



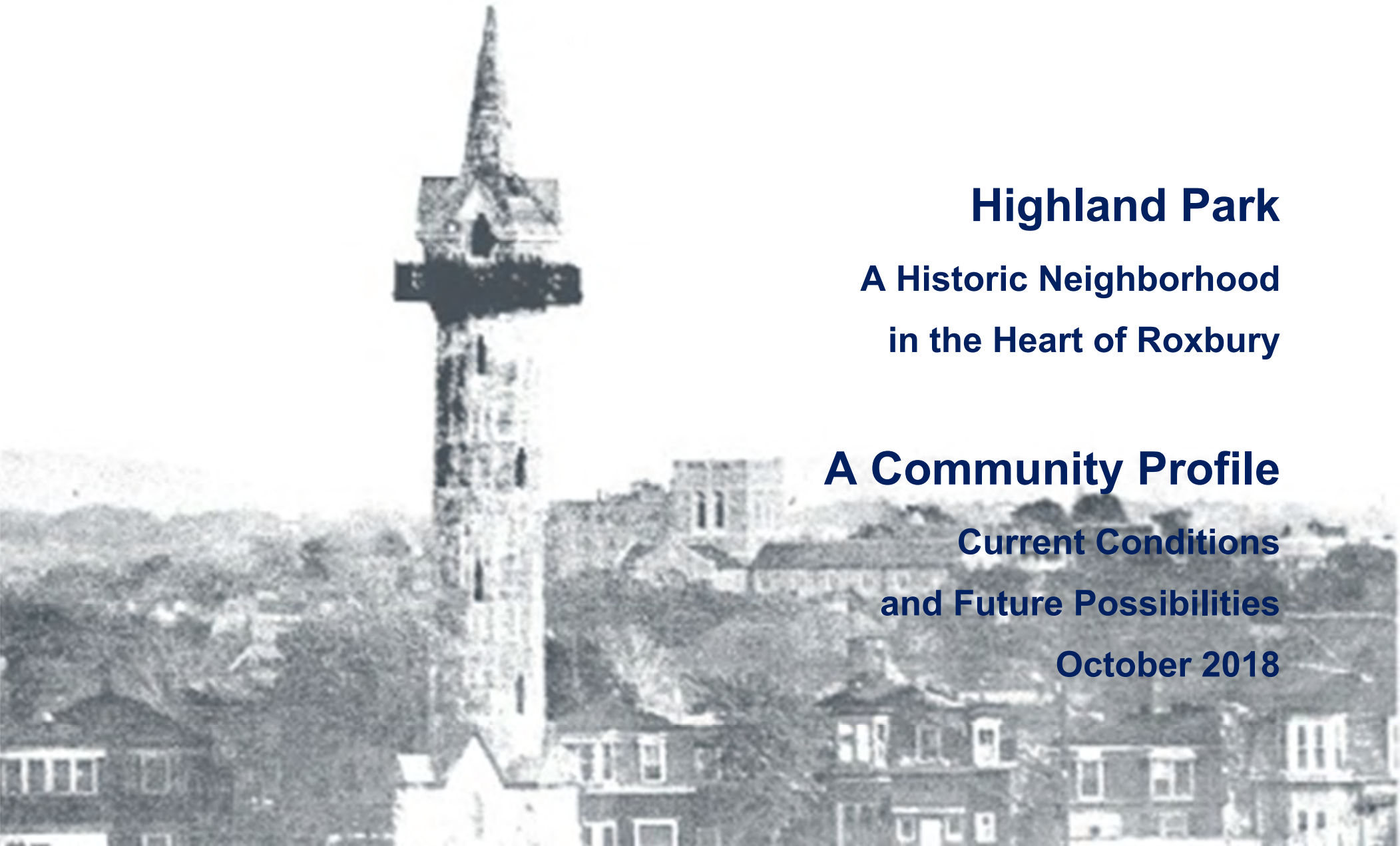
Highland Park

**A Historic Neighborhood
in the Heart of Roxbury**

A Community Profile

**Current Conditions
and Future Possibilities**

October 2018





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Executive Summary

This report contains basic information regarding the historical evolution, current condition, proposed developments, and future development possibilities for the Highland Park community within the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston. This report was prepared by students and faculty participating in UPCD 720 Community Development Seminar in the School for the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Boston. It was prepared in response to a request for research assistance received from the Highland Park Neighborhood Association.

The report bases its research findings, inventory of current planning issues, and preliminary list of policy and planning strategies to address these concerns on a

methodology that included the following data collection activities:

- Archival research focused on Highland Park's historical evolution;
- Analysis of recent population, economic, and housing trends using the U.S. Census;
- A tour of the community led by Liz Miranda of the Hawthorne Youth Community Center;
- A "windshield survey" of the community's open spaces, built environment, public facilities, and infrastructure;
- Review and summary of public studies, reports, and plans impacting the Highland Park neighborhood;
- Attendance at community meetings and Project Review Meetings; and,

- Interviews with a select number of long-time community leaders

Analysis of these data reveal Highland Park to be a community with an: extraordinarily rich history, advantageous location within the city and region, a distinctive and well maintained building stock featuring a varied mix of architectural styles, significant supply of open space available for potential development a network of community and faith-based organizations which are deeply involved in local community-building and problem-solving, and inspired group of civic leaders committed to further enhancing Highland Park's impressive quality of life.

These and other positive attributes of Highland Park, along with recent and proposed transportation improvements undertaken by the MBTA in the area have, in the context of a rapidly growing city economy

and population, generated powerful development pressures that are currently threatening to displace many long-time residents and small business operators. If these market forces are not effectively managed through the cooperative efforts of local residents, property owners, business owners, institutional leaders, elected officials, and enlightened developers many local stakeholders believe the very qualities that make Highland Park one of Boston's most distinctive and desirable residential communities will be undermined, including:

- preservation of highly valued **open spaces**;
- adaptive re-use of historically and culturally **significant structures**;
- maintenance of the socio-economic, ethnic, and racial **diversity** of the community; and,



-respect for the community **planning and development values** of the community.

Reflecting upon these findings as well as best practices in other rapidly gentrifying communities, UMB's Highland Park Research Team offer eight preliminary recommendations for local stakeholders and officials to consider in their efforts to promote a more balanced and equitable model of development in this historic community.



Introduction

In early January of 2018, Mr. Jon Ellertson, President of the Highland Park Neighborhood Association (HPNA) contacted the leadership of the University of Massachusetts Boston's newly-established MS in Urban Planning and Community Development Program. Mr. Ellertson called to ask if our graduate planning program would be interested and willing to partner with the Highland Park Neighborhood Coalition (HPNC) on several research projects focused on the numerous public and private development projects being proposed for this historic Boston neighborhood located in the northwest corner of Roxbury.

Following an exchange of emails between Mr. Ellertson and Ken Reardon, Professor and Director of the MS in Urban Planning and Community Development Program, the UMB planning faculty agreed to mobilize students in their

UPCD 720 Introduction to Community Development class to produce a detailed profile of the Highland Park community. This profile would describe Highland Park's historical origins and evolution, changing population and housing profile, current physical conditions, recent plans and development proposals. It would also present local stakeholders' perceptions of current conditions and future planning and policy opportunities and challenges facing the community.

The primary purpose of this initiative was to provide current community residents, civic leaders, public officials, property owners and potential developers with a detailed picture of current environmental, economic, and social conditions in the Highland Park neighborhood, local stakeholders' development concerns and preferences, and alternative planning strategies to preserve what is special about this extraordinarily diverse and resilient community which, like many other Boston neighborhoods, is experiencing increasingly powerful development pressures that are threatening to displace long-time residents, businesses, and



institutions which have sustained this community during Boston's many economic ups and downs.

This report represents the final work product of the University's UPCD 720 Introduction to Community Development class that began in mid-January 2018 and concluded during the first week of May 2018. The eight students and two faculty members who contributed to this report welcome feedback on this document which will be formally submitted to the Highland Park Neighborhood Coalition and posted on the UMass Graduate Program in Urban Planning and Community Development's FACEBOOK page in early October of 2018.

The report presents and analyzes a variety of environmental, economic, and social data highlighting historic as well as current conditions within the Highland Park neighborhood collected by means of the following research activities:

- an examination of archival materials focused on the history of Highland Park and Roxbury;
- a review of population and housing data from the US Census;
- a site visit to the Hawthorne Youth and Community Center (HYCC) and nearby resident-managed open spaces led by HYCC's Executive Director, Liz Miranda;
- a "windshield tour" of the neighborhood organized to identify important community assets as well as current community challenges;
- attendance at a variety of community meetings and new development project reviews; and,
- interviews with a cross-section of neighborhood residents and leaders to elicit stakeholders' perceptions of current conditions and preferred development patterns.



Data generated by these research activities have been used to identify a list of critical planning issues facing the Highland Park neighborhood and alternative planning strategies, policies, and practices local stakeholders might consider to address these challenges.

Highland Park in Context

Highland Park is a sub-area of Roxbury which is one of the city's 23 officially recognized neighborhoods. Like many neighborhoods located near the heart of the city, Roxbury and Highland park are currently experiencing intense development pressures which are threatening to displace many long-time residents and businesses.

Roxbury was first established as an independent farming community a few miles south of Boston around First Church located on John Eliot Square in what is now considered the heart of the Highland Park community. Over time, Lower Roxbury was transformed into an industrial area,

while the Roxbury Highlands transitioned from an agricultural area into an upscale residential community. When street cars from Boston reached the area in the mid-18th century new waves of industrial workers came to the area seeking good jobs in Roxbury's breweries, ropewalks, piano makers, iron foundries and rubber production facilities and improved living conditions which served to diversify the area's population.

In 1869, the independent village of Roxbury was incorporated into the City of Boston. By this time, the community had grown to include a diverse set of neighborhoods possessing unique histories, economies, and cultures. As described in the 2004 Roxbury Strategic Master Plan, Roxbury is located near the geographic center of the city. 60% of its area is residential. Winding streets that follow its ever-changing topography is one of Roxbury's most distinctive characteristics.

The community's attractive building stock reflects its long and rich history featuring many distinct phases of development. Roxbury is located just south of the South End



and South Boston. It is surrounded by other historic neighborhoods, including: Jamaica Plan, Mission Hill, and Fenway/Kenmore to the west, Dorchester to the southeast and Mattapan to the southwest.

Many of the Boston's most noteworthy historical sites and buildings are located within Roxbury. Among these are: Fort Hill Park, William Lloyd Garrison House, Dillaway-Thomas House, and First Church. The neighborhood is also home to many historic sites, buildings, and institutions of special interest to the region's large African American population. Among these are the apartment where Malcolm X once lived, the church where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. worshiped and preached while earning his Ph.D. in Divinity at Boston University, and the African American History Museum.

According to the 2005 Roxbury Strategic Master Plan, "Each of these areas (Roxbury's sub-neighborhoods) possess a range of characteristics with respect to the architecture, open space, topography, and the mix and density of land

uses. The districts share commercial centers at significant crossroads that define the boundaries of the districts. Maintaining the uniqueness and integrity of the sub-neighborhoods is an important community goal. Therefore, the Plan outlines general strategies and recommendations for the community as a whole but also recognizes that sub-neighborhoods (such as Highland Park) will have specific objectives."





1 ROXBURY SUB-NEIGHBORHOOD. SOURCE: ROXBURY STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN



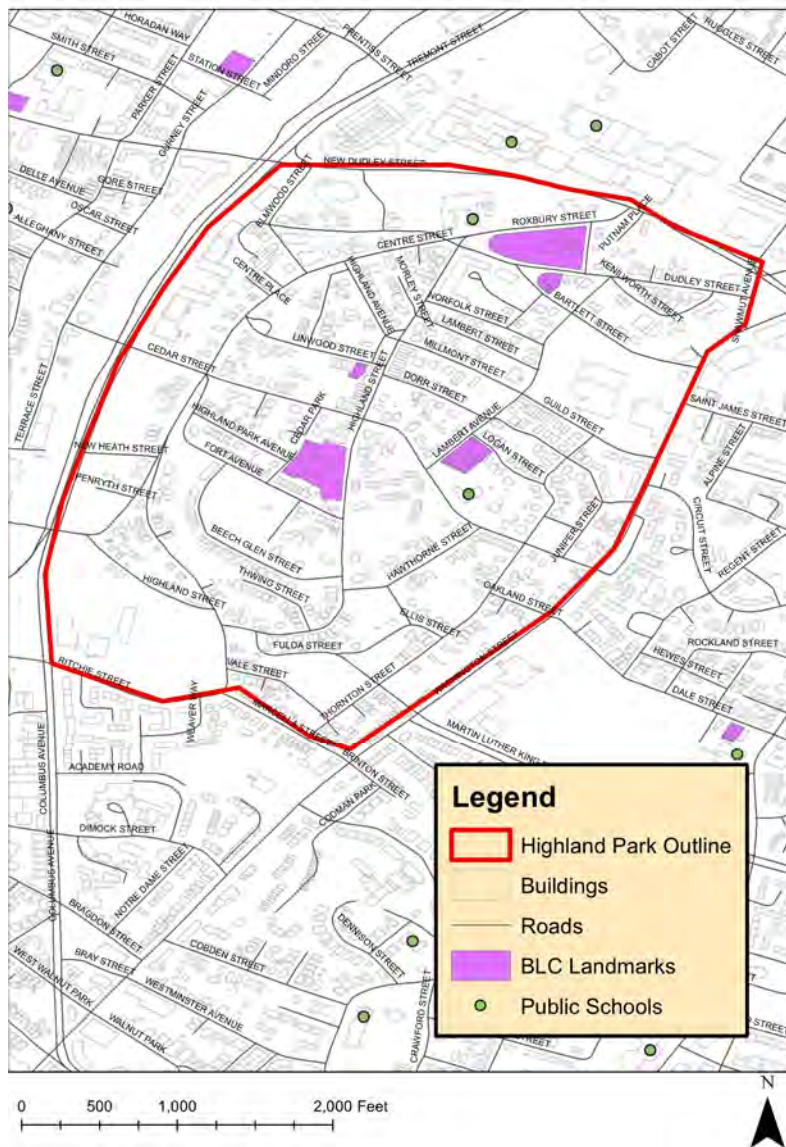
Physical Description

Highland Park is a historic neighborhood located on a rocky and hilly section of northwest Roxbury. This .4 square mile community formed around Fort Hill, which played a pivotal role in the Battle of Boston during the Revolutionary War, offers commanding views of Boston's Downtown and Seaport Districts. The neighborhood's boundaries are Malcolm X Boulevard to the north, Washington Street to the east, Ritchie and Marcella Streets to the south, and Columbus Avenue to the west. The Highland Park neighborhood is bordered by Mission Hill to the West, Lower Roxbury to the north, Dudley Square to the east and Roxbury, Eggleston Square and Jamaica Plain to the south surround it.

The core of the neighborhood is comprised of a wide variety of 18th, 19th, and 20th century single-family detached homes, including of several that appear on the National Registry of Historic Places, handsome bowed-front row



Highland Park Basemap

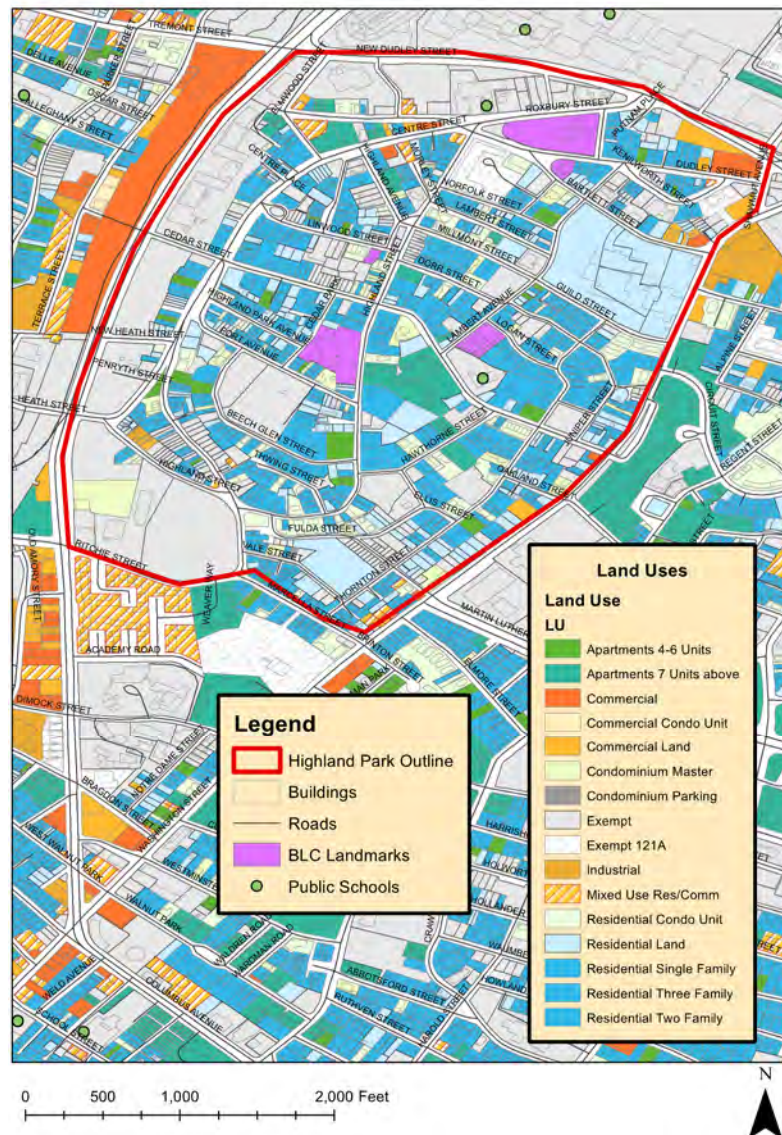


houses, low-density garden-styled apartment complexes, as well as a number of impressive houses of worship. Several publicly assisted, medium-density housing complexes, small-scale commercial buildings, and the offices of various municipal agencies and human service organizations dominate the edges of the neighborhood. Scattered throughout the neighborhood are a significant number of vacant parcels that have been transformed by local residents into verdant fruit, vegetable, and flower gardens that serve as one of the neighborhood's most distinctive physical features.

The neighborhood's nine hundred building structures are located along a series of curvilinear streets that branch off the major commercial corridors that serve as the borders of the community. These streets wind their way from these commercial streets to the top of Fort Hill where the five-acre Highland Park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted is located. The major feature of this attractive hilltop park is a



Highland Park Basemap



handsome one hundred and thirty-foot stone water tower known as “Cochituate Standpipe” which was constructed in 1869 to enhance Boston’s water supply at a time when the city was growing through a series of ambitious annexations.



Highland Park's other major urban design feature is John Eliot Square, which is actually a triangular open space, where the historic First Church of Roxbury, Dillaway-Thomas Home Historic Site, James P. Timilty School, and the Parting Stone Landmark are located. Complementing these historic and institutional structures is a marvelous collection of late 18th century commercial buildings, including the former Norfolk House Hotel and several of Boston's first cast iron storefront buildings.





Social History

The history of Highland Park is strongly tied to that of the Roxbury community, which was an independent and thriving agricultural community until it was annexed by the City of Boston in 1868. We present the historical evolution of the Highland Park community through six distinctive periods. These are: Agricultural Outpost, Street Car Suburb, Working Families Residential District, Neighborhood in Decline, The Development Wave, and Preserving Highland Park as a Diverse and Resilient Community.

Agricultural Outpost

The City of Boston was established in 1630 on a narrow strip of land called the Shawmut Peninsula. The growth of this English Colony and the strict view of Protestantism its leaders adopted caused several groups of the original colonists to search for new settlement sites. Among these were a small

group of colonists who travelled from the Shawmut Peninsula using the narrow strip of land that connected the settlement to the rest of the North American land mass, called the Boston or Roxbury Neck. These settlers found fresh water, abundant timber, rich soil, and numerous animals to hunt less than ten miles southwest of Boston in an area they settled and named Roxbury in 1630. One of the most important centers of activities within new-established Roxbury was the First Church of Roxbury that was erected in 1632 in the area now referred to as John Eliot Square. During the next one hundred and fifty years this section of Roxbury developed as a vibrant agricultural community which helped meet the fresh food needs of Boston which was experiencing significant growth due to the quality of its harbor, the ample food supply provided by the bounty of its waters, forests, and fields, and its relative closeness to England compared to other east coast communities, such as, Providence, New York, Philadelphia,



and Savannah. By the end of the 17th Century, this section of Roxbury came to house many affluent settlers who had made fortunes as traders who were attracted by the area's natural beauty, cheap land, and quiet lifestyles. Many of these settlers purchased land and built large well-designed homes near the top of the hill we now refer to as Fort Hill that offered stunning views of the growing city and its bustling harbor. When the War of Independence erupted in 1775, artillery strategically placed on the top of Fort Hill by the Colonists played a decisive role in helping General Washington repel British Troops from the city and British Warships from the Harbor following a year-long British occupation of Boston which is referred to as the Siege of Boston which took place between April 19, 1775 – March 17, 1776.



Following the end of the War of Independence, communities such as Highland Park and Roxbury, entered into a period of reconstruction to address the physical damage caused by the conflict. One of the most important projects to



be undertaken in Highland Park was the replacement of the fourth First Church of Roxbury located in Eliot Square that had been repeatedly bombarded by the British who believed the colonists were using the structure as a signal station.

Street Car Suburb

The City of Boston's population grew steadily throughout 19th century as a result of its growing importance as a mercantile trading center. The city's growth rate was further enhanced during the first quarter of the century by the successful development of water powered textile and apparel mills, tanneries and shoemaking factories, and paper production facilities located along the major rivers draining into Boston Harbor (Charles, Neponset, Mystic, and Cambridge Rivers). These factors caused the City of Boston's population to skyrocket. The City attempted to overcome the limited amount of developable land available on the Shawmut Peninsula by engaging in massive landfill efforts, including the

filling in of the Back Bay that had become seriously polluted as a result of indiscriminate dumping of household, institutional, commercial, and industrial wastes. As increasing numbers of European immigrants arrived in Boston to take advantage of its growing number of maritime, manufacturing, and retail jobs, increasing numbers of the City's upper and

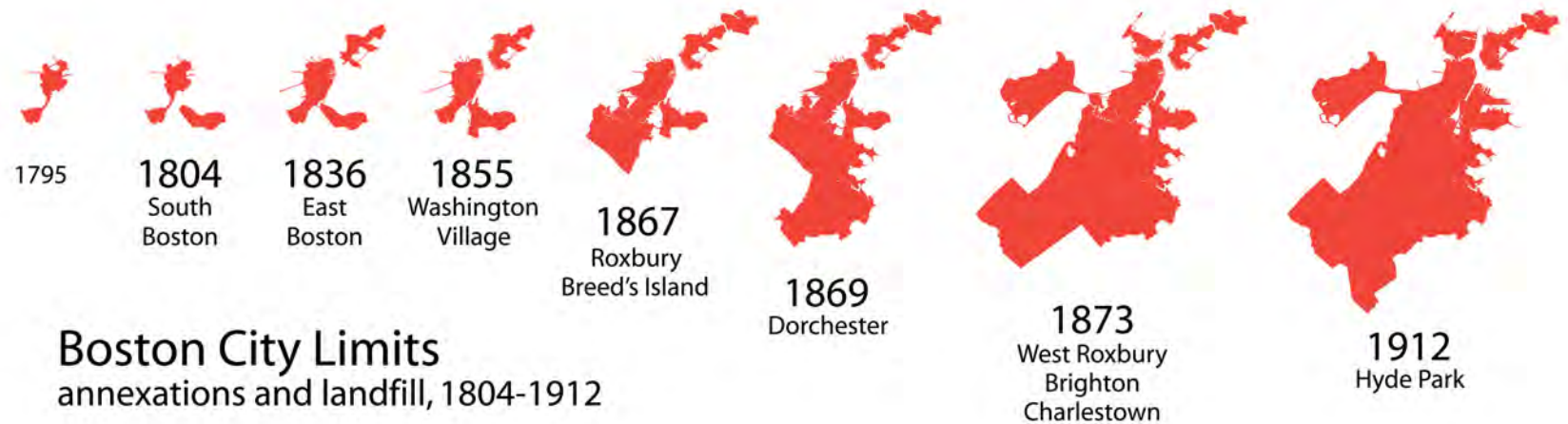


upper middle-class residents began relocating to nearby suburbs to avoid the environmental problems and social conflicts caused by the city's rapid urbanization.

This movement of significant numbers of Boston's business leaders to suburban communities, such as Cambridge, Brookline, Dorchester, and Roxbury was made possible by the development of ever-improving urban transportation services that began with horse-drawn omnibuses, progressed to steam and then electric powered street cars and ended with the establishment of commuter rail service throughout much of the region. Business elites from Boston were attracted to these suburban areas by the availability of cheap land, steadily improving educational and municipal services, low taxes and the absence of poor and working-class immigrants who could not afford the transportation and housing costs connecting to suburban living. The City of Boston responded to the waves of suburban out-migration that took place.

throughout the 19th century by aggressively pursuing the annexing many of these areas.





The chart above documents the City of Boston's successful efforts throughout most of the 19th century to annex its rapidly growing suburban neighbors until Brookline managed to resist Boston's efforts to do so in 1873. For the next forty years, the City was unsuccessful in its efforts to annex additional suburban communities until it absorbed Hyde Park in 1912.

The provision of streetcar service to the area, along with the improvement of city services that accompanied Roxbury's incorporation into Boston, prompted many large landowners to sell their property to developers who subsequently

subdivided these holdings into building lots to accommodate the mix of single-family, attached homes, and modest apartment buildings that comprise the majority of both Roxbury and Highland Park's housing stock. This development trend was further encouraged when a second streetcar line was added along Washington Street to better serve Roxbury and Highland Park's growing population. The final major public transportation improvement came to the area in 1901 when a new public transit hub was constructed

in nearby Dudley Station offering residents the opportunity to travel to Downtown Boston by bus, subway or commuter rail.

By 1900, Roxbury and Highland Park boasted a growing working and middle- class population, a solid housing stock reflecting a variety of architectural styles, good schools, dependable municipal services, and excellent public transportation options.

Transformation of a Working-Class District

The majority of the families living in Roxbury and Highland Park at the beginning of the 20th century were either European immigrants or their children. Most of these families were of Irish, German, or Italian descent whose breadwinners were employed in the mills located along Washington Street, the breweries found in Jamaica Plan, and on the wharfs, rail yards, and trucking depots situated in the city's Downtown and Seaport Districts. In the 1920s, Roxbury and Highland Park began to attract growing numbers of African American families who were moving north as part of "The Great Migration"

following the collapse of the labor-intensive plantation system of the South due to the rapid mechanization of Southern agricultural. They came to Boston attracted by its bustling economy and its rich Abolitionist history. Many settled in the City's South End and in Roxbury where jobs were abundant and housing was relatively affordable. Following World War II, urban renewal plans for the South End, courageously opposed by Mel King and his Tent City coalition, prompted many African Americans to resettle in Roxbury. There they were joined by growing numbers of Cape Verdeans who were displaced by destruction of Providence's Fox Point neighborhood as well as many Haitians, Jamaicans and Trinidadians whose economies were underperforming in the immediate Post World War II years.

As the numbers of African and Caribbean American families were increasing in Roxbury and Highland Park the number of White families in the community was decreasing. The movement of White residents from Roxbury and Highland Park was the result of both pull and push factors. On the pull



side of this dynamic was the ability of returning veterans to make the transition from being renters to homeowners using VA mortgages which were only available for the purchase of new structures in racially segregated neighborhoods. On the push side of this dynamic was the fear of non-White families that long-time residents had unconsciously absorbed from popular culture which portrayed people of color in the most negative and threatening terms. Another factor was the “block busting” tactics of some unethical realtors who told long-time homeowners their homes would definitely lose value as the number of African Americans moving into their neighborhood increased. Having done so, they would offer these nervous property owners minimal prices subsequently selling these homes, at a premium, to African American families seeking to live in majority White neighborhoods where services, especially schools, were more likely to be substantial and consistent. Another dynamic encouraging the neighborhood’s White residents to relocate was the 1965 Racial Imbalance

Act which outlawed residential segregation by race which was implemented in 1975 by Federal Judge Arthur Garrity through a court imposed city-wide busing scheme which was strongly opposed by many of the city’s White working and middle-class families. A significant portion of these families chose to move out of Boston rather than see their children bused to distant schools to achieve school desegregation. The “white flight” that took place in Boston throughout the 1970’s had a very destabilizing impact on the city’s less affluent communities, especially Highland Park.

Collapse and Contestation

A number of factors contributed to the decline of Boston’s older residential neighborhoods, such as Highland Park and Roxbury, in the late 1960s and 1970s. First, was the interest of long-time residents to use their GI Benefits to purchase homes in the city’s suburbs where a growing

percentage of the region's employers were moving to avoid Boston's rising property taxes and increasing traffic congestion. Second, was the ongoing decline of the many of the city's historic maritime and manufacturing industries, which served as the primary source of employment for the residents of the city's older residential neighborhoods such as Highland Park and Roxbury. Third, was the disruptive impact which the changing racial composition of the city's older residential neighborhoods which was exacerbated by the block-busting practices of local realtors and the court-mandated busing designed to promote more fully integrated school. Fourth, was a proposal made by state and Federal highway planners for an eight-lane inner city loop to relieve traffic congestion along a small stretch of I-93 in Downtown Boston, as well as the extension of I-95 -- the proposed Southwest Corridor -- through Jamaica Plain, Roxbury and the South End. The proposed Inner Belt was to begin just south of Downtown Boston, travel through Roxbury, the Fenway, and parts of Brookline, Central Square in Cambridge before

rejoining I-93 in Somerville. The Southwest Corridor would separate Roxbury from the rest of the city by an eight lane highway..

Speculation by real estate savvy outsiders had a devastating impact on Highland Park and other parts of Roxbury. State property acquisitions and speculators' property purchases and evictions along the proposed route had a devastating impact on property conditions and values in the community, especially along Columbus Avenue at the edge of Highland Park, formerly a key commercial district.





Many Highland Park residents, along with residents of other nearby neighborhoods, assisted by a group of advocacy planners and designers affiliated with Urban Planning Aid, organized a powerful city-wide movement under the slogan of “People Before Highways”, which ultimately defeated the state proposed inner city highway plan. However, the impact of the plan in the form of state property acquisitions and clearance activities, and the deferred maintenance and evictions carried out by real estate speculators hoping to cash in on the Inner

Belt Highway had a devastating impact on Highland Park in terms of widespread residential and commercial vacancies, building and property abandonment, and disinvestment in the neighborhood’s streets, parks, playgrounds, and schools. Large sections of the neighborhood were bulldozed in anticipation of the beltway’s construction, including segments of Columbus Avenue, Highland Street and Marcella Street - portions of which still remain vacant! As conditions in the neighborhood declined throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, working-class and middle-class residents of Highland Park migrated from the neighborhood leaving low-income residents with limited economic opportunities and resources behind. Over time, Highland Park’s profile and reputation changed from that of a historic neighborhood with an architecturally significant building stock, ample open spaces, solid municipal services and a diverse population to one characterized by social isolation, physical decline, rising crime

rates, deteriorating services, and a flourish illegal drug trade. As buildings burned through neglect and arson, Highland Park became known as the Arson Capital of the US.

Following the exodus of White working and middle-class families from the neighborhood, which continued throughout the 1970's, various Civil Rights organizations and Countercultural groups attracted by Highland Park's location, transportation services, and relatively inexpensive housing settled in the neighborhood assuming a key role in stabilizing the community. Among the most important of these groups was the Roxbury Action Program (RAP) which was formed shortly after Dr. King's assassination in 1968 by veterans of the Voter Registration Campaigns conducted by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the South and the Lyman Family, a group of artists, musicians and activists who came to the area to create a new community on Fort Hill.

The Roxbury Action Project brought together veterans of the Civil Rights Movement in the South with progressive



RAP Mural in foyer of the Alvah Kittredge House

planners and designers, most of who resided in Highland Park, to create an economically and socially self-reliant African American community. RAP's organizers sought to create a Model Black Community offering people of color expanded educational, employment, and business development opportunities. With initial support from the American Friends Service Committee, RAP succeeded in developing a number of pioneering education, housing, and human service programs. Among the later, were free breakfast and lunch, family counselling, Draft counselling,



health referral, legal services, a Black Library, and after-school tutoring programs many of which were strongly influenced by the ideas contained in the Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program ("The Black Panther Ten-Point Program". *The North American Review*. **253** (4): 16–17. July–August 1968). While RAP did not accept Federal funds to advance their community revitalization efforts they did

partner with the City of Boston to design and build a number of attractive and highly regarded affordable housing complexes on the periphery of Highland Park. These complexes include 88 units of scattered-site low and moderate-income housing, 26 units of public housing, and 166 units of senior citizens housing.

By the mid-1970s the Roxbury Action Program had formulated clear guidelines for advancing revitalization without displacement in Highland Park. The group's overall

planning strategy was organized around the following five development principles.

- 1) Housing is related to broader problems of the society, and it is an issue that must be attacked through social mix and mobility



- 2) No single approach can solve the housing problem, there is a need for a multi-faceted strategy
- 3) Community resident control + high levels of technical and professional expertise (citizens for policy direction, practitioners for implementation). "Only residents can pinpoint problems and only they have the right to determine the solutions that will affect their lives, but technical problems require flexibility for technical implementation of solutions".
- 4) The Importance of the neighborhood scale (manageable yet impactful) requires decentralized and customized programs in separate neighborhoods that compliment each other.
- 5) The success of housing programs' can be measured only by the maintenance and preservation of "a people-oriented problem focus" (as opposed to one focused on structures and objects). "The full cost of housing must include the cost of working on the people's problems".



The Roxbury Action Program remained a strong force in the Greater Roxbury community throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, however, the repeated robbery of the Roxbury Action Pharmacy as well as the departure of several of its founding members in the late 1970s caused the group to pull back from some of its more ambitious affordable housing and



economic development programs to concentrate on youth development through the arts which the organization still pursues with great energy and passion.

During this same period, Fort Hill/Highland Park became one of the major centers of counterculture activity within the region. A number of youth collectives, communes, and bands, some with identifiable leaders (i.e. gurus) were attracted to Highland Park. These groups of young people worked together to restore a portion of the area's housing stock, reclaim open spaces, and support local community organizations as volunteers. The one remaining collective in Highland Park is the Lyman Family whose members arrived in the neighborhood in the last 1960s under the leadership of a charismatic folk musician named Mel Lyman. A virtuoso harmonica player who served as one of the headliners at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, Lyman and his followers developed a widely read alternative arts and literary magazine, called AVATAR, dedicated to advancing his world

view. A commune whose members largely avoided the drug abuse problems and interpersonal conflicts of many similar groups, the community experienced serious problems in the mid-1970s when four of its members attempted to rob Brigham's Circle Bank as a protest against the Vietnam War policies and repressive political tactics of the Nixon Administration.

Following an unwarranted and largely fabricated attack on the group in Rolling Stone magazine that compared it to the Manson Family Cult, members of the family retreated

from the public eye. Meanwhile, they purchased and restored five large Victorian houses at the top of Fort Hill while also restoring and maintaining Highland Park when the city was unwilling to do so. While initially considered odd and unwelcomed white gentrifiers by many of the African America activists seeking to transform the area into a model community for Black Self-Reliance, they have become accepted as constructive long-term members of the larger community. The group has supported itself and many of its member families through the development of the Fort Hill Construction Company that has acquired and developed high-end real estate in Boston, New York and Los Angeles. The Fort Hill Construction Company is currently developing a two-unit resident on a parcel facing the park with spectacular views of Downtown Boston and its harbor, which they plan to rent in order to generate the necessary income to support members of the collective as they age in place, still together after 50 years.





Gentrification on the March

Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, many of Boston's poor and working-class neighborhoods lost population due to the combined effects of deindustrialization, suburbanization, and disinvestment. This was especially true of the Highland Park community where building owners unable to rent or sell their properties either walked away from their structures or engaged unemployed youth to burn them down for their

insurance money causing many to refer to the area as "The Arson Capital of the Nation". Other owners of multi-family properties occupied by low-income tenants were believed to have burned their buildings down in anticipation of new development stimulated by the construction of a new Orange Line and other transportation improvements related to the Southwest Corridor Project proposed by the BRA and the MBTA.

The expansion of the city's service sector fueled by growth of its financial, health care, higher education, information technology and bioengineering sectors in the 1980s, generated new investment, development, and housing demand throughout many of the city's established neighborhoods. As space became less available and housing costs rose in and around Boston's Central Business District, the BRA looked to redevelop areas such as Roxbury which had experienced considerable decline.



When the BRA announced plans to build a new subway line to improve transit services and promote redevelopment in Roxbury, local residents organized to oppose the effort. Creating a broad-based coalition of long-time Roxbury residents, small business owners, and institutional leaders, called the Greater Roxbury Neighborhood Association, local stakeholders forced the city to abandon their initial plan. Encouraged by this outcome, local resident subsequently hired their own planners to design an environmentally sensitive, pedestrian oriented, mixed use plan featuring a significant number of affordable housing units. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative's Overall Development Plan implemented through the delegation of eminent domain powers to the neighborhood by the BRA and the use of a land bank to maintain housing affordability has emerged as one of the nation's most powerful examples of "bottom-up, bottom-sideways" planning and development.

While leaders of the the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative were working to assemble the public and private

capital needed to realize their dream of socially integrated housing with strong neighborhood-based social, commercial, and transit services, the Roxbury Neighborhood Council, an all volunteer committee of long-time resident, formulated an Interim Planning Overlay District to reduce the growing gentrification and displacement threat facing the neighborhood.

Under pressure from groups such as the Roxbury Action Project, Roxbury Neighborhood Council, and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, the BRA issued a Request for Proposals for a Roxbury Strategic Master Plan in 1991 which was adopted in 2004 following extensive and inclusive input from the Roxbury community. These and other groups that participated in this BRA-sponsored planning process sought to balance new development with the expansion of affordable housing opportunities and improved neighborhood-oriented services, especially public transportation.

While continued expansion of the city's economy has encouraged developers to proposed new projects for the



remaining open spaces remaining in Roxbury and Highland Park under the land use policies contained in the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan, the BRA has issued a new RFP for the development of several large parcels in Dudley Square which local stakeholders fear will further intensify local development pressures resulting in further residential and commercial displacement in the community. Local residents, supported by students and faculty from MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning Program are currently seeking to slow this process down to enable local residents, institutional leaders, and elected officials to devise policy guidelines that will enable the redevelopment of the Dudley Street Station area without causing further displacement.

Population and Housing

Highland Park is located in the northwestern corner of the Greater Roxbury neighborhood. It lies between Mission

Hill on the west, Lower Roxbury and Dudley Square on the north and east, and Jamaica Plain to the southwest. Its history reflects the evolution of many older residential neighborhoods in Boston from the 20th century. In 1900, it was an urban neighborhood of working and middle-class Whites of Irish, Italian and German descent. Between WW I and WW II African American families began settling in Highland Park in significant numbers. However, the neighborhood did not become a majority-minority neighborhood until the mid-1970s, after forced school busing triggered an exodus of many White families the nearby suburbs. Following this "White flight" and a decline in the city's maritime, transportation, and manufacturing sectors, Highland Park became a severely distressed neighborhood. Its total population fell from its 1950 peak by nearly 30% during this period and did not begin to show evidence of a recovery until the first decade of the 21st century.

Table 1 compares Highland Park's population trends with those of the City of Boston and the United States for the period between 1970 and 2010. Similar to Boston, Highland Park experienced a nearly 20% loss in total population between 1970 and 1980. While Boston began to show signs of a significant population turn around starting in the 1980s, Highland Park did not begin to experience a positive movement in total population until 2010.

During the past two decades, there has been a significant movement of population from the suburbs and communities outside of our region to the City of Boston caused by the availability of well-paying jobs in the medical research, high technology and financial sectors. As a result of these opportunities, neighborhoods such as Highland Park that had evolved into highly diverse communities are facing powerful development and gentrification pressures. Residential areas just outside of Boston's Central Business District (CBD), such as Highland Park, that had become majority minority in the 1960s and 1970s are witnessing a

significant influx of White professionals employed within the city's rapidly expanding life sciences, health care, financial services, and hospitality industries who are seeking affordable housing options in centrally located neighborhoods well served by public transportation. Figure 2: Racial Composition of Boston Neighborhoods highlights the degree to which Highland Park has become increasingly White. Keep in mind that this racial composition map is based upon data from the US Census of 2010; there is little doubt, based upon our recently-completed resident interviews, that this process of immigration by White professionals has continued at an increasing pace.

Figure 2 reveals Highland Park's racial composition using data from the 2010 U.S. Census of Population. While Highland Park remains a majority African American community, Whites and Hispanics now respectively comprise more than 20% of the resident population.



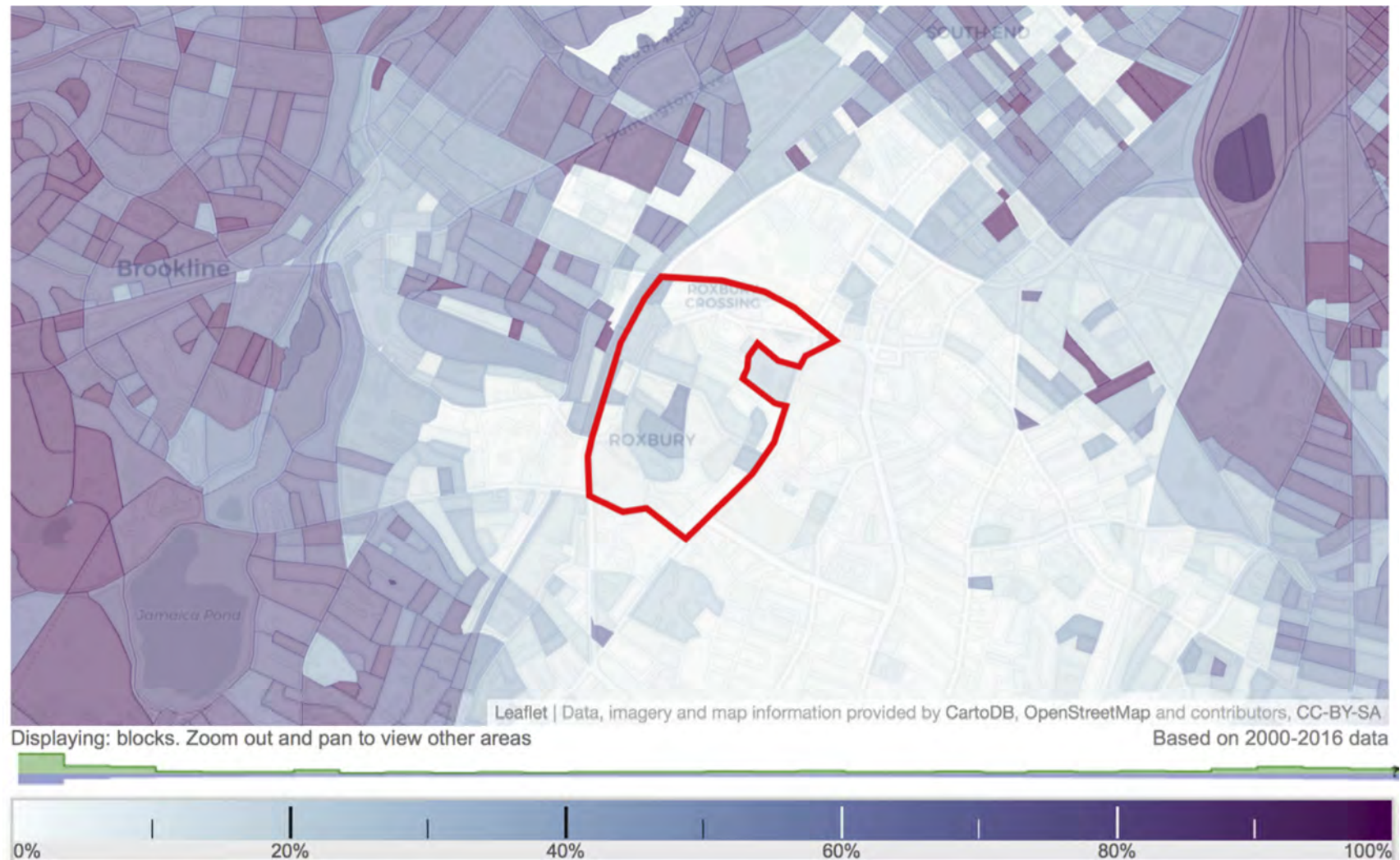


FIGURE 1 RACIAL COMPOSITION AND CONCENTRATIONS FOR HIGHLAND PARK AND ITS SURROUNDING AREAS

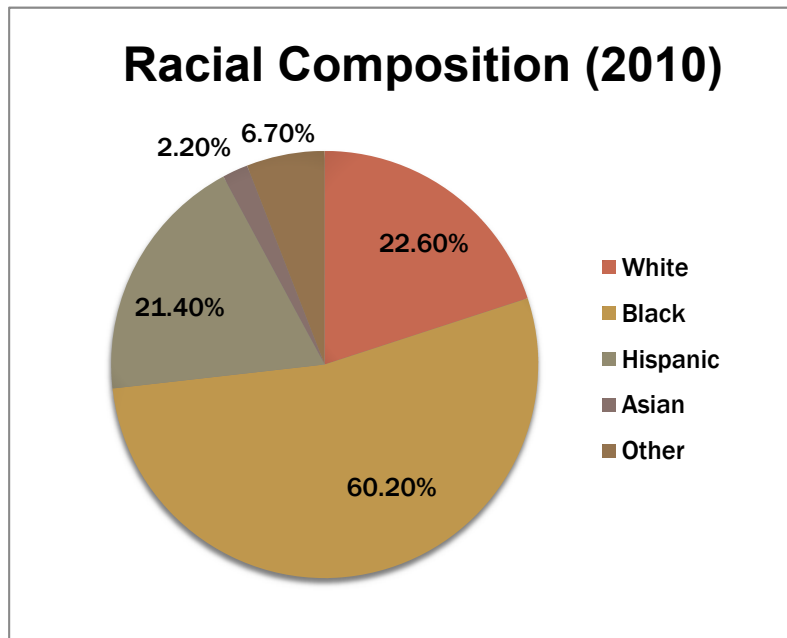


FIGURE 2 RACIAL COMPOSITION FOR HIGHLAND PARK
(2010 CENSUS)

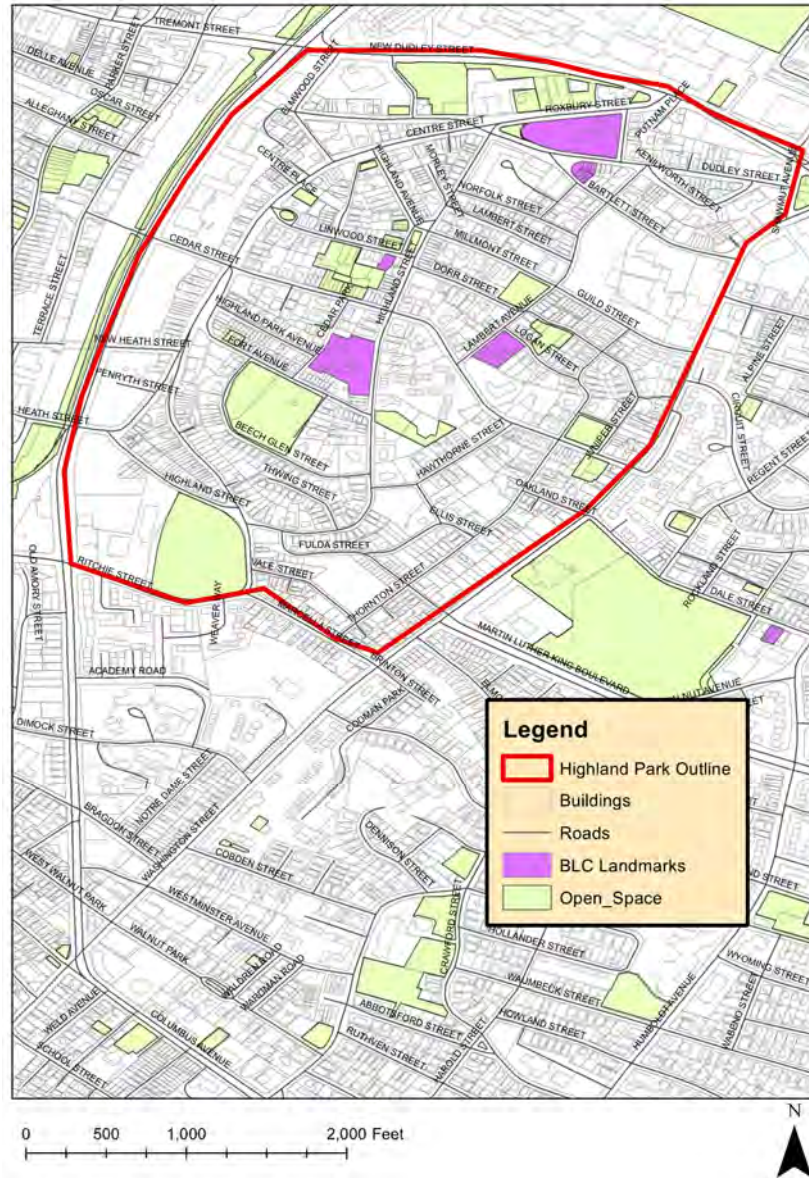
In most respects, Highland Park is doing better than nearby Egleston Square, the sub-neighborhood of equivalent size to its south, and is doing somewhat less well than Mission Hill, the already gentrified neighborhood located to the north which is close to the Harvard Medical School, Northeastern University, Wentworth Institute and the Museum of Fine Arts. Highland Park is clearly in a zone of transition that will

continue to experience powerful development and gentrification pressures as long as the Boston metropolitan economy continues to grow. Please note that Highland Park still has considerable vacant land to develop; its current population density (16,467 persons per square mile) is much lower than both Mission Hill (24,845 persons per square mile) or Egleston Square (22,014 per square mile). The total population in Highland Park is also still considerably below what it was at its peak in 1970, while Boston, as a whole, is making powerful strides towards reaching its 1950 peak.

Figure 3: *Open Space in Highland Park* and Figure 4: *Land Use Highland Park* reveals the large number of parcels available for development in and around Highland Park.



Highland Park Community Profile



The median household income in Highland Park is

FIGURE 3 OPEN SPACE AND BLC LANDMARKS IN HIGHLAND PARK



FIGURE 4 LAND USE IN HIGHLAND PARK

The median household income in Highland Park is more than double that of Egleston Square (\$33,000 vs. \$17,000); it is approximately two-thirds that of its northern neighbor, Mission Hill (\$33,000 vs. \$47,000) and is slightly more than half of what it is in the city as a whole (\$33,000 vs. \$63,621).

The age discrepancy mentioned may be explained by the predominant family structures in Highland Park and Egleston Square: in both neighborhoods, single-female heads of households represent a plurality (31% and 42% respectively, vs. 16% and 11% married-couple families).

Location	Density (people/sq. mile)	Total population (est. 2016)	Land area (sq. mile)	Median household income (est. 2016)	Median age - males (2016)	Median age - females (2016)
Highland Park	16,467	4,873	0.296	32796	28.7	39.5
Mission Hill	24,845	20,304	0.817	47473	25.4	30.3
Egleston Square	22,014	7,132	0.324	17234	28.2	42.3
Boston	13,894	672,840	48.4	63621	31.5	32.6

TABLE 1 KEY DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS HIGHLAND PARK COMPARED TO EGLESTON SQUARE, MISSION HILL AND BOSTON US CENSUS OF POPULATION 2016

There is a noticeable difference between the median age for males and females in Highland Park and Egleston Square (28 years old vs. 39-42 years old). This is not the case for Boston as a whole: for the City the discrepancy is negligible and tracking longer life expectancy for females (31.5 males, 32.6 females).

These numbers differ significantly from the Boston totals and very likely explain the high percentage of persons living below the poverty level in these two neighborhoods (35% for Highland Park, 45% for Egleston Square).

The discrepancies in rents paid across these communities are enormous! Renters in Mission Hill have housing costs that are, on average, double those living in



Highland Park Community Profile

Location	Percentage of married-couple families (among all households)	Percentage of single-mother households (among all households)	Average estimated value of detached houses (2016)	Percentage of population below poverty level (2016)	Median rent (2016)
Highland Park	16.5	30.9	256,555	34.5	\$687
Mission Hill	16.9	26.1	371,201	36.7	\$1482
Egleston Square	11.3	42.2	223,539	45.1	\$339
Boston	26.9	16	515,220	21	\$1,369

TABLE 2SELECTED FAMILY STRUCTURE, HOUSING VALUES/COSTS AND POVERTY RATES HIGHLAND PARK COMPARED TO MISSION HILL, EGLESTON SQUARE AND BOSTON US CENSUS 2016

Highland Park, though the numbers are somewhat dated. (Interviews suggest current rent levels are closer to \$950/person/month.) Mission Hill has unusually high rents because of its immediate proximity to Longwood, an area with many well-paid jobs in the medical research, higher education and cultural arts sectors. As regards Egleston Square, it still has some of the lowest rents and the most affordable housing in Boston. We have included a proxy measure for the value of real estate, the average value of detached houses (although only a minority of properties in the area fall in this category). All housing measures, however, follow the same pattern: Egleston Square at the bottom end of the housing cost

distribution, Mission Hill is at the top of this distribution, while Highland Park currently falls somewhere in between these two communities.

Table 3: *Family Structure, Housing Costs and Poverty Data* appearing on the following page highlights a number of important facts regarding the Highland Park neighborhood. The percentage of married couples living in the neighborhood (16.5), similar to Mission Hill and Egleston Square's percentages, falls significantly below the City's (26.9). The neighborhood's relatively low percentage of married-person households helps explain the relatively high percentage of



single-female heads of households as well as the elevated poverty rates that exist in Highland Park (34.5%), Mission Hill (36.7%), and Egleston Square (45.1%) especially when compared to the city-wide poverty rate of 21%. As regards the value of single-family housing, the cost of such homes in Egleston Square and Highland Park are approximately 30% lower than similar homes in Mission Hill and 50% below those in the City as a home.

The distribution of residents' ages is very different across the four comparison areas. Boston mirrors the demographic of newly popular cities: it has large numbers of people in their late 20s and early 30s. Mission Hill has almost become an undergraduate residential area, with the distribution line peaking at age 22. Egleston Square and Highland Park, however, both begin with jagged lines (illustrating the presence of large families with children of various ages) and the presence of significantly more females than males between the ages of 20 and 35 (for Highland Park) and 30 to 40 (for Egleston Square) - presumably, revealing a

large number of single mothers living in these communities. Both Highland Park and Egleston Square have a higher proportion of older adults - 40 to 55 - than the City as a whole. This means that retirement issues are most likely more significant in these two neighborhoods than in the City as a whole.

For privacy reasons, the US Census Bureau does not release income data at the block level; however, mapping income at the tract level is still informative. There are clearly major differences in income between the core neighborhood and the public housing blocks on its outskirts; it is also likely that as newer, wealthier residents move in, inequality becomes a door-to-door phenomenon. The tract level resolution is enough to conclude that Highland Park is a neighborhood reflecting growing social inequality between homeowners living in the heart of the community and renters who reside within the peripheral areas of the community (see Figure 6).





FIGURE 3 HIGHLAND PARK (DISTRIBUTION OF RESIDENTS' AGES)



FIGURE 4 EGLESTON SQUARE (DISTRIBUTION OF RESIDENTS' AGES)

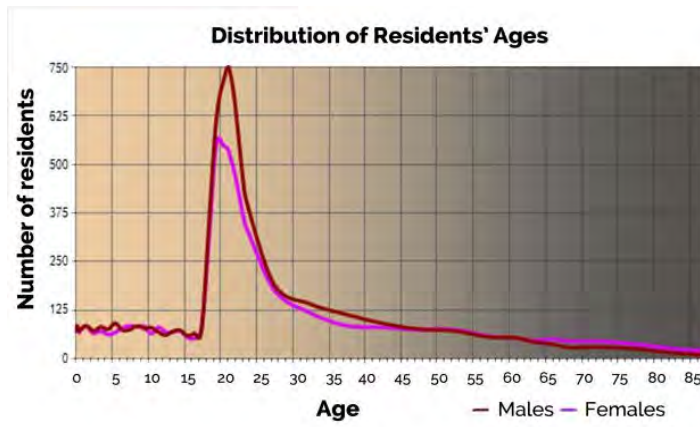


FIGURE 5 MISSION HILL (DISTRIBUTION OF RESIDENTS' AGES)

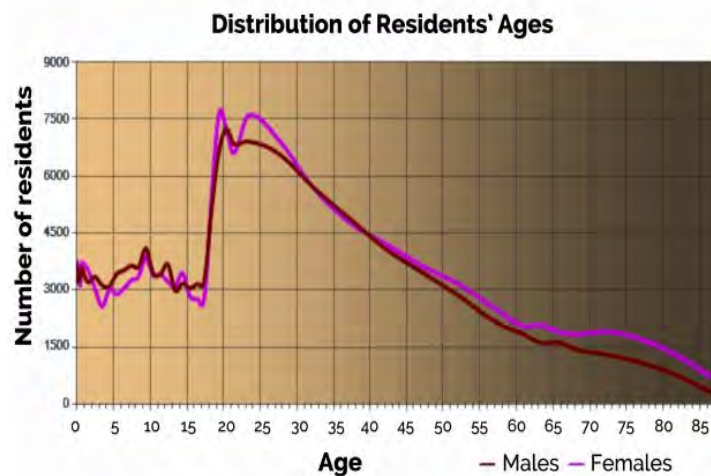


FIGURE 6 BOSTON (DISTRIBUTION OF RESIDENTS' AGES)

Four decades ago, Phillip Clay described gentrification as a four-step process: first, a younger population seeking cheap

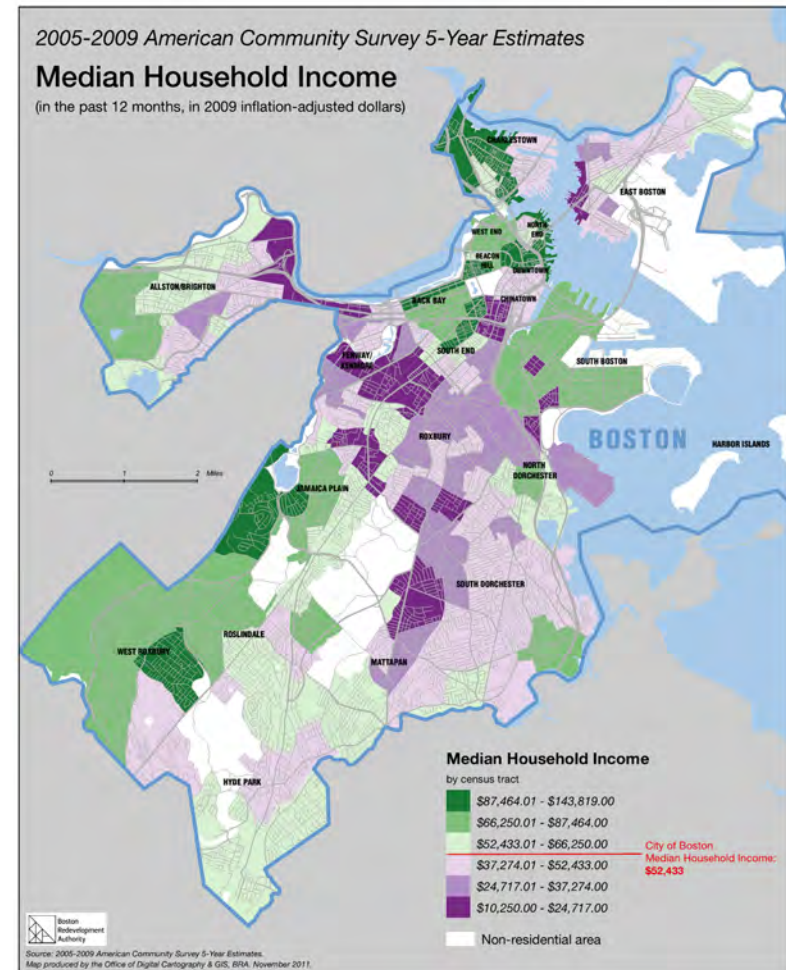
rents moves into a relatively safe but divested neighborhood; secondly, more middle-class people follow, and the real estate developers begin to notice the trend; thirdly, the newcomers exercise their political power in order to enforce closer policing and attract more amenities; and fourthly, the neighborhood becomes sufficient safe, convenient and expensive that the managerial class starts moving in and the original "gentrifiers" are pushed out.

.... Highland Park is most likely at the end of the second stage (real estate developers have definitely noticed change taking place within the neighborhood) and the beginning of the third (the protracted struggle between various groups on development issues). Its past appears to the south in Egleston Square where the first stage has begun to take hold, in large part, due to pressure from adjacent Jamaica Plain! Its future is presumably visible to the west (Mission Hill, where free-spending undergraduate students, relying on substantial student loans, have pushed out many of the community's older residents. The planning challenges facing Highland



Park are therefore inextricably related to managing the influx of newcomers (how many should ideally come in?) in what type of housing? In what family structures?) and addressing the pressure on current residents, many of whom will need help if they are to stay. If they do not receive some form of assistance, many of the area's long-time residents will be subjected to powerful market forces that will, in all likelihood, push the majority of families of modest means who do not live in subsidized housing units from the neighborhood.

Figure 8: *Median Household Incomes* highlights the disparities across neighborhoods. While the City of Boston had a median household income of \$56,000, Highland Park had a median income of approximately \$36,000.



Summary of recent public plans and reports

A number of recently published reports and plans issued by the Boston Planning and Development Agency, the MBTA, as well as several community-based organizations have influenced local stakeholder and elected officials' perceptions of current conditions and future development possibilities within Highland Park neighborhood. Among the most important of these documents are *The Roxbury Master Plan: Building a Twenty-First Century Community* (2004), *The Fairmont Indigo Rail Initiative Corridor Plan* (2005), *Highland Park Historic Preservation Priority Report* (2009), *Reclaim Roxbury: Roxbury Planning for Roxbury Residents* (2015), *Imagine Boston 2030: A Plan for the Future of Boston* (2016), *Plan Dudley Square Roxbury* (2017) and *The Plan: JP Rox* (2017).

Brief summaries of these documents and their most significant Highland Park planning recommendations are summarized in the following section of this document.

The Roxbury Master Plan: Building a Twenty-First Community was published in 2004 by the Boston Redevelopment Authority, now known as the Boston Planning and Development Agency, following more three years of active engagement with a broad cross section of organizations representing Roxbury's highly diverse population. The primary objective of the Roxbury Plan was to provide a ten to twenty-year framework for "building a more socially and economically vibrant Roxbury". This asset-based plan that was developed with considerable input from the Greater Roxbury community seeks to achieve this overall goal through the accomplishments of the following planning objectives:



1. Enhance civic life and the cultural environment in which residents participate (Arts & Cultural Heritage)
2. Actively promote a sustainable and diverse economy focused on job opportunities and the creation of wealth (Economic Development & Job Creation)
3. Provide a safe and convenient pedestrian, public transit and automobile transportation network (Transportation)
4. Provide a wider range of housing options for residents of diverse socioeconomic and age groups (Housing)
5. Create a public realm that is comfortable, lively and safe that reflects the unique physical and social character of the neighborhood (Community-Wide Urban Design Recommendations)
6. Enhance community participation and empowerment and increase the accountability of various groups and entities to the Roxbury community; including

institutions, government agencies and businesses
(Implementation)

The Roxbury Master Plan contains detailed policy and planning recommendations aimed at assisting the community in achieving these specific neighborhood improvement objectives. Among the policy and planning recommendations of greatest importance to the Highland Park community were a number of policy and planning recommendations related to the Arts and Cultural Heritage, Housing, Urban Design objectives. Among these were the development of an arts and cultural trail featuring a number of Highland Park sites and buildings, the enhancement of the Roxbury State Heritage Park. Increased funding and regulatory support for affordable housing, and the dedication of a significant portion of publicly owned vacant land for the development of new affordable housing. In addition to these substantive policy and planning



proposals, the Roxbury Master Plan also proposed the development of an ongoing oversight committee of local stakeholders to guide the implementation of the plan as well as the strengthening of local project review committees to insure that future private sector development proposals conform to the Master Plan's overall goals and objectives.

The Fairmont Indigo Rail Corridor Initiative Plan

offers a detailed strategy for improving commuter rail service for Bostonian's living south of the city. This MBTA document published in 2005 features proposals for the transformation of an existing 9.2 mile rail corridor connecting Readville with parts of Hyde Park, Roxbury, Dorchester, and the South End terminating in Downtown Boston. In the past, commuter trains running along this route typically travelled directly from Readville to South Station without stopping in the neighborhoods along the route. In addition to re-orienting the existing rail line to offer significantly improved service for residents of Boston's neighborhoods, the plan features the

construction of four new rail stations, the upgrading of two existing stations, and the strengthening of connections with the City's existing pedestrian, bicycle, bus, and subway routes, services, and facilities. According to the plan, the Fairmont Indigo Rail Line will "create new links between neighborhoods, revitalize commercial districts, and create a new sense of place that identifies and celebrates the local yet transcends neighborhood boundaries. The operation of the Fairmont Indigo transit line is poised to create connections and opportunities within the neighborhoods on a scale not seen in Boston in many years."

The Fairmont Indigo Corridor Initiative seeks to advance the following community development objectives. First, implement a Complete Corridor initiative by strategically building Complete Neighborhoods connected by the Indigo Line based upon six key urban design components. Second, promote multicultural diversity through the showcasing of food, events, and businesses along the Corridor that seeks to achieve a cultural and commercial corridor along with "the



entire world at home here”. Third, create exciting new public spaces reflective of the unique histories and cultures of the communities located along and adjacent to the new Indigo Line.

The Fairmont Indigo Rail Initiative Corridor Plan includes a number of policy initiatives that could have a very positive impact on the Highland Park community. Among these is the improved access to enhanced rail service, and a modified fare structure designed to offer neighborhood residents enhanced access to local employment and training opportunities and an expanded network of regional employment opportunities. Another benefit the Fairmont Indigo Line may provide to Highland Park residents is a modest expansion in the available stock of market rate and affordable housing. The Fairmont Indigo Rail Initiative includes plans for the construction of more than 2,000 units of housing surrounding the existing and proposed rail stations that may help moderate Highland Park’s overheated

residential housing market. These units which are being proposed as “transit oriented development” projects within new mixed use districts surrounding the existing and proposed rail stations may also reduce the number of automobile dependent families moving into Roxbury and Highland Park.

Highland Park Historic Preservation Priority

Report was published in 2009 through the cooperative efforts of the Neighborhood Preservation Partnership of Boston, the Boston Preservation Alliance, Historic Boston Incorporated, the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the Highland Park community. The overarching goal of the Historic Preservation Policy Report is to highlight the many significant historic places and structures that exist within Highland Park. In addition, the report identifies those historic places and structures that may be at risk for abandonment, demolition,



and inappropriate development in the near future. Finally, the report inventories a long list of public and private resources that could be used by local property owners, community-based institutions, and area historic preservationists to document, maintain, and restore many of the area's most historically significant structures. One of the preservation strategies discussed, at some length, is the adaptive re-use of these structures to meet current community needs while maintaining the architectural, historic, and cultural significance of these places and structures.

Reclaim Roxbury: Roxbury Planning for Roxbury

Residents is a resident-led effort that was initiated in 2017 by former City Councilman Tito Jackson and MIT Professor Caesar MacDowell. The initial focus of this effort was to update the Roxbury Master Plan of 2004. However, the rapid pace of development taking place within Dudley Square prompted the project's organizers to refocus their attention on a more immediate and limited planning objective, namely, to

insure that private development taking place in Dudley Square through the BPDA and DND Plan Dudley Square Roxbury public planning process advances the community development and resident empowerment goals of the Roxbury Master Plan. For the past 18 months, participants in the Reclaim Roxbury effort have been actively seeking to shape the Draft RFP recently issued by the BPDA and DND for a set of publicly-owned parcels in Dudley Square which they believe will determine the future of this important sub-area of the city.

The overwhelming majority of the ten or so parcels for which the City is seeking development proposals, as part of the Plan Dudley Square Roxbury initiative, are located less than a half mile from the northeast edge of the Highland Park community. Four of the parcels featured in this City-issued RFP are located either in or adjacent to the Highland Park neighborhood. The permitted uses, density, height, bulk, design guidelines as well as community benefit criterion which the City places on these properties will have a discernable



impact of the future development of Highland Park. This is especially true given the location of these parcels at the entrance of one of Highland Park's most significant historical and cultural areas (i.e. First Church and Eliot Square).

Imagine Boston: A Plan for the Future of Boston is the Walsh Administration's effort to update the City of Boston's fifty-year-old comprehensive plan. The result of a two-year community engagement process that elicited input from more than 15,000 local stakeholders, Imagine Boston 2030 seeks to improve the overall quality of life for current and future residents of the city by supporting inclusive economic development; expanding educational, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities for all; providing more affordable housing in order to minimize displacement; enhance open spaces and improve our public realm while preparing for ongoing climate change, and investing in education, arts, culture, transportation and other infrastructure. Included in this

400+ page document are initiatives in the area of: housing, health and safety, educational excellence, economic growth, energy and environmental conservation, open space planning, transportation alternatives, technological development, arts and culture, and land use planning. Among the strategies outlined in the plan are those aimed at enhancing existing neighborhoods, encouraging further mixed use development Downtown, promoting new development at the periphery of existing residential communities, new waterfront development, and establishing new networks for economic growth and development such as the Fairmont Indigo Rail Corridor. The City plans to pursue these initiatives and strategies by creating partnerships with other public, private, and non-profit organizations; prototyping previously untried preservation, development, and revitalization concepts; and coordinating capital spending across public agencies as the local and regional levels of government.



Highland Park could take advantage of many of the new planning policies and programs outlined in the plan's housing, energy and environmental conversation, open space planning, transportation alternatives, arts and culture, and land use planning sections. Highland Park could also benefit from the City's commitment to enhancing existing residential neighborhoods, expanding stable neighborhoods at their periphery, and promoting business and employment opportunities along new corridors and networks such as the Fairmont and Indigo Lines.

Plan Dudley Square Roxbury is a cooperative effort initiated by the Boston Planning and Development Agency and the City of Boston's Division of Neighborhood Development in 2016 to capitalize on the emergence of Dudley Square as one of the city's most important multi-modal transportation hubs by promoting high density, transit-oriented development, in a revitalized mixed-use district. The driver of this process is a Preliminary Request for

Development issued by the city in March of 2018 for the development of a set of twelve parcels in and around Dudley Square. Local activists responded to the opportunity that residents, property owners, and institutional leaders had to influence the environmental, economic, social, and design guidelines being used to guide the process by seeking additional time to suggest amendments to this document. Their overall goal is to promote a balanced approach to development that provides for appropriate forms of higher density, expanded affordable housing options, and improved municipal and commercial services for current and future residents.

Plan: JP/Rox Washington Street and Columbus Avenue was the first sub-area or district plan generated by the Boston Planning and Development Agency during the Walsh Administration. The Plan which covers Jamaica Plain and a small section of northwest Roxbury was undertaken to address the powerful development and displacement



pressures which these historic neighborhoods are currently experiencing. The overarching values that guided the creation of this plan, as shaped by local stakeholder and Advisory Group members, were to:

- preserve the community's socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and cultural diversity;
- enhance the unique characters of the community's various subareas;
- promote balanced growth that expands opportunities for all current and future residents; and,
- accelerate the production of affordable housing to meet current and future needs.

In order to honor these values, Plan JP/Rox identified eight specific goals to shape the future development of the Jamaica Plan and Roxbury communities. Among these eight development goals are to:

- prevent displacement of low- and moderate-income residents through the acceleration of new affordable housing opportunities and technical assistance;
- add to the overall stock of existing housing within the Study Area to relieve escalating pressure on rents and the cost of homeownership;
- preserve the vast majority of the Study Area's existing form and character while guiding new development built on vacant or under-used land;
- identify areas of former industrial use as strategic mixed-use redevelopment opportunity sites with an emphasis on the provision of affordable housing and job creation;
- build and enhance the existing physical character and diversity of places in the Study Area – from Egleston Square, to Green Street, to Stony Brook to Forest Hills – as distinctly different from each other;



- create and/or modify City policies, planning guidelines and tools to implement the vision established by this plan.
- develop updated zoning that provides a predictable baseline for as-of right development; and,
- propose explicit requirements for the provision of public benefits, specifically affordable housing, in exchange for additional height and density.

make a wider variety of goods and services conveniently available, and the commitment to reduce auto dependency by promoting the development of Complete Streets and Neighborhoods that offer a wide range of comfortable, safe, and convenient transportation options.

A number of the specific strategies related to the Plan's housing, urban design, land-use and transportation goals are likely to have significant impact on the future direction of development in the Highland Park neighborhood. Among the most important of these are those related to the promotion of more affordable housing opportunities, the preservation of the unique urban design form of each community, the promotion of additional mixed-use areas to reduce the number of daily vehicular miles traveled and to



Local Perceptions of Current Strengths and Future Development Options

During the months of February, March and April, members University of Massachusetts Boston's Highland Park Research Team had the opportunity to undertake a number of qualitative research activities aimed at identifying local stakeholders' perceptions of Highland Park's current strengths and future development opportunities. Among the field-based research activities we completed were: a tour of the Hawthorne Community Center and surrounding open spaces and community gardens; attendance at a Highland Park Neighborhood Coalition Project Review Meeting, and interviews with three long-time leaders of the Highland Park Community Coalition. A review of the field notes created by the student researchers participating in these activities generated the following list of preliminary research findings.

Current Community Strengths

- **Centrally located** within the City of Boston as well as the greater Boston Metropolitan Region providing residents with excellent access to the health care, education, employment, and cultural resources of Downtown Boston.
- Socio-economic, racial/ethnic, cultural and generational **diversity** of the community that significantly enhances the neighborhood's social, political, and cultural life.
- Provides local residents a wide variety of **transportation options** including: walking, biking, driving, bus, subway and commuter transportation options.
- Offers residents a wide range of market rate and affordable **housing options** in buildings reflecting a



variety of historic and contemporary architectural styles.

- Presence of a diverse set of **employers** in and near the neighborhood providing jobs for unskilled, semi-skilled as well as highly skilled professionals.
- Availability of a wide range of **neighborhood-oriented retail services**, including banks, grocery stores, drug stores, restaurants, and professional service providers.
- Conveniently located **municipal and non-profit** health care and human service providers' offices.
- Rich network of **community-based and resident-led non-profit organizations** committed to improving Highland Park's environment, economy, and civic culture.
- Extensive network of well-maintained **community gardens and open spaces** available for current and

future economic and community development projects.

- Significant collection of **historically, architecturally, and culturally significant sites and buildings** some of which are appropriate for adaptive re-use to meet current and future community development needs.
- Numerous community-oriented **religious congregations** that share a strong commitment to supporting policies, projects, and programs designed to enhance the overall quality of life within the community.
- Outstanding **local civic leaders** engaged in a wide range of challenging neighborhood preservation, stabilization, and revitalization initiatives.
- Local and nearby **public, parochial and private schools** that offer Highland Park families a wide range of school choice.



- Strong **partnerships with a range of city agencies** including the Boston Police Department, Boston Fire Department, Boston Public Works Department, Boston Environmental Services Department, MBTA, Boston Planning and Development Agency, Boston Department of Neighborhood Development, and Boston Historical Commission.
- Strong **working relationships with several area colleges and universities**, including: Roxbury Community College, Northeastern University, Wentworth Institute of Technology, MIT, and the University of Massachusetts Boston.
- The **City's current interest** in the Highland Park neighborhood and its healthy and sustainable development.
- Involvement of several **high quality and community sensitive private and non-profit developers** in the neighborhood who appear committed to projects that

provide significant benefits to the Highland Park community.

Current Community Concerns

- **Displacement of long-time residents** as a result of the rapid expansion of the Boston Regional economy and steadily rising housing costs.
- **Additional gentrification pressures related to the influx of college and university students** who can no longer find suitable housing in Mission Hill.
- **Loss of historically, architecturally, and culturally significant buildings** as a result of the intense development pressures confronting the neighborhood.

- **Fear of future losses in the neighborhood's existing supply of affordable housing** caused by private developments "aging out" of their tax credit related affordability requirements and the replacement of existing public housing complexes with mixed-income development projects facilitated by HUD's Choice Neighborhood and Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Programs.
- **Loss of important resident-managed but city-owned open spaces** currently used for community gardening and environmental education projects essential to the nurturing and maintenance of social capital within the community due to the non-strategic approach to the redevelopment of these spaces by the City.
- **Growing need to more effectively incorporate overlooked voices within the neighborhood** in its ongoing community problem-solving, planning, and development activities (i.e. African American, Latino, and Asian representatives, small business owners and youth).
- **Loss of income and wealth caused by individuals and institutions purchasing goods and services outside of the Highland Park neighborhood** in nearby Jamaica Plain resulting in significant economic losses to the neighborhood.
- **Threatened neighborhood character** due to the absence of appropriately formulated urban design guidelines for the community, especially as it relates to the redevelopment of parts of Malcolm X Boulevard, Washington Street and Columbus Avenue.
- **Failure to secure meaningful employment/entrepreneurial benefits for neighborhood residents** due to the rapid pace of development, the weaknesses in the City's current citizen participation



rules and procedures, and Mayor Walsh's pro-development policies.

Future Development Opportunities

- Hawthorne Youth Community Center and Haley House currently control two significant pieces of **vacant land at the center of the community**. There may be an opportunity to consolidate the community gardening, environmental education, and youth development activities currently taking on these parcels to permit the redevelopment of one of these sites for permanently affordable housing.
- There is another potential development site located adjacent to the **Norfolk Residences** that is jointly owned by a long-time resident, business owner, and realtor and the City of Boston that could

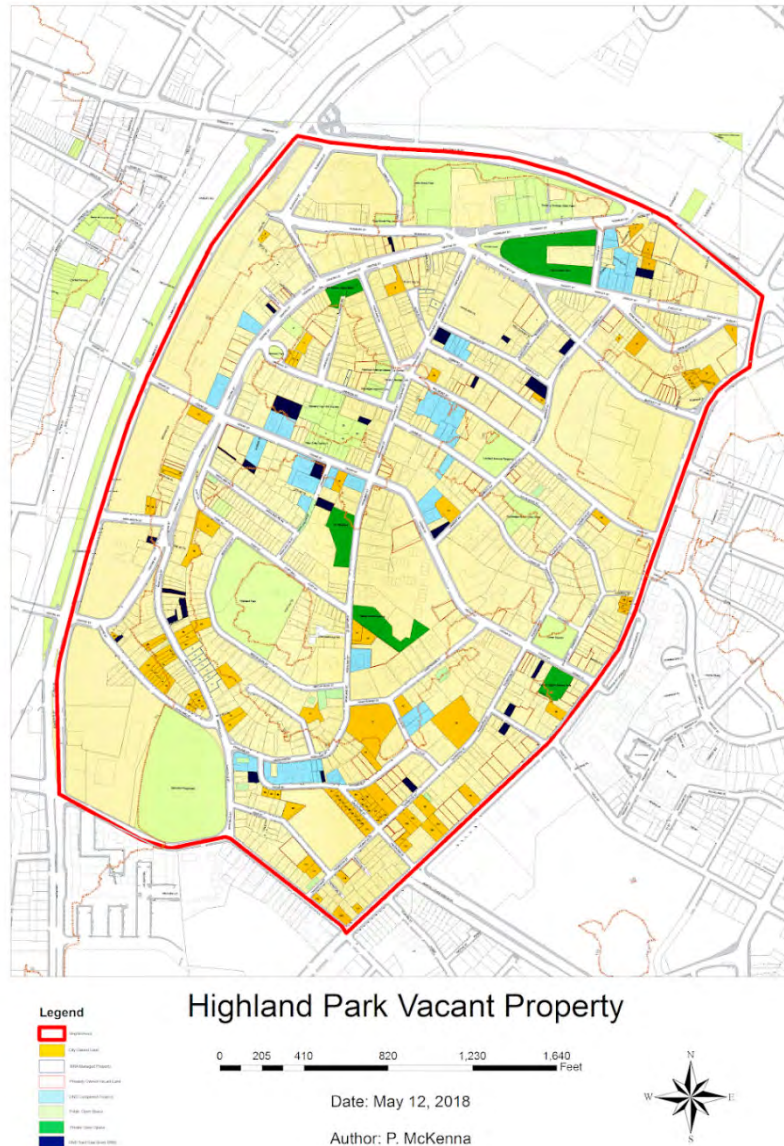
accommodate additional market rate, affordable, and special needs housing.

- There are also a number of churches within the neighborhood that are either no longer being actively used for services or have small congregations that are struggling to maintain their buildings, such as the African Orthodox Church on Cedar Street, that may be candidates for sensitive adaptive re-use to help address the neighborhood's need for additional housing or affordable business "start-up" sites.
- In addition to these possibilities, there are a number of large tracts of vacant land located at the periphery of the neighborhood, some of which are city-owned, that could also be developed for housing or mixed-use developments, including neighborhood-oriented retail services. (See map on page 58).



Summary of Research Findings

UMass Boston's Highland Park Planning Team collected and analyzed a significant amount of historical, physical conditions, population and housing trends, and resident perceptions data for the Highland Park community. These data are summarized on the following page in the form of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Chart pioneered by Stanford Research International (SRI) to present a concise picture of complex organizations and communities. The Strengths and Weaknesses appearing in the top row of this two by two matrix describes current assets and challenges currently facing Highland Park as identified by local stakeholders and members of the UMass Planning Team. The Opportunities and Threats appearing in the bottom row of the matrix identifies opportunities and threats likely to confront the neighborhood in the next five to ten years if current trends persist.



These observations form the basis of an initial set of planning and design challenges/opportunities that appear to confront Highland Park residents, property owners, leaders, and their allies. These preliminary research findings and set of potential planning and design challenges/opportunities would typically be revisited and re-examined in light of additional data that would be carefully collected and analyzed as part of a comprehensive neighborhood improvement plan in the event local stakeholders and the Boston Planning and Development Agency decided to undertake such an effort.



Preliminary SWOT Analysis of Highland Park

Current Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Central location -Views and vistas -Historic sites and structures -Outstanding building stock (Design quality) -Historically affordable housing -Resident-managed open spaces -Diverse population -Excellent transportation options -Considerable school choice -Availability of local retail services -Reasonably safe neighborhood -Civically engaged religious congregations -A small but strong network of active and skilled community-builders -Excellent human service organizations (HYCC, Haley House)
Future Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increased service and employment opportunities made possible by new developments in Dudley Square -Expanded transportation options via improved service on the Fairmont Indigo Rail Corridor -Enhanced affordable housing options on city-owned land and within city-assisted developments -New neighborhood-oriented retail in “mixed-use” projects -Improved business and employment opportunities generated by heritage tourism and buy local initiatives -Increased walkability, connectivity, and legibility through a “complete streets approach” to neighborhood corridor improvements -Broader and deeper citizen participation in local community

building, problem-solving, and community development

Current Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rapidly rising rents and home prices -Fear of future reductions in its affordable housing stock -Influx of students from Longwood corridor seeking housing -Rising incidence of residential and commercial displacement -Development pressures threatening historic sites/buildings -Insuring stakeholders a voice in current planning decisions -Increasing traffic congestion and parking problems -Loss of income and wealth caused by local residents shopping elsewhere -Encouraging corridor development that is contextually appropriate -Weak communication and trust between hilltop homeowners and down hill renters -Civic overload among the neighborhood's relatively small cadre of dedicated community-builders/leaders
Future Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Intensified gentrification and displacement -Growing housing affordability gap for residents and business operators -Further losses of historically and architecturally significant structures -Shrinkage in the amount of resident-managed open space in the neighborhood -Increasing social cleavages among long and short-term residents resulting in significant policy differences -Loss of local stakeholder trust and confidence in BPDA's project review processes -Drop in local stakeholder engagement in community-



building, problem-solving, and community development due to mounting frustrations with BPDA

Preliminary Review of Future Planning

Issues and Strategies

A number of possible planning and design strategies are available to address the current and future development challenges confronting the Highland Park community. Among these possibilities are the following:

A review of the current affordability requirements for development taking place on public and private land given the shelter crisis presently affecting the Highland Park community. Consideration should be given to using 100% of Highland Park's publicly owned land for affordable housing. In light of the current income distribution of families living in Highland Park, 50% of this land should be dedicated to housing families living on incomes below 30% of the AMI, 25% of the land should be dedicated to housing families living

on incomes below 50% of the AMI, with the balance of the land being used to house families living on incomes below 80% of the AMI. Consideration should also be given to requiring private developers seeking "use variances" or other significant forms of public subsidies to make their residential project's "pencil out" to set aside a minimum of 40% of their units for affordable housing using the same levels of subsidy percentages as above.

A comprehensive survey and plan for the strategic use of the neighborhood's considerable open space resources. Rapid deterioration in the health and vitality of the Highland Park neighborhood in the 1970s left many vacant lots which members of the community, in cooperation with local institutions and the City, worked together to reprogram for use as community gardens and gathering spaces. Highland Park is currently facing an acute shortage of affordable



housing that might necessitate the use of these spaces for affordable and special needs housing. Rather than see these properties reprogrammed in an unplanned and haphazard fashion with little, if any, resident input, we propose the implementation of a comprehensive survey of these places and subsequent strategic planning and programming of these places by local stakeholders who will recommend to the BPDA the percentage of these spaces to be used for open spaces, affordable housing, retail/commercial spaces, and mixed use development.

Update of the historic places and structures inventory in Highland Park to identify places and structures requiring immediate protection from inappropriate alteration or demolition and to evaluate the feasibility of submitting an application to the Department of the Interior to place the Highland Park neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places which will highlight the district's rich social history; help protect the exteriors of the buildings from

unsympathetic redevelopment; and increase the chances of securing public and private funding for the preservation of these important cultural/community assets. Much of what needs to be done has already been outlined in the Highland Park Historic Preservation Priority Report (2009). In addition, the community is trying to create an Architectural Conservatin District , which would give the community more leverage over development that would destroy existing historic structures, rather than having to fight each case individually, with developers having the upper hand. The recent successful battle to preserve the St. James African Orthodox Church on Cedar St. is an example of how an ACD could be of help in fighting rampant development.

Engage local public history students from one or more of our area colleges and universities to work with area high school students in conducting the research needed to establish a series of local heritage tours that can be led by



area high school, community college, and university students as well as retired workers. These tours will introduce local students and residents as well as tourists from across the nation and the globe to the extraordinarily rich social history of the Highland Park and Roxbury communities. This effort could be undertaken by a collaborative network of institutions that might include: the Roxbury Historical Society, Boston Historical Commission, Boston Public Library, Roxbury State Historical Site, Museum of African American History, and the University of Massachusetts Boston and Roxbury Community College Library Archives. This initiative would have educational, cultural, and economic development benefits.

Recruit graduate planning students from a nearby college or university to conduct a small area retail market analysis to determine the business and employment development potential of increasing the portion of consumer dollars spent by Highland Park families and institutions within

the neighborhood. This “buy local” strategy would seek to increase the economic vitality of the Highland Park by reducing the amount of money local residents, institutions, businesses, and agencies spend on goods and services outside of the neighborhood.

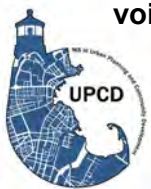
A cooperative enterprise study conducted by planning, public policy, or business students from a local college or university would use the results of the previously mentioned small area retail market analysis to identify local goods and service demands that might be cost effectively met by worker owned and operated cooperatives. Such businesses tend to offer higher quality consumer goods and services, competitive prices, improved salaries and benefits, and lower rates of business failures. Finally, they tend to do local sourcing which results in these organizations spending

a higher portion of their operating budgets within the community.

Recruit a team of urban planners and designers to formulate a set of design guidelines (form-based codes) aimed at establishing Malcolm X Boulevard, Columbus Avenue, and Washington Street as aspirational “prototypes” for the City’s new “complete streets” initiatives. These design guidelines would promote a public realm that is highly functional, environmentally sensitive and resilient, aesthetically-pleasing, designed with CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles in mind, that would accommodate all forms of transportation, and would reflect the unique history and culture of Highland Park as these arterials pass through the community.

Advocate for a strengthening of Boston Charter Article 80 designed to provide local stakeholders with a stronger voice in planning and design decisions affecting their

communities. While Boston requires developers proposing major projects requiring various forms of city support or regulatory relief to meet with designated Project Review Committees, this process is somewhat informally pursued and infrequently affects the developments being examined in a significant manner. Reasonable deadlines for the BPDA to notify Project Review Committees regarding upcoming reviews need to be established. In addition, specific guidelines need to be developed regarding the kinds of information developers should make available to the public and to members of the Project Review Committees before they are asked to consider these projects. This information should cover the basic description of the project in terms of: proposed use, height, bulk, density, set-backs, parking, building materials, etc. This information should also specify whether the project needs one or more area variances or a use variance. If it is the latter, the developer should be asked to identify, in very detailed terms, the specific forms of relief he/she is seeking. The new guidelines should also outline the



kinds of information the developer should share at the Project Review Committee Meeting. Also, the guidelines should prescribe the effort the BPDA and their staff should make to ensure reasonable notification of abutters and other “interested” parties (i.e. residents and stakeholders). Finally, a strengthened Article 80 needs to establish a clear mechanism by which the Project Review Committees indicate their support for, conditional support of, or opposition to proposed projects. A strengthened Article 80 should also establish a specific manner in which this information is shared at the BPDA before deliberation of any proposed zoning relief is undertaken by this body. Currently, members of Project Review Committees in so-called “hot” neighborhoods such as Highland Park are being asked to convene, often without the basic information they need, to adequately examine and comment on these projects. In the absence of a formal process for them to forward their “review findings” to the BPDA Board; it is unclear if and how the voting members of

the BPDA Board of Directors are adequately informed of the community’s needs and desires.

Addressing the need for high quality “independent” technical assistance to initiate and review important new economic and community development projects. Boston’s rapidly growing regional economy has generated powerful development pressures on the neighborhoods within the City as well as many of its surrounding communities. The number and complexity of the projects local civic leaders are being asked to review is extraordinary. Highland Park has a very skilled and committed network of leaders who devote considerable time to evaluating and, in some cases, reshaping development projects. Highland Park and neighborhoods like it which are the locus of significant and, often contested, development need access to a small group of independent planners and designers to gather and analyze



data needed to empower them to render informed opinions and judgments regarding proposed projects. They need similar forms of technical planning and design assistance to generate plans, designs, and financial packages for projects needed by the community that the market is not ready to provide. In the current context, the City of Boston should consider establishing a Community Planning and Design Assistance Center to meet this need. In 1965 Paul Davidoff published a seminal article in the Journal of the American Institute of Planners (JAIP which is now known as the Journal of the American Planning Association) in which he challenged the notion of a “unitary public interest” that a central planning agency could determine through solid citizen participation methods. Instead, he argued for the existence of competing views of the common good, he argued that local communities should have the ability to access high quality planners to challenge the planning, design, and development values, assumptions, and concepts of centralized planning agencies.

Through a give and take process between central agency

planners and their neighborhood planning counterparts Davidoff argued that his “advocacy model” of planning would improve the thoughtfulness, equity and justice outcomes of decisions rendered by city planning commissions. Members of the UMass Boston’s Highland Park Research Team believe that now might be a very opportune time for Boston to consider the potential benefits of strengthening its Article 80 Project Review processes by establishing new guidelines and by providing local Project Review Committees with access to high quality independent planning consultation service as advocated by Paul Davidoff.



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