

Connections & Decisions- Service Learning Section

April 18th, 2022

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### Community Organizing Alliance – Dorchester Final Report

Dorchester, Massachusetts was founded in the early 1600's by Puritan farmers. These were English protestants whose objectives were to eliminate the aspects of Catholicism from religious practices in order to “purify” the church of England. They migrated from Dorchester, England to Dorchester, Massachusetts to establish a new community. They built roads and the neighborhood had a spurt of Colonial English growth. However, Native Americans were forced out and had to relocate. In the 1700s, town meetings were established, but with limited voting, the first public school (for boys) in the US which was financially supported by tax revenues was created and future landmarks started appearing. The 1700s was an important decade for Dorchester as it was fueled by a growth of infrastructure and housing, as well as an influx of people of different races & ethnicities. As Dorchester continued to evolve through the following century, it eventually led to a Civic renewal in the 1970's.

Today, Dorchester has a very diverse population of over 124,000. Of Dorchester working residents, 6.3% are self-employed, 62.3% work for private companies, 13.2% are employed by the government, and 18.2% work for not-for-profit companies. The median age of Dorchester residents is 35. To learn about the community and residents of Dorchester, we had the opportunity to attend the Ashmont-Adams Neighborhood Association Meeting, a monthly community assembly on March 2.

At the Dorchester community meeting, there were many concerns brought up by the residents. At the forefront of these issues was the financial struggles of Carney Hospital. The hospital, Dorchester's main healthcare facility & the largest employer in Dorchester, is at risk of closing. Carney hospital has been struggling financially for over two years, and Steward Health Care, the for-profit healthcare company that owns Carney Hospital has allowed resources to diminish, staffing and supply shortages to increase, and residents are worried that this disinvestment will lead to the closure of the hospital. According to nurses working at Carney who attended the community meeting, Steward healthcare, which owns Carney, will not let community members in the door, then claim that "volume" is down. As these resources and staff members are being cut, the residents plead with Mayor Wu to recognize that Carney hospital is essential for Dorchester residents to have accessible healthcare, and is an invaluable employer for the Dorchester community.

Another issue addressed by residents in the meeting was concerns about the increased taxes imposed by the city of Boston, saying that they are unaffordable, and may soon drive out many residents who have lived in Dorchester for many years, or even their whole lives. Residents also described the inequity between the different Boston neighborhoods. While Dorchester is the largest neighborhood in Boston and requires funding for some of their more run-down public schools and parks, Dorchester received the lowest percentage of Boston's budget compared to other neighborhoods. On the other hand, Chinatown recently received a significant amount of funding for a brand new school in the neighborhood. As residents attempt to bring this and several other budget issues to the awareness of the mayor, they also express how they have been ignored. Their frustration was clear when they explained that City Hall has not been responding to their concerns, and that many representatives of the neighborhood have

failed to attend their community meetings and hear their concerns on community issues. These were only a few of the concerns voiced by Dorchester residents at the community meeting.

As we learned more about Dorchester, we used the community calendar on Dorchester's own website (<https://mydorchester.org/dotcal>), to look at the different community events they offered. This lists different neighborhood meetings, as well as family events such as farmers markets. Almost every organization and partner in Dorchester can be found on this website, like Dorchester People for Peace, the Codman Square Food Pantry, Greater Four Corners Action Association, and many others, all of whom would be great potential collaborators for the Community Organizing Alliance.

South End: Final Report

For: Community Organizing Alliance

By: Lilly O'Meara, Maria Bisono, Rachel Tulk

Sunday, April 16, 2023

### **Brief overview/History of neighborhood**

- The South end is a neighborhood in Boston, Massachusetts which was developed in the 19th century.
- The reason for the development of south end was to relieve overcrowding in the areas of downtown Boston and Beacon Hill
- During the 19th century the South End was initially developed as a fashionable and elegant residential neighborhood but then shifted its purpose during the 19-20th century as a home for many immigrants becoming one of the neighborhoods more ethnically and racially diverse
- South end is known for its diverse galleries, trendy restaurants, and historic architecture.
- But today the South End is recognized for its beautiful row houses, local restaurants, and small, beautiful boutiques which you can see while walking through the streets. When walking around the area you can also see many parks like one of the most recognizable Southwest Corridor parks and art also resembling along all the streets, one of the most important art centers being "Boston center for the arts".

Source: <https://globalboston.bc.edu/index.php/home/immigrant-places/the-south-end/>  
<https://www.bu.edu/articles/2022/getting-to-know-your-neighborhood-the-south-end/>

### **Resident Overview**

#### ***Population:***

Around 34,669

#### ***Race & Ethnicity:***

White- 49.5%

Black/African American - 17.1%

Hispanic or Latino- 16.6%

American Indian and Alaska Native 0.2%

Asian- 13.9%

Native Hawaiian and other pacific Islander- 0.0%

Other races 0.6%

#### ***Age:***

Under 5: (5.1%)

5-14: (6.8%)

15-19: (6.9%)

20-24: (12.2%)

25-64: (59.7%)

65+ (9.2%)

Source:

[https://www.cityofboston.gov/images\\_documents/South\\_End\\_Planning\\_District\\_Profile\\_tcm3-13007.pdf](https://www.cityofboston.gov/images_documents/South_End_Planning_District_Profile_tcm3-13007.pdf)

### **Key Issues in the South End and a Rationale for How we Found Them**

- Homelessness
- Adorable housing
- Gentrification
- Food
- Not having access to technology/ not being tech savvy
- Addiction & drug dealing

The aftermath of Covid 19 left residents in the South End struggling to pay for rent. Not to mention the cost of food and gas has risen drastically. When we called Vanessa, an employee at ABCD, she talked about the increase in the amount of South End residents who are requesting loans and for rent and costs of living.

We turned to google to investigate how drastic the housing problem was in the South End. We were shocked at what we found. According to Emilee Witkowski, the author of the article “Homelessness Crisis in the South End”, the residents in the south End have been experiencing lack of clean water, addiction, and drug dealing for years.

Lack of access to food has always been an issue in the South End according to an article written by Diti Kohli, a writer for the Boston Globe. Food scarcity has only gotten worse, according to Kohli, nearly one in three adults struggle to have access to enough food to get them through a day.

Another issue Vanessa mentioned was the number of individuals who either do not have access to technology or are not tech savvy enough to work their technological devices.

Source: [Homelessness-crisis-in-bostons-south-end-neighborhood](#)

### **Potential Collaborators**

- ABCD Hispanic Center
- Pine Street Inn
- Hailey House
- United South End Settlements
- Tenants Development Corporation

## Insight: Conversations and Events

Preliminary research as well as the initial neighborhood walk gave good insight into the layout of the South End neighborhood and helped us understand how geography plays a role in some of the key issues we looked at.

We attended the SoWa art market on a Sunday in February where we talked to a gallery manager. She told us that although SoWa doesn't have any major ties to the South End in particular, residents often attend SoWa Sunday, and it is a source of community for them. Our contact at the gallery also mentioned that unhoused individuals staying at the Pine Street Inn down the street often enjoy the gallery in passing.

Most of the information we have learned regarding strengths and deficits in the neighborhood comes from our research, however, we also have learned a lot from Vanessa Neves, an operations manager from ABCD South End.

Questions we asked Vanessa and her answers:

- **What are some of the main issues clients deal with and how does ABCD address them?**
  - ABCD does everything, helps clients with any issues they present. These are mostly providing financial assistance with the following costs: housing (rent, etc.), fuel, and food. This time of year, ABCD also helps many residents with taxes. Another big thing is giving residents the information they need to succeed, educating them on what kinds of programs they qualify for and how other organizations can assist them.
- **How do resident needs become apparent to you and what process is taken to address them?**
  - ABCD has connections to over 100 organizations in the Boston area as well as the government. These organizations often refer people to ABCD. Also, intake forms give employees like Vanessa a good idea of what clients' needs are, Vanessa noted that many issues are recurring or seasonal and many are new and persisting.
- **Who qualifies for assistance from ABCD?**
  - The specific qualification for qualification is making under \$60,000 a year. Vanessa noted that many folks think they don't qualify for assistance when in fact they do.
- **Where does ABCD get most of their funding?**
  - Most funding comes from government grants.
- **What kinds of positions are held at ABCD, who is doing most of this work you are discussing?**

- There are both full time employees like Vanessa who mainly work to organize and manage and volunteer workers who perform a range of tasks. Vanessa noted that many student volunteers do clients taxes.

## **Jamaica Plain**

**Elena Grant, George Decker, Katherine Leichty**

### **History of Jamaica Plain**

The first settlers of Jamaica Plain came soon after the first settlers of Boston in the 1600s, and grew and transformed from there into a community of homesteaders, then wealthy estate owners, to the multicultural community that exists there today. The area's tradition of social advocacy began early, as by the time of the American Revolution, several notable revolutionary figures bought up Loyalist properties. Around a century later the growing community split from Roxbury. Later, after the immigrant and commuter population had outnumbered the estate owners and they voted to be annexed by the city of Boston. Since then, the Emerald Necklace of parks was constructed around the city, and the population growth and new construction spurred transportation development in the area. The 20th century brought the Wake Up the Earth Festival after plans for a highway to split the community in half were halted, an urban renewal in the 1980s, and the development of the Latin Quarter. The neighborhood is now a center for artists and activists. On a walk through the community, one will see many signs of advocacy for movements like Black Lives Matter or LGBTQIA+ rights dotted amongst residents' front yards.

### **Resident Overview**

Jamaica Plain is a majority white suburb of 37,500 with substantial Latinx, African-American, and Asian populations. There is a significant Spanish speaking population due in part to Dominican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban migration. The residents have experienced gentrification following the redevelopment of its Southwest Corridor. Jamaica Plain has a number of distinct sub districts with their own unique culture and history, which can be seen just by walking through the main streets of the suburb and passing through pieces of the subdivisions. More than 50% of the residents work in social assistance and healthcare, with a median income of \$106,153.

### **Key Issue Areas**

Although Jamaica Plain is a wonderful and safe community, there are a few areas with opportunity for improvement. As in any urban center, homeless populations congregate around heavy foot-traffic areas such as train stations and public centers. We observed a lack of maintenance on several buildings and a lot of litter near the Latin Quarter and along main streets. There is more evidence of income inequality between the Latin Quarter and the rest of Jamaica Plain in the form of a lack of franchises, more housing projects in the area, and we observed greater rates of smoking in the Latin quarter. Additionally, Jamaica Plain has a number of volunteer organizations in need of volunteers, including the Lucy Parsons Center and the numerous schools in the area. Parking in the neighborhood centers remains difficult as well, though this is largely subvertable by use of the trains and buses in the area.

Jamaica Plain is a desirable suburb of Boston and was once called the 'Eden of America'. In the last two years, average rent prices have gone up 9% to an average of \$2890, outpacing Boston as a whole. This has led to a lack of affordable housing and a housing shortage. This housing crisis is further fueled as building owners are unwilling to renew leases in writing for affordable housing contracts. The community needs to commit to affordable housing without increases in rent in writing. If this is not achieved, an increasing number of homeless encampments will continue to pop up on street corners.



Most recently, hundreds of new residential units have been or currently are being constructed near the MBTA train station. The ever-increasing in popularity of this area results in more cars, bikers, and pedestrians straining the transportation infrastructure.

### **Potential Collaborators**

Lucy Parsons Center – The LPC is a volunteer run anarchist bookstore with connections to other social justice projects. Their member group meets monthly, and we attended one of their discussions to discover more of the projects they help run. <https://www.lucyparsonscenter.org>

Keshet Inc. – Keshet is a national organization dedicated to supporting the LGBTQIA+ members of the Jewish community based in Boston. Jamaica Plain was outwardly very accepting, perhaps partially due to this group. <https://www.keshetonline.org>

World Animal Net – WAN is a place of information, collaboration, and campaigning for the welfare of animals worldwide based in Jamaica Plain and appear well established in the community. <https://worldanimal.net>

Community Servings – Community Servings supports the JP community through providing scratch-made, medically tailored meals to community members in need, from the food insecure to the chronically ill. <https://www.servings.org>

Family Aid Boston – Supports parents and caregivers secure housing and combat housing insecurity. <https://familyaidboston.org>

Bottom Line Inc. – Provide students with one-on-one support getting into, getting through, and graduating from college, based in JP. <https://www.bottomline.org>

### **Documentation**

When we went on walks around Jamaica Plain we noticed litter on the ground, and that many of the stores around Jamaica Plain were all locally owned and later that many of the community service organizations were geographically close along the same couple streets.

We attended a meeting at the Lucy Parsons Center to get a sense of the projects it ran and its role in the community. While they are not directly tied to many of the projects they support, many of their members are involved in them and are well connected in that regard. The projects they mentioned were a basis for further research on other organizations.

While visiting Jamaica Plain, we decided to eat at a local Dominican restaurant. Upon entry, we noticed a man wearing a bright orange shirt with the letter T on it. We soon realized he was a translator for the restaurant. When we went to order, the man came to translate for us. It didn't appear like any of the cashiers or chefs spoke english. This made us realize that Jamaica Plain is less homogenous than we thought. Although the entire community is lumped together, there are certain areas with their own distinct culture and demographics, and these areas may have their own key issues that differ from the rest of the community. For example, we observed the issue of litter in the Latin Quarter, but not outside the train station

### **Conclusion**

We'd recommend contacting Family Aid Boston first, as according to our research, housing affordability and gentrification were large areas of concern in the last few years among residents. To wrap up, our overall impression of Jamaica Plain was a friendly community in a quieter, residential area of Boston but one still with plenty to do, as evidenced by the numerous community organizations we've encountered, ones we've included on this list, and beyond.

**Service Learning Report: Roxbury**  
**By Camille Boer, Lauren Ballengee, Ella Young**

**I. Brief overview/history of neighborhood**

- A. According to the latest Census data, Roxbury has around 60,705 residents.
- B. The neighborhood is one of the oldest in Boston.
- C. The neighborhood has a rich history of being a community for a variety of immigrant populations.
- D. Areas within Roxbury include Nubian Square, Fort Hill, Crosstown, Grove Hall, Egleston Square, and Blue Hill Avenue.
- E. Has a rich black history (many notable national figures are from here and have done important work here)
- F. Some important buildings/institutions – Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC Roxbury), Nubian Station, Boston Latin Academy, Branch of BPL, Franklin Park, Boston Islamic Center, The Museum of NCAAA

**II. Resident overview ([Source for Data](#))**

- A. The median age of residents is 34 years old.
- B. White-collar workers make up ~85%, while blue-collar workers make up ~15% of the resident population.
- C. ~28% of households in the neighborhood are households with children.
- D. ~74% of housing units are occupied by renters.
- E. ~54% of residents have never been married and ~29% are currently married.
- F. Top three means of transportation used by residents to get to work are – car, bus/trolley or, bus and walking.
- G. Community is currently undergoing large amounts of gentrification, one developer of note is the University of Northeastern.

**III. Key issue areas of the neighborhood (and rationale for how you found them)**

- Connection and community history education, found through the talk held by the Leventhal Map & Education Center
- Long term effects of redlining in Boston, which predominantly included the neighborhoods of Roxbury and Mattapan

**IV. List of potential collaborators (ie. neighborhood associations, community leaders (civic and informal))**

- A. Our group found that the Public Library branch in Roxbury was a great source to find and connect with community leaders and members. The Leventhal Map & Education Center is especially engaged with the community and concerned with community history and education through the use of its urban atlas collection.
- B. Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) had a Neighborhood Opportunity Center and a location that works on Head Start & Children Services. We reached out to ABCD but were not able to get an interview with someone

within our timeline. They seemed like a good option as a contact and for resources.

- C. Eastern Service Workers Association. This organization focuses on organizing low income workers with the goal to create long term solutions to poverty conditions as caused by the lack of living wages their members receive. They provide emergency food, clothing, and preventative medical care.
- V. **Documentation of conversations and events that you attended and why you found them useful to gaining insights into the neighborhoods.**
- A. Black Boston Stories: Growing up – conversation held by the Grove Hall branch of the BPL in Roxbury, organized by the Leventhal Map & Education Center
    - Our team attended the panel, *Black Boston Stories: Growing Up*
    - Four longtime residents (Dart Adams, Helen Credle, Klare Shaw, and Jerry Smart) of Roxbury spoke on the challenges faced growing up as a person of color in the neighborhood.
  - B. Question 1: Experience of racial dynamics growing up in Roxbury?
    - a. Jerry Smart recalled his neighborhood in Roxbury become more integrated, so that it seemed as if there were more White people than Black people
      - ◆ Jerry Smart was 1 of 12 Black people in his entire school; Jerry was verbally harassed, and remembers a fellow student chanting “Go back to summer”
      - ◆ Mr. Smart started a movement after two Black students were suspended for not wearing ties by walking out of the school
    - b. Helen Credle states that the first time she heard foul language was when she was a little girl and her neighbor yelled at her mother “N\*\*\*\* what are you doing here?”; Regardless, her mother was fearless and replied with “Have a great day.”
    - c. Klare Shaw went to public school. Her teacher constantly told Klare that her name was spelled wrong. Although Klare was well read, the teachers were not understanding and were insistent that her name was spelled “Claire”.
  - C. Question 2: Consider what it’s like growing up in Boston now? How is it similar/different?
    - a. Dart Adams, who graduated from BPS in 1995, states that kids are experiencing the same struggles but in different forms
    - b. Jerry Smart considers then vs. now differently, and believes that GenX is coddled
    - c. Helen Credle advises “Don’t make assumptions”
    - d. Klare Shaw believes there is less protection now. Back then, your teacher knew where you lived, who your grandparents were and who your friends

were. Today, little information is shared thus the community is more loose knit and children are receiving less community support

D. Q/A Section

- There is a large misinterpretation of Boston; people's idea of Boston outside of Massachusetts have no idea communities of people of color live within the city. Thus, there should be more videos, interviews, books etc. to combat this misinterpretation and inform the nation
- There needs to be a "Call to Action" through technology to share information

E. The panel conversation on *Black Stories: Growing up in Boston* gave us inside perspectives on Roxbury. The panel allowed one to learn of past / current problems faced by the community; for example, people of color in Roxbury face society's ignorance of larger Boston and racial struggles that have persisted over time. Insights on the struggles faced by people of color in Roxbury today can be utilized to educate others.