comment cards through street teams, 153 website responses, 198 Imagine Boston Forum responses—respondents asked to rank choices; above answers were ranked #1)

Housing affordability and neighborhood jobs were top themes raised at open houses in Fall 2015.

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In Fall 2016 the Imagine Boston Engagement Team brought a building block activity to more than 50 events across the city. Participants chose to locate new housing approximately evenly in all areas of the city as a way to increase housing affordability.

We will enhance neighborhoods through a combination of citywide initiatives and neighborhood-specific approaches.

We will...

Stabilize housing and reduce displacement

To help Boston residents remain in their homes and communities, we will aggressively pursue policies that prevent displacement, including strengthening and expanding eviction and foreclosure prevention, tenant organizing, and homeownership assistance programs. In some neighborhoods, we will also collaborate with partners to encourage strategic land acquisition that ensures affordability and prevents displacement. In addition, we will identify opportunities to address racial disparities in housing-cost burden and homeownership.

- › Boston has created an Office of Housing Stability that will support residents at risk of eviction and housing instability.

Work to create neighborhood Mobility microHUBs

These will provide local connections by clustering bike share and car share near bus stops and train stations, with wayfinding and placemaking to expedite transfers, make multipart trips easier, and make sure active transportation infrastructure is near places residents need to travel between.



- › Hubway stations, like this one in East Boston, are key components of Mobility microHUBs, which will provide a range of connected travel choices centered around T-stations, bus network nodes, and local destinations. These nodes will be clearly-branded with real-time interactive information displays about transit schedules and shared vehicle availability.

Create vibrant main streets

We will collaborate with local businesses and main streets organizations to create, build, and sustain healthy neighborhood commercial districts that serve residents' daily needs through streetscape investments, small business support, and improved connections to surrounding neighborhoods.



- › The Boston Main Streets initiative is composed of 20 main street organizations that aim to create, build, and sustain healthy neighborhood commercial districts through streetscape investments, small business support, and enhanced connections to surrounding neighborhoods.

Pursue policies that encourage the production and maintenance of deed-restricted low-, moderate-, and middle-income housing

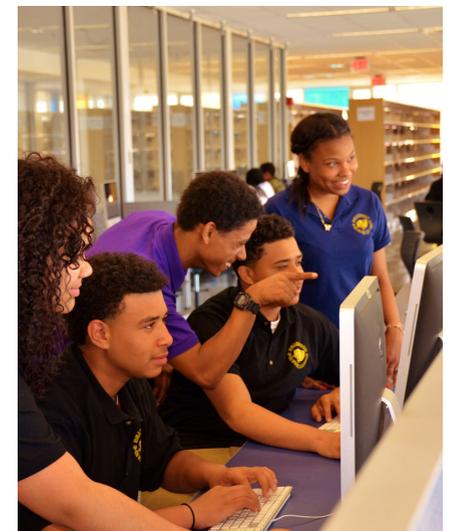
These policies include the Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) and linkage payments, the reuse of surplus City parcels as locations for affordable housing, and the Community Preservation Act. It also includes encouraging experimentation with new housing models that build affordability into the design such as additional dwelling units (sometimes known as in-law apartments), smaller unit sizes, and units that unbundle the costs of housing from those of parking.

- › The Mayor's Housing Innovation Lab is exploring concepts such as smaller living, Additional Dwelling Units, and innovative approaches toward student housing.

Provide twenty-first century learning experiences and facilities

We will invest in modern schools and flexible spaces that serve all of Boston's communities to prepare our students to be career-ready, equity-oriented, contributors to their communities, and full of agency. To ensure our schools are equipped for the task, we will modernize local school infrastructure through the BuildBPS Ten-Year Educational and Facilities Master Plan and develop innovative modes of instruction through High School Redesign.

- › A new \$73.5 million building at the 6-12th grade Dearborn STEM Academy is scheduled to open in 2018 in Dudley Square. The new space has been designed for twenty-first century student learning and will include flexible spaces for collaboration between students and adults and a high capacity for the use of technology, including a Fab Lab and learning commons.



"Neighborhoods are great if they have a sense of place and offer plenty of multimodal transportation options. Boston is a city built around its squares. Enhancing neighborhoods should be about taking back squares so they first serve people, not cars. Each neighborhood square should serve as a mobility hub for the community and provide a sense of place."

Roxbury resident via online survey

"Create affordable microapartments for young people."
Allston resident via travelling display feedback

Make neighborhoods healthier places to live

We will encourage mixed-use, compact communities where it is easy to bike and walk, improve access to healthy and affordable food, expedite response times for emergency services, and improve indoor and outdoor air quality.

- › Farmers' markets in Roslindale and Mattapan bring fresh produce and other locally made goods to their respective neighborhoods.

Continue to improve access to and maintenance of neighborhood parks

We will continue to improve parks with quality features and programming that meets the needs of Boston's diverse residents, visitors, and workers. We will invest in play amenities that contribute to meaningful community gathering spaces, bolster opportunities for equitable economic growth, and enhance the quality of public life for residents of all ages.

- › The City is investing in major improvements for Harambee Park, including new basketball courts, a playground, and improved connections to Blue Hill Avenue.

Develop neighborhood plans and zoning

We will work with communities to develop neighborhood plans that guide uses, density, and public-realm investments in neighborhoods. These planning processes aim to align land use regulations with the aspirations of the community and improve quality of life.

- › PLAN: Dudley Square is underway, with City planners and community members jointly working to create a comprehensive development opportunity plan and streamline an implementation plan for publicly-owned and vacant privately-owned parcels in the neighborhood.

Expand investment in art in the public realm

We will expand art in public spaces through a percent-for-art program on municipal construction projects and ask private developers to follow our example. Through partnerships, we will work to bring compelling temporary and permanent public art to Boston's streets and open spaces.

- › A new public art project for Hyde Square was commissioned earlier this year.

"Make building more densely near transit easier by updating zoning, and eliminating restrictions like Floor Area Ratio [density] limits or minimum parking restrictions."
Brighton resident via online postcard



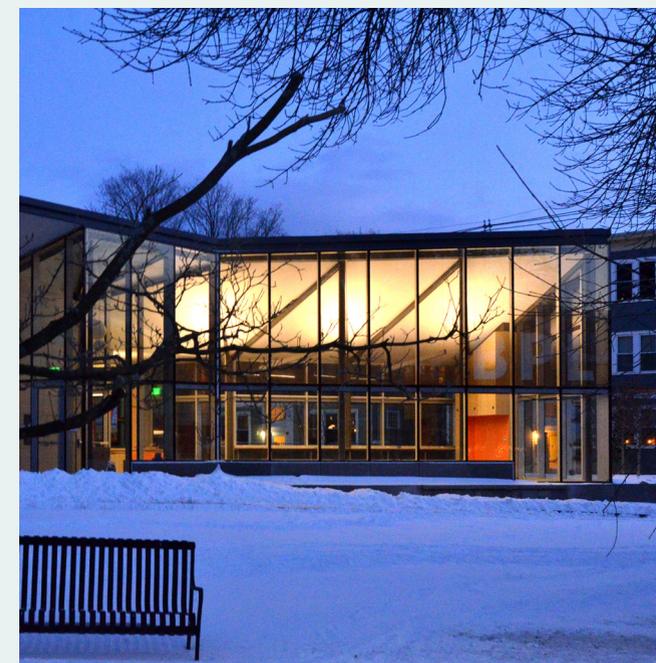
"Include community gardens and green spaces in neighborhood design"
Allston resident via traveling display feedback

Boston Public Libraries

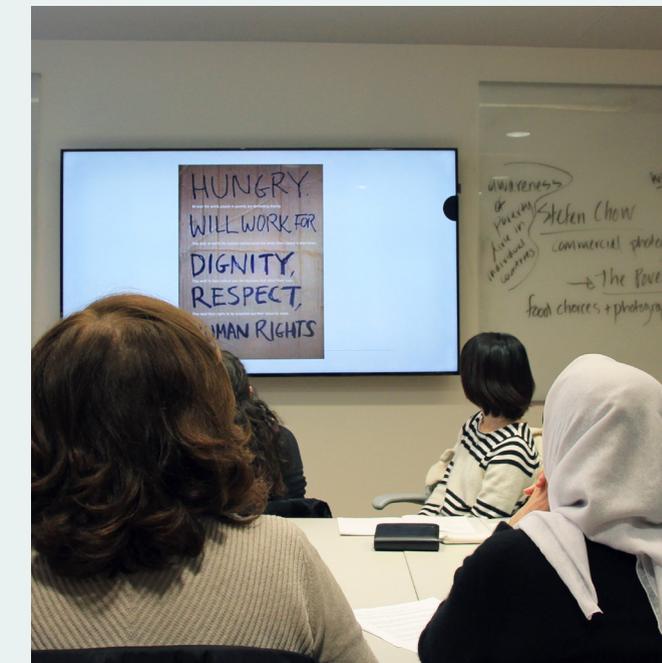
Public libraries anchor main streets in neighborhoods across Boston as spaces to learn, create, gather, and engage.

Boston Public Library (BPL) was established in 1848 as the first free municipally funded library in the United States; today it is the largest public research library in New England.¹ With branches in every neighborhood in the city, BPL is a resource for all residents. It is a home for reading, adult education, community programming, information access, and cultural engagement and exchange.

BPL continues to expand its role in the community. Library branches are strengthening their positions as "third spaces," with new and renovated areas to facilitate public discourse and events. BPL is also transforming libraries into places where Bostonians can not only consume but also create knowledge, whether through next-generation technology and fabrication, or through education, civic engagement, and arts and culture, or simply writing. BPL is investing in neighborhood branches to ensure that they not only continue to fulfill their original mission—providing free access for everyone, regardless of background—but also make investments to serve the needs of the public in future decades.



This vision can be seen in the investments made in the current renovation of the Jamaica Plain Branch, which will increase the building square footage by 20 percent.² The new space will include gathering spaces such as a new children's room, a teen area, a reading room and a Digital Maker space with a 3D printer, visual, and graphic software technology.



BPL is also investing in new programming across all locations. BPL programs like English as a Second Language Conversation groups advance learning for both native and non-native English speakers and reinforce the role libraries play as community hubs.

Enhanced Neighborhood Pilot: Upham's Corner

Investments in Upham's Corner will strengthen the community's historic main street fabric, enable economic mobility and local innovation, and support a vibrant arts and culture hub. Investments will also preserve affordability and prevent displacement.

Imagine Boston's enhanced neighborhood approach builds on Upham's Corner's strongest assets—a diverse and engaged population of residents, historic fabric, and a burgeoning arts community. It identifies actions to address local needs for housing and commercial space that is affordable, improve access to jobs and quality transportation, and strengthen new and existing cultural infrastructure. Specifically, key actions aim to prevent housing displacement, revitalize and reimagine existing assets such as the historic, City-owned Strand Theatre, preserve the supply of affordable commercial spaces, and bolster the neighborhood's role as a hub for arts, culture, and innovation.

Upham's Corner can be a model of planning that uses public-private partnerships and community engagement to enhance quality of life for residents,

attract investment, and encourage economic activity. The City will explore new funding mechanisms, use existing City services and financing tools, and coordinate with partners to encourage development activity by public and private landowners, enterprises, and investors.

The vision to enhance Upham's Corner complements and reinforces ongoing City plans and initiatives for the area, including the Fairmount Indigo Corridor Plan, the Neighborhood Innovation District between Dudley Square and Upham's Corner, and ongoing City work to improve service on the Fairmount/Indigo Line. The strategy set forth for Upham's Corner has the potential to serve as a pilot for enhancing neighborhoods along this line and in neighborhoods throughout the city.

Key Actions

- › City-catalyzed investments and policies to promote dense walkable areas around transit stops
- › Policies and strategic land acquisition and development to ensure affordable housing and commercial space
- › Improved connections, frequency, and user experience on the Fairmount/ Indigo Line
- › Support of local businesses, artists, and entrepreneurs
- › Foster the creation of an arts innovation district with artist housing and resources
- › Improved Upham's Corner Branch library and spaces
- › Investments in Columbia Road as a green and active corridor

"Let's start by improving the arts districts we have: Fort Point, South End, JP, Upham's Corner, Theater District. And then start adding/ bolstering: Allston, East Boston, Dorchester, Hyde Park. More galleries, more dance, more film!"
Dorchester resident via online postcard

Upham's Corner is an important commercial and community center that anchors a strong and cohesive residential neighborhood.



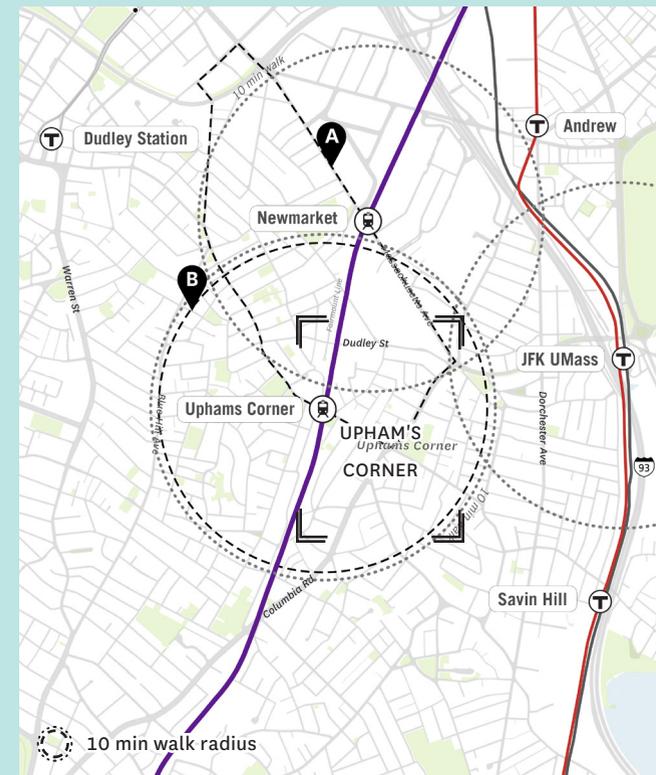
Upham's Corner's historic main street district was a bustling commercial center for most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, beginning when Amos Upham opened a dry goods store on the corner of Dudley Street and Columbia Road in 1804.³ The area around this intersection is now home to cultural and historic assets ranging from the Dorchester North Burying Ground, which dates back to 1633 and is home to the graves of William Stoughton, the Chief Justice during the Salem Witch Trials;

John Foster, the first printer in Boston; and slaves who lived in the area.⁴ The neighborhood is also home to the City-owned Strand Theatre, which opened the night that WWI ended and originally served as a movie and vaudeville house. After going through a period of decline, the Strand was revived by a neighborhood group in the 1970s.⁵ Community-based organizations such as the Upham's Corner Health Center and Upham's Corner Main Street, Inc. continue to support the neighborhood today.

The neighborhood itself is recognized as one of the most diverse in the nation.⁶ It has lower income and educational attainment than the citywide average. Only 45 percent of the population age 25 and over has more than a high school education, compared to 64 percent of the city, and median household income is lower than the city average at just over \$41,000 per year.⁷

Key assets and recent investments present an opportunity to strengthen the neighborhood fabric and raise the quality of life for nearby residents. Upham's Corner benefits from its proximity to a stop on the Fairmount/Indigo Line and to the MBTA's Route 15 Bus along Dudley Street, a route that will be enhanced as part of the MBTA's Key Bus Route Improvement Program. These connections place Upham's Corner within a broader constellation of existing and emerging job centers in the area, including Newmarket and Widett Circle and Dudley Square. Recent investments in innovation have further strengthened the neighborhood's role as a local job center and creative economy node, the most notable example being the new Fairmount Innovation Lab, an incubator and accelerator for creative companies along the Fairmount corridor.

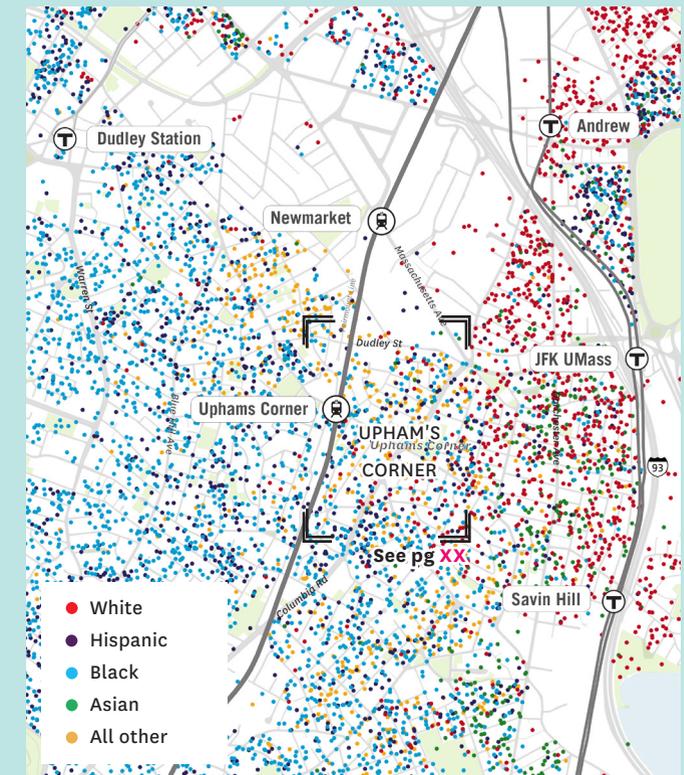
"There [are] large improvements in our neighborhood, but we're failing to attract business to fill empty storefronts or to replace the redundant stores...would be great to see something happen in [Upham's] Corner business wise."
Dorchester resident via online mapping comments



Existing Plans

A Dudley Square-Upham's Corner Corridor Neighborhood Innovation District Plan (2015): Pilot Neighborhood Innovation District to test the viability of similar districts across the city. Recommended investments include skills and vocational training for entrepreneurs and innovators, affordable space for entrepreneurs to live and work, enhanced transit accessibility, and high-speed internet connectivity.

B Fairmount Indigo Corridor Plan (2012): Community-based, comprehensive planning process to address the need for economic growth and physical improvement along the Fairmount corridor. The planning effort focuses on guiding economic and physical development, encouraging sustainable growth, and prioritizing economic prosperity for existing residents.



Population by Race

Upham's Corner is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the nation. 41 percent of residents are black, 26 percent are Hispanic or Latino, and 15 percent are white, with large Cape Verdean and West Indian populations.





- A** Investments and policies to assure affordable housing
- B** City-catalyzed investments around key transit stops
- C** Improved connections, frequency, and user experience on the Fairmount/Indigo Line
- D** Support of local businesses, artists, and entrepreneurs
- E** Foster the creation of an arts innovation district with artist housing and resources
- F** Investments in green and active corridors

Actions and Investments

Key assets and recent investments present an opportunity to strengthen the neighborhood fabric around Upham's Corner and raise the quality of life for nearby residents.

Arts and Culture

- › Reimagine the Strand Theatre as a city-wide arts anchor, structured to serve the needs of artists and the arts community
- › Invest in infrastructure to support arts and culture that is accessible to all residents
- › Promote the creation of artist housing near other arts assets
- › Improve Upham's Corner Branch library
- › Continue to preserve and rehabilitate historic assets such as the Comfort Station and Fox Hall
- › Use art to uncover the potential of overlooked spaces within the neighborhood and create gathering spaces for community

Transportation

- › Boost the quality of Fairmount/Indigo Line through improved connections, frequency, and user experience
- › Invest in streetscape, crosswalks, and wayfinding improvements along Dudley Street to improve pedestrian, bike, and bus connections to the Fairmount/Indigo Line station
- › Collaborate on improvements to nearby Bus Routes, including routes 12, 15, 16, 17, and 41, with a focus on boosting service during off peak hours and connectivity to the rest of the transportation system
- › Improve Route 15 as part of the MBTA's Key Bus Route Improvement Program
- › Invest in an active transportation corridor, including safer crosswalks and more walkable and bikeable green space along Columbia Road

Open Space

- › Invest in wayfinding and greener connections between Upham's Corner and the Fairmount/Indigo Line along Dudley Street
- › Enhance the Dorchester North Burying Ground as a cultural and green space destination
- › Foster greater connectivity between local parks, including along the route to the Fairmount/Indigo Line stop and enhancing Mary Hannon Park.

Housing

- › Ensure housing for the full range of income groups (aiming for approximately one-third of units for affordable housing, one-third for middle income, and one-third for market-rate housing)
- › Implement proactive antidisplacement measures using a phased approach that targets the right tools at the right time to ensure a stable residential fabric
- › Strategic land acquisition and development to create affordable housing and commercial space and maintain the diversity of residents that live in the neighborhood

Economic Development

- › Use city-catalyzed investments and policies to promote dense walkable areas around transit stops
- › Encourage a Dudley-Upham's Corner neighborhood innovation district that builds on existing businesses and nonprofits
- › Equip residents with skills needed to access quality jobs in Upham's and other job centers through mentoring, entrepreneurship training, and targeted vocational training
- › Provide the infrastructure businesses, artists, and entrepreneurs need to succeed, including affordable commercial space, incubation, access to reliable transportation, and streamlined City processes for setting up and growing a business.
- › Support existing businesses with commercial antidisplacement efforts and by ensuring affordable spaces for small businesses
- › Explore steps to develop the City's ability to acquire, assemble, and develop sites



Upham's Corner Pilot Process & Relevance to Other Areas

The community-led, City-catalyzed process for investing in Upham's Corner provides a template for the process through which Boston can enhance other neighborhoods. The City's role is to jump-start the process through strategic focus and targeted investments that stem from the community's vision for their neighborhood. To ensure that investments benefit the existing community, policies to ensure affordability and prevent displacement will form the foundation of enhancement efforts. Once these are in place, the City can pursue investments in main-street corridors, civic infrastructure, and improved transit access for the local community. Just as Upham's Corner will build on its strength as an arts and innovation cluster, other neighborhoods can adopt similar policies and programs to amplify their distinct strengths. The City aims to pilot innovative tools in other enhanced neighborhoods such as Dudley Square in Roxbury and East Boston.

