

Why invest in Columbia Road?

History

The communities along Columbia Road are culturally distinct, representing many languages, experiences, and histories. It all started in the 1600's when the Dorchester North Burying Ground was built. The area then grew into an important commercial center. Columbia Road was widened in 1897 to become "one of the prominent thoroughfares in this part of the city," with a hope to turn it into a tree-lined connection between Moakley Park and Franklin Park. A trolley line was later built and ran down the center. By the 1920s, Uphams Corner grew to a prominent business district.

Cifrino Market was the first one-stop super-market in the nation. The Strand Theater was not only one of the first movie theaters to be built in Boston, but the center of African-American Bostonian culture. Legalized housing discrimination in the mid 1900's led to racial segregation and harmed families. By the 1960s, the trolley lines had been removed in favor of car lanes. This led to high traffic speeds, unsafe walking conditions, and a loss of greenery that we see today.



Upham's Corner looking north - 1948
Boston City Archives





Columbia Road is twice as long as Newbury Street but has about the same number of crosswalks. It also takes a long time for “walk” signs to appear. The low number of crosswalks and long wait for a walk sign makes the road extra dangerous. Columbia Road is listed by the City as a “high crash” street. This means it is a street with one of highest number of crashes per year.



Shade from trees along Columbia Road varies, however, there are far fewer trees as you get closer to Upham’s Corner and Moakley Park. In fact, there are almost no street trees between Elder Street and Holden Street and between Buttonwood Street and Dorchester Avenue.



During the summer months, sidewalks and roads along Columbia Road can reach up to 125 degrees F (50 degrees C). To make a comfortable and safe public place for people to see neighbors, visit shops and restaurants, and wait for the bus, shade is important. Heat is the number one threat to human health from climate change.



Strong storms flood some streets near Columbia Road with water, especially Quincy and Ceylon Streets.



Over 6,000 people ride the #16 bus every day. Buses are scheduled to run every 12 minutes but are often delayed by traffic. Riders often have to wait 30 minutes or more between buses.



Over 13,000 households and families live within walking distance of Columbia Road and over 60 businesses operate along the corridor. The goal is to keep Columbia Road affordable for families and businesses.

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