

Roslindale Square
Draft Plan Document
APPENDICES

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FULL ENGAGEMENT REPORT

This report provides an overview of the Roslindale Square Squares + Streets engagement activities, which took place from January 2024 until January 2025. Throughout the community process, the Roslindale Square Squares + Streets team collected ideas and feedback from the community using a variety of different formats, as summarized below.

Our engagement strategy, based on the Squares + Streets Engagement Template, started with identifying community needs and assets, then hosting hands-on educational sessions and a walking tour to provide the community with knowledge of existing conditions and tools to understand opportunities for improvements. Each recommendation produced in the Roslindale Square Squares + Streets Plan is responsive to identified needs from the community and analysis of existing conditions data.





WHAT WE LEARNED

HOUSING

Many community members recognize Roslindale Square as a suitable context for more housing production within the larger neighborhood because of its walkability and access to a diversity of business types.

Stakeholders of different ages, living situations, and socio-economic backgrounds agree that more housing needs to be built in Roslindale Square, although there are diverse opinions on how much density the Square should accommodate. We continuously heard the need for a variety of affordability levels, including deeper affordability than required by Inclusionary Zoning, and more diversity in housing types, namely larger units with 2+ bedrooms suited for families with children. Additionally, many community members are concerned about residential displacement and ensuring that current residents will not be pushed out of their neighborhood as new development and investment comes to the Square.

“ I didn’t even notice how ‘short’ the Square was until this project. I would not be bothered by taller/denser buildings in the Square.
– Housing and small business workshop ”

“ I WOULD be bothered by taller/denser buildings!
– Housing and small business workshop ”

“ How does S+S providing 80% of the new housing at market rate help create more affordable housing?
– Housing and small business workshop ”

SMALL BUSINESS

Part of what makes Roslindale Square a desirable place to live is its local business district that gives community members access to many daily necessities and resources. That said, many residents and business owners are concerned about commercial displacement and Roslindale Square losing its charm to chains or more expensive options that don't reflect community needs and affordable price points. There are a number of storefront vacancies in Roslindale Square that everyone would like to see meaningfully occupied by local businesses. Some of the most requested commercial tenants that community members would like to see include sit-down restaurants, daytime cafes, a small movie theater, and more affordable grocery options.

Additionally, business owners are excited about the potential for more housing in Roslindale Square to stimulate foot traffic and enable less dependence on a customer base that does not live within close distance. Nevertheless, concern for a lack of parking is a consistent pain point for both residents and business owners. The opportunity for more programmatic support from the City to promote local business districts like Roslindale Square to a wider customer base was also met with support.

“ If I could change anything [in Roslindale Square] it would be cleaner, fewer empty storefronts, and a movie theater.

– Roslindale kick-off madlibs

”

“ Build up! Opportunity for much more dense housing while still preserving our green spaces. Small businesses rely on foot traffic so we need to bring people to the Square to make this possible.

– Spring survey comment

”

“ Our businesses thrive on accessibility and the ability of customers to visit us with ease. Many of our clients rely on the convenience of nearby parking, and without it, we fear substantial negative impacts on our foot traffic, customer retention, and overall economic viability.”

– Roslindale Square business owner

”



ARTS + CULTURE

The Roslindale Square community would like to see more cultural programming that reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of Roslindale. Residents are looking for more live entertainment, music and events that are child-friendly and activate the existing public spaces in the Square. We consistently heard feedback that although Roslindale Square has many open spaces in and around the Square, they need to be more consistently programmed with less of a reliance on Adams Park for many community-wide events.

Mural art came up very frequently as a desired art form to contribute to Roslindale’s sense of place and cultural identity. Specifically, diverse representation of local communities in public visual arts was highlighted as lacking.

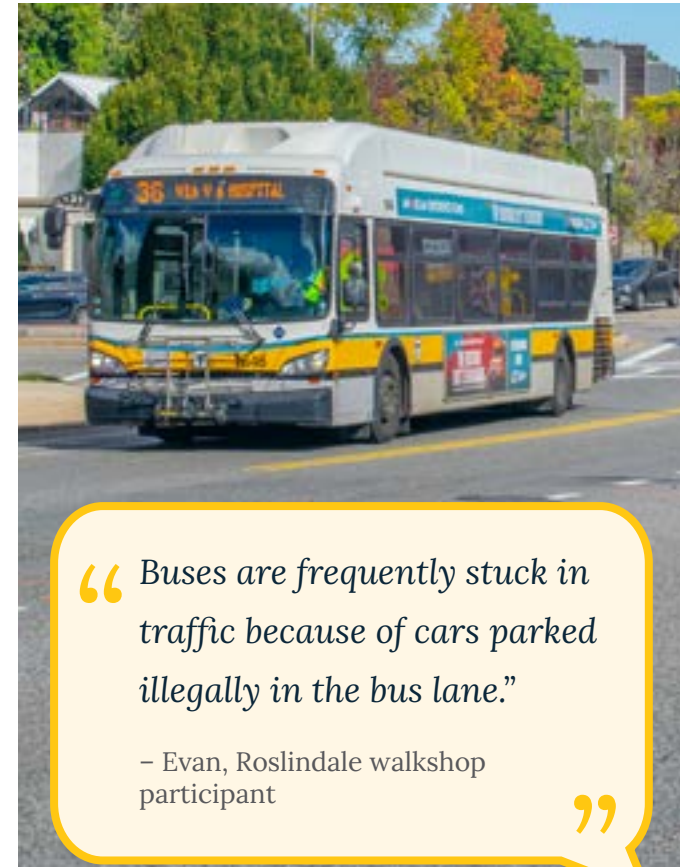


“ Window chalk murals – e.g. Distraction Brewing. With a local artist of the month Birch Street or Create Studio, Rossie Open Studios. – Visioning session comment ”

“ Too much focus is on Adams Park and Birch St—need to expand to other areas like here and down Washington St toward Forest Hills. – Visioning session comment ”

TRANSPORTATION + PUBLIC SPACE

The perception of inadequate public parking was consistently brought up across many engagements. Additionally community members noted that while there may be enough spots in the Square currently there is a lack of parking enforcement, especially for double-parking. Many community members in Roslindale also depend on using transit - particularly the buses - to and from the Square to get to and from the neighborhood. However, the reliability of buses, delays, and the lack of bus lane enforcement challenges the viability of riding the bus for frequent trips.



“ Buses are frequently stuck in traffic because of cars parked illegally in the bus lane.”
– Evan, Roslindale walkshop participant ”

Many community members appreciate that Roslindale Square is such a walkable scale, but vocalized concerns with regard to pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety, particularly on streets around Adams Park and major streets leading into the Square like Belgrade Ave, Washington Street, and Cummins Highway. There is strong support for more pedestrianized or “people-focused” infrastructure in Roslindale Square, like Birch Street Plaza.

“ The speed of cars and disregard for pedestrian safety in the area is very scary, especially walking with my children. There have been so many accidents in the last year, cars just running off the road. There are some areas in need of crosswalks, along Belgrade and on Walworth, where cars move fast. – Spring survey comment ”

OPEN SPACE + RESILIENCE

Residents and stakeholders of Roslindale Square enjoy the area because of its close access to several open spaces that allow community members to gather and casually run into their neighbors. More programming such as live music or movie nights should be brought to these spaces so that activity is more consistent and spread out beyond Adams Park.

Many people shared an interest in seeing more outdoor seating, shade structures, public art and activities around the Square that could help foster intergenerational and inter-cultural gathering spaces. Elements such as green infrastructure and green roofs/solar roofs surfaced as common themes. This indicates a desire for integration of green elements through street and open space design and new development.



“ LOVED the Salsa dance classes – more dance classes! Free for the public, more summer concerts in Birch St Plaza.

– – Deborah, Roslindale walkshop ”

“ Trees make spaces inviting. More trees everywhere!”

– Visioning session comment ”



LAND USE + DESIGN

The community is interested in mixed-use buildings with active ground floors that are consistent with the “quirkiness” of mixed-matched buildings. Desire for outdoor amenities and gathering spaces and variation in ground floor activity are commonly cited elements. They emphasized an interest in various building heights and embracing different materials and building styles. Many voiced support for more traditional materials like brick and for permeable pavement on the streets.

“ Good use of space—dense residential with multiple stories—local businesses on the ground floor.

– Visioning session comment ”

“ Make sure that zoning allows for a diversity of program types.

”



SUMMARY OF ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

Following the [Squares + Streets Engagement Template](#), team members from the Boston Planning Department and other City of Boston departments hosted x public meetings, x pop-up events, 2 Coffee hours, spoke to x community groups including 4 English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. The below provides a summary of each event and links to raw data collected through activities and conversations.



IDEAS RECEPTION

Engagement Phase: Community Vetting

The Planning Department & partner City of Boston departments held an Ideas Reception, in-person at the Roslindale Community Center, where the first draft of plan recommendations were presented to the community. At the reception attendees were able to provide direct feedback through activities & a survey on the recommendations to indicate whether or not they agreed with the recommendation, provide context for changes, and identify opportunities for new recommendations.

Additionally, to expand outreach and engage with residents who typically do not or cannot attend larger community meetings, the Planning Department team held a pop-up the following day in front of the Roslindale Public Library with the same content and questions from 10AM-1PM. The team also organized 3 business walks in the Square to hear feedback from business owners on draft recommendations.

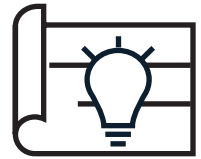


VISIONING SESSIONS

Engagement Phase: Visioning & Plan Drafting

The Planning Department & partner City of Boston departments held two visioning sessions - one held in-person at the Roslindale Community Center and one held virtually using the Miro activity platform. At these sessions, community members were able to provide direct feedback on a variety of topics, including housing and small business support, open space and public realm activation, transportation safety improvements, and different building types to inform a future zoning map amendment.

Additionally, to expand outreach and engage with residents who typically do not or cannot attend larger community meetings, the Planning Department team held several visioning pop-ups across Roslindale Square. These locations included the Roslindale branch of the Boston Public Library, a bus stop in front of Healy Field, the Roslindale Farmers Market, teen open-gym at the Roslindale Community Center, the Sumner School, and a hot dog night at Archdale BHA.



SMALL BUSINESS FOCUS GROUP

Engagement Phase: Visioning & Plan Drafting

The Planning Department and the Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI) hosted two focus groups to hear directly from business owners in Roslindale Square about their experiences owning and operating a business and how Squares + Streets planning and zoning may contribute to their long-term success.



TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC REALM WALKSHOP

Engagement Phase: Listening & Learning

The Planning Department and Boston Transportation Department staff hosted a walking tour of the main commercial streets around Roslindale Square that asked the community for input on a number of areas including transportation, buildings, arts & culture, and public realm. Participants of the walk shared their perspectives on the study area and offered ideas for improvements through these feedback sheets.



ZONING EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP

Engagement Phase: Listening & Learning

At the Zoning Workshop, which took place at the Roslindale Community Center, Planning Department zoning planners introduced zoning as a tool that guides development and contributes to a community development mindset. The second half of the workshop was a facilitated activity to think about how proposals for community development projects created by participants during the workshop would have to interact with existing zoning regulations in Roslindale Square. Some groups also focused on asking clarifying questions about the existing zoning, Squares + Streets zoning, and overall process for developing zoning maps.



ENGAGEMENT REPORT OUT AND URBAN DESIGN STUDY

Engagement Phase: Listening & Learning

At this virtual meeting, staff reviewed the engagement timeline, and asked the community to respond to and refine the themes and community goals developed to-date. Attendees completed live polls in response to an Engagement Themes Survey and a Community and Cultural Assets Mapping survey. The links to feedback results are as follows: the [meeting poll results](#), [engagement themes survey results](#), and [Community and Cultural Assets Mapping survey results](#).



SPANISH LANGUAGE SQUARES + STREETS MEETING

Engagement Phase: Listening & Learning

This hybrid in-person and virtual meeting, held at the Menino Center at Archdale BHA, was held in Spanish to introduce the Squares + Streets process, how the planning and engagement process will unfold in Roslindale Square, and engaged attendees in a question and answer dialogue.



HOUSING AND SMALL BUSINESS EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOP

Engagement Phase: Listening & Learning

This workshop, held in-person at the Roslindale Community Center, was designed to provide more information on existing City of Boston (CoB) housing and small business tools that can be used to achieve community goals through Squares + Streets Plans. Participants were asked to respond to a series of housing and business data specific to Roslindale and interpret how this data relates to their community development goals. The link to all of the completed activity sheets is [here](#).



COFFEE HOURS AND ESL CLASSES

Engagement Phase: *Listening & Learning*

The **coffee hours** were an informal venue to continue discussions after the kick-off event and familiarize the Roslindale Square Squares + Streets Plan with community members who did not attend the kick-off.

The **ESL classes** that staff attended at the Casserly House and ABCD provided an opportunity for students to learn about Squares + Streets, complete the Squares + Streets survey in their native language, and complete an [activity](#) that provided insight on what they would like to see improved or stay the same in Roslindale Square through the planning process.



KICK-OFF OPEN HOUSE

Engagement Phase: *Listening & Learning*

The Squares + Streets: Roslindale Square kick-off open house was held at The Substation. This was the first community engagement event held to introduce residents to Squares + Streets and officially begin the community process.

Community members were given several opportunities to provide initial feedback on their vision for how Roslindale Square should look and function in the future. There were a number of activities that participants could rotate through including a [Main Street drawing activity](#) to envision a future commercial heart of Roslindale Square, a [‘Mad Libs’ activity](#) to identify important community features in Roslindale Square, and [topic-specific question prompts](#) about housing, transportation, small business and the public realm.

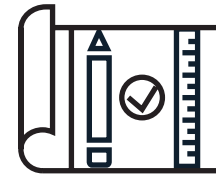


COMMUNITY SURVEY

Engagement Phase: *Listening & Learning*

The Squares + Streets Community Survey was launched on February 14th and remained open until March 29th. The survey helped us gather early information from plan constituents about specific goals, concerns, and opportunities for the planning area.

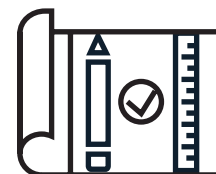
The [results of the survey](#) will be used to inform subsequent phases of engagement and to gauge community preferences early on in the process.



BUSINESS CANVASSING

Engagement Phase: *Pre-launch Engagement*

The Roslindale Squares + Streets team also spent a day canvassing the businesses and cultural institutions in the planning area. Many business owners engaged in discussions with staff members, and we received [21 responses to the business and cultural space survey that each business received, and 11 business owner comments from members of the Roslindale Coalition](#). Additionally, on May 15th, 2024 Boston Planning and Development Agency staff worked with a community member to take another walk focused on Latinx and Spanish speaking business owners.



COMMUNITY GROUP MEETINGS / STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Engagement Phase: *Pre-launch Engagement*

Before the launch of Roslindale Square Squares Streets the engagement team met with a total of 16 stakeholders and community groups to discuss the upcoming process and brainstorm effective engagement strategies for reaching target populations.



III.

ROSLINDALE SQUARE BUSINESS MEMO

INTRODUCTION

Roslindale Square, located approximately 6 miles south of downtown Boston, is a thriving local business district supported by Boston’s oldest Main Streets district, Roslindale Village Main Streets (RVMS), established in 1985. The center of the Square revolves around Adams Park, an approximately .7-acre public park that lends a geometric shape to the commercial district.

The Square has a variety of businesses serving many local residents from Roslindale and surrounding neighborhoods, including personal care establishments, financial services and banks, sit-down cafes and restaurants, and soft goods retailers. Larger anchor establishments in the Square include Village Market, a full-service grocery store, the Roslindale branch of the Boston Public Library, the Roslindale Community Center, the Charles Sumner school, and a USPS post office. The Square is transit-oriented, with 10 bus routes operating in the planning area, and the Roslindale Village stop on the Needham Line of the commuter rail. The major corridors that extend through the Square - all of which serve at least 2 bus routes - include Belgrade Avenue running east-west to the west of Washington Street, and Cummins Highway running east-west to the east of Washington Street.

Neighborhood business districts like Roslindale Square contribute to the formation of community, including gathering spaces, outdoor spaces for passive enjoyment and special events, and long-established small businesses that residents have patronized over the years. During the community engagement process, residents and other stakeholders in Roslindale Square emphasized the importance of maintaining the local business character of the Square by ensuring the long-term success of existing businesses even as new investment and zoning are introduced. In conversations with business owners in Roslindale Square, staff noted several concerns of business owners including future rent increases and displacement, the availability of parking and general transportation access for their customers, and the need for more City programs to support smaller neighborhood business districts like their own.

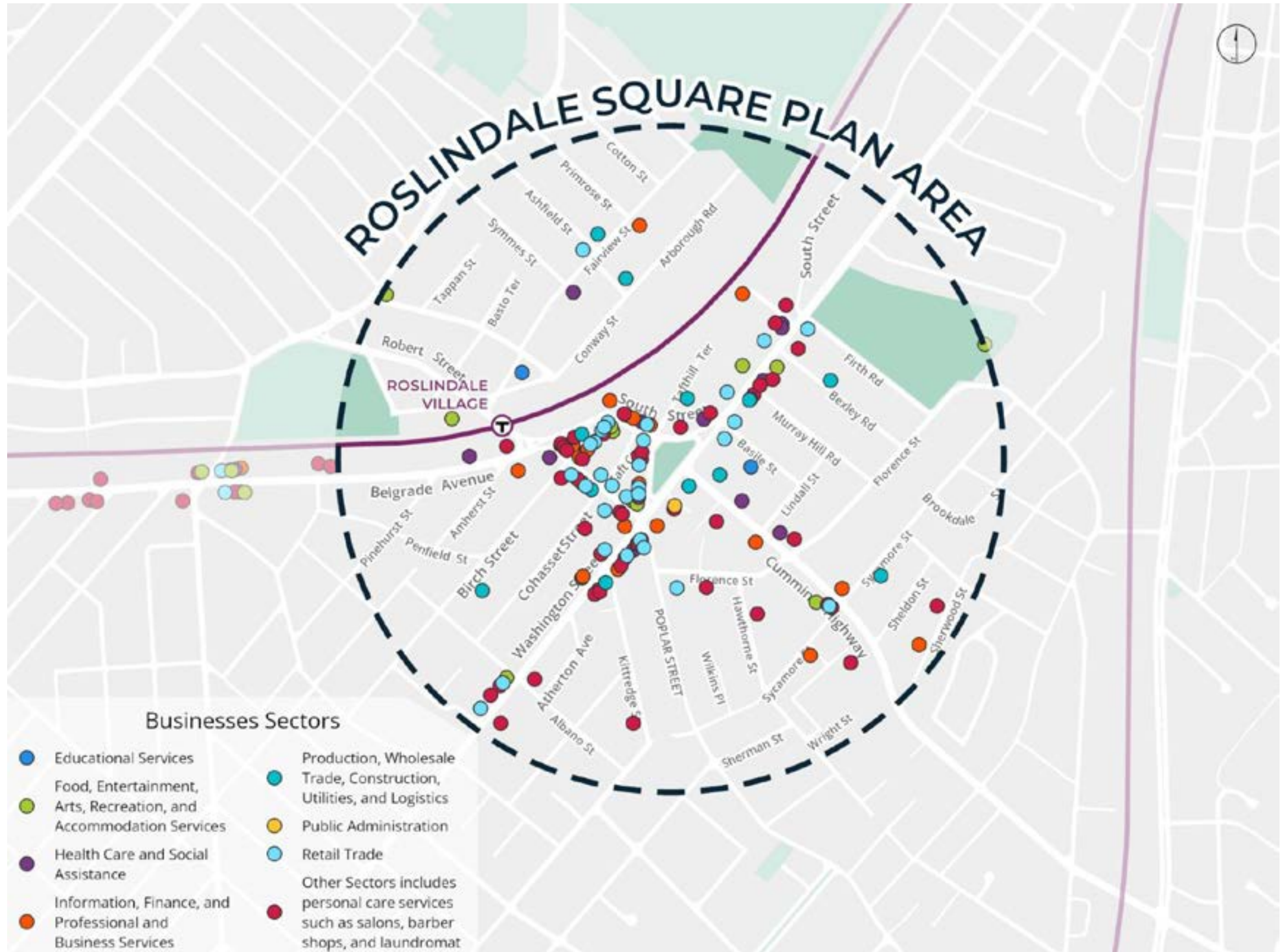
BUSINESS COMPOSITION AND EMPLOYMENT

As seen in the chart below, there are a variety of business establishments in the Roslindale Square planning area. The top 3 most common categories are the following: Other Services (which includes personal care and repair/maintenance services), Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail. Most of these business sectors drive foot traffic, from both customers and employees, and generally require in-person exchange of goods and services.

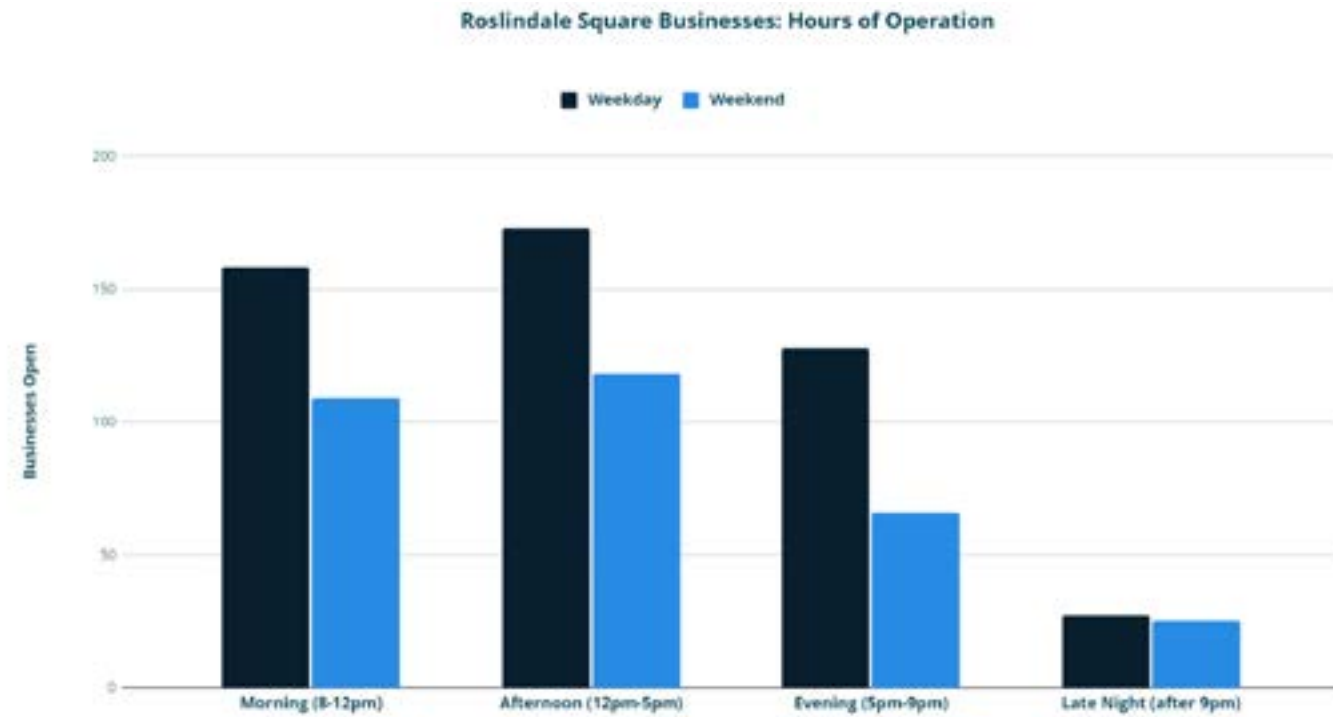
PAYROLL JOBS AND BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS IN ROSLINDALE SQUARE		
	BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS	
	#	%
All Industries	222	100.0%
Production, Wholesale Trade, Construction, Utilities, and Logistics	11	5%
Information, Finance, and Professional and Business Services	34	15.3%
Educational Services	5	2.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	40	18%
Retail Trade	32	14.4%
Food, Entertainment, Arts, Recreation, and Accommodation Services	30	13.5%
Other Services (including personal care and repair/maintenance services)	69	31.1%
Public Administration (payroll job data not available)	1	0.5%

Source: OntheMap 2021 payroll jobs, December 2023 BPDA Research Division business database (Data Axle, Yelp, Bing, YellowPages, Boston Licensing Board), Research Division analysis modified based on February 2024 Planning Department staff canvassing.

The map to the right includes all of the businesses in the Roslindale Square study area, in addition to a few businesses that extend outside of the study area along Belgrade Avenue. Most of the businesses are concentrated in the catchment area of Roslindale Village Main Streets. This map is based on staff canvassing of the study area in February 2024, which yielded several new businesses not reflected in the original data, as well as several vacancies. The CoStar data cited in the Roslindale Square Plan Primer, released in January 2024, indicated no vacancies in the study area during the time span the data reported on at the end of 2023. However, staff noted at least 8 vacant commercial spaces during canvassing, and the data inaccuracies in the CoStar data are likely a result of some vacant spaces still having a lease on the space.



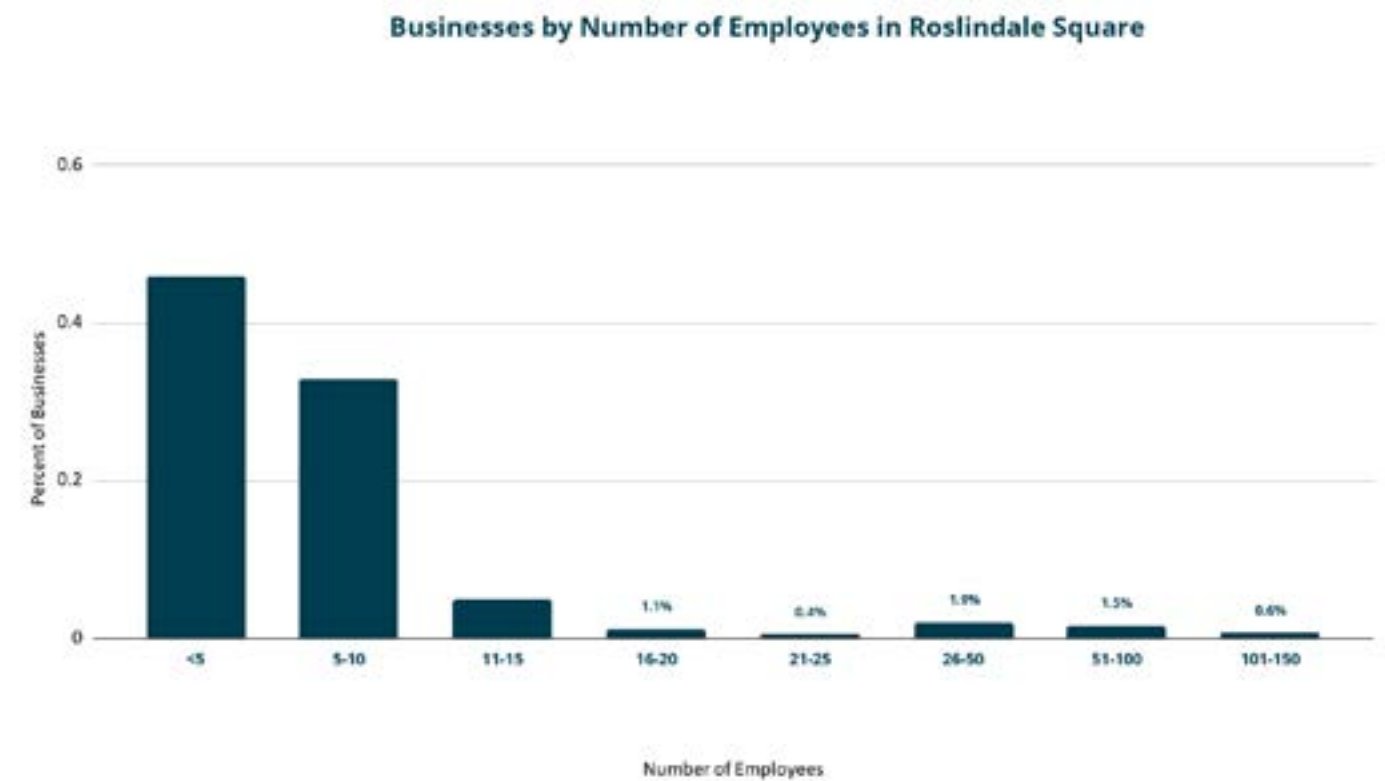
As seen in the pie chart below, approximately one fifth of businesses are open during weekday mornings and afternoons. Far fewer businesses are open late nights (after 9 pm) for both weeknights and weekends, and far fewer businesses are open on the weekends in general.



Notes on this chart: This data reflects the hours of operation of existing businesses sourced from their websites, Google Maps, and displayed storefront window hours. 40 of the 225 existing businesses do not have hours listed or are not open yet, so those business' operating hours are not included in the pie chart.

Most businesses in Roslindale Square employ fewer than 10 people, according to the chart below. Approximately 46% of businesses in the study area employ fewer than 5 people, and approximately 33% employ between 5 - 10 people. This condition is likely influenced by the fact that the most common business types in Roslindale do not typically require high levels of staffing, and that many businesses are owned and operated in small ground level commercial spaces.

Workers at the businesses in Roslindale Square come from further away than other visitors. Only 17.1% of payroll workers working in Roslindale Square live in the Roslindale zip code, and approximately 50% of people working in Roslindale Square live in Boston. Remaining workers are spread out across the region: Norwood (2.5%), Dedham (2.2%), and Quincy (2.1%) are the top non-Boston places of residence. It is important to consider how employees get to and from the Square given that many of the most common business types require employees to work in-person.

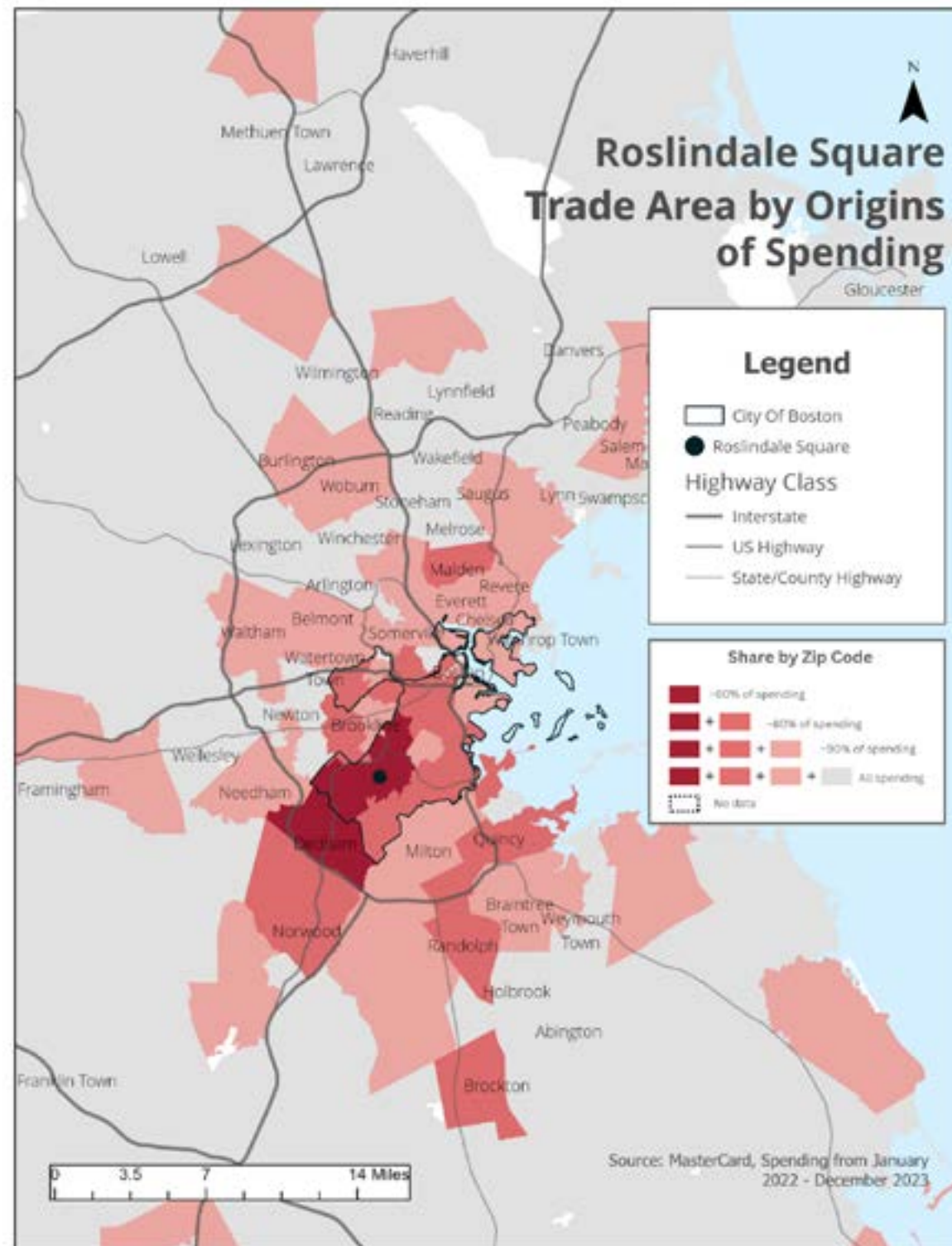


WHO SPENDS MONEY IN ROSLINDALE SQUARE?

Roslindale Square is a locally-focused commercial center. Over 59% of in-person dollars spent in Roslindale Square come from within 1 mile of the Square (Source: 2022-2023 MasterCard Geographic Insights). A full 93% of people spending time in Roslindale Square (but not necessarily spending money) live within 3 miles of the Square, and more than half (51%) live within half a mile (Source: BPDA Research Division analysis of Cuebiq mobility data 2022). They mainly come from Roslindale, Hyde Park, Mattapan, Jamaica Plain, Dorchester, and Roxbury. People spending time in the Square include employees, businesses owners, shoppers, residents, and other visitors.

The places of origin of those who spend money in Roslindale Square, also known as the trade area, closely tracks the places of origin for people spending time in Roslindale Square. The map below shows the top zipcodes of customers making up 60%, 80%, and 90% of spending in Roslindale Square. Based on the places where 60% of customers come from, it is evident that the goods and services attracting people to the Square are for more local errands, likely close to where people live and/or work.

In fact, spending in Roslindale Square increased during the Covid-19 pandemic, as seen in the chart below, which is adjusted for annual inflation. The overall retail spending category includes in-person services such as salons, barber shops, laundromats, etc. This data indicates a strong customer base that relies on the Square for obtaining day-to-day goods and services. Convenience businesses - characterized as goods that customers frequently purchase and seek out the most convenient location to purchase these goods - comprise 39% of all in-person businesses in Roslindale Square. This category represents a key business sector, including pharmacies, grocery stores, and personal care services that draws local foot traffic to activate the commercial center of the Square.



RATIO OF CONSUMER SPENDING IN ROSLINDALE SQUARE TO 2019 LEVELS				
	2020	2021	2022	2023
Overall Retail Spending	106%	115%	117%	109%
Eating Places	96%	108%	116%	112%
Grocery and Food Stores	148%	129%	136%	119%

* For January through September 2023 compared to January through September 2019, inclusive to accommodate data availability at time of analysis Source: MasterCard, BPDA Research Division Analysis

The full breakdown of business types below compares the mix of in-person retail by three categories: convenience, comparison, and speciality. These numbers categorize Roslindale Square as a Neighborhood Convenience District, primarily serving the needs of local residents.

BUSINESS CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES	ROSLINDALE SQUARE	BOSTON
Convenience	Consumers purchase immediately and frequently with little ongoing comparison of alternatives at the most accessible outlet (likely close to home or close to work)	Grocery stores, bodegas or convenience stores, pharmacies, take-out restaurants, and personal care services	39%	24%
Comparison	Consumers expend time and effort comparing and purchasing and may be willing to travel longer distances to access preferred goods and services	Home improvement stores, full-service restaurants, and specialty food stores	26%	28%

Specialty	Consumers buy infrequently and expend considerable time and effort to access	Furniture stores, car dealerships, accommodation services, and arts/entertainment	5%	10%
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Generally, the Roslindale Square study area is demographically similar to the trade area. The similarity is likely due to a primarily local customer base. A majority of spending in Roslindale Square overlaps heavily with the study area due to the high proportion of convenience businesses.

There are a few key differences across income, language/race, and age that distinguish the trade area from the Roslindale Square study area.



Income: The share of very low-income households (earning less than \$25,000) in the trade area is 4 percentage points higher than the share in the study area. This may be due to the fact that the study area does not include nearby BHA developments that are home to residents who likely spend money in Roslindale Square.



Language/Race: The Spanish-speaking, Latinx community is less represented in Roslindale Square's customer base than the study area, but there is a higher share of Black/African American population in the trade area than living in Roslindale Square.



Age: The share of 18 to 34 year olds is 10 percentage points lower in the trade area than the study area, while the share of 35 to 59 year olds is 7 percentage points higher in the trade area than in the study area.

	INCOME				
	< \$25,000	\$25,000 - \$49,999	\$50,000 - \$74,999	\$75,000 - \$99,999	> \$100,000
Roslindale Square study area	10.5%	11.1%	11.1%	13.4%	53.9%
Trade Area	14.5%	11.7%	11.3%	11.4%	51%
	LANGUAGES				
	English only	Spanish	French or Haitian Creole	Other	
Roslindale Square study area	69.4%	17.9%	4.7%	8%	
Trade Area	68.8%	13.1%	4.8%	4.2%	
	AGE				
	0-17	18-34	35-59	60+	
Roslindale Square study area	17.9%	35.4%	26.3%	20.4%	
Trade Area	18.8%	25.4%	33.2%	22%	

	RACE				
	White, non-Hispanic	Black/African American, non-Hispanic	Hispanic or Latino	Asian Pacific Islande	Other
Roslindale Square study area	59.1%	12.5%	21.9%	2.3%	4.1%
Trade Area	55.5%	16.1%	16.4%	6.6%	5%

CONCLUSION

The intent of this memo is to inform a targeted application of existing and future City policies and programs to promote small business centers like Roslindale Square. During the Roslindale Square Squares + Streets engagement process, the community indicated a need for more City support to stabilize existing small businesses and promote their goods and services to a wider audience.

This memo provides greater context on the types of businesses and customer base that supports the commercial sector of Roslindale Square. The data in this memo informs potential opportunities to support existing businesses through new, complimentary uses desired by the community and targeted marketing strategies to expand the existing customer base.



Roslindale Square
BUSINESS LIST

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	
25 School Street, Inc	Charles Sumner School
ABCD Rosindale Head Start	Washington Irving Middle School
Beacon Academy Inc	

FOOD, ENTERTAINMENT, ARTS, RECREATION, AND ACCOMMODATION SERVICES	
753 South	Mi Finca Mexican Foods LLC
Blue Star Restaurant	Midnight Morning LLC
Chilacates Inc	New Imperial Kitchen
Columbus Managing Corp	Obosa Restaurant
Create Art in Community	P S Gourmet Coffee
Delfino	Roslindale Square Theater
Distraction Brewing Co	Rutchada Thai Restaurant
Dunkin'	Sophias Grotto
Effie's Kitchen	Subway
Flaherty Pool	The Square Root
Fornax Bread Co Inc	Triple Eatery
Green T Coffee Shop	V! Healthy
Home Market	Village Sushi & Grill
I + I Rose Garden	Weesh Bake Shop
Las Palmas Restaurant	Yang's Martial Arts Association

HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE (INCLUDING CHILD CARE)	
Affordable Priority Home Health Services	Mendes Medical Associates
African & America Friendship Inc	New England Baptist Medical Associates
Amy R Offenbergl LLC	New England CLG-Optometry Center
Anne Ollen-Smith, MD	Paul Ahn, MD
Boston Clinical Trials	Rogerson Communities Adult Day
Brianna Barbosa-Angles, MD	Roslindale Dentistry
Care Net Physical Therapy	Roslindale Family Planning
Chinese Acupuncture & Massage Center	Roslindale Gynecology
Deepa Jhaveri, DPM	Roslindale Obstetrics
Dental Zone	Roslindale Rehab Inc
Elizabeth Ham, FNP	Roslindale Village Dental
Fior's Childcare	Roslindale Wic Program
Genta Baci, MD	Roxbury Youthworks Inc
Janet Protiva, MD	Steps to Wellness Chiropractic
Juliana Castedo, MD	Sullivans Pharmacy
Karen Kirchoff Acupuncture & Herbal Medicine	The Leggett Group
Lisa Harrington, LICSW	Theresa Lim, MD
Little People's Playhouse LLC	Unity Dental Roslindale PC
Little Treehouse Family Child Care	Village Preschool
Marissa Hamrick, MD	Webster House

INFORMATION, FINANCE, AND PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES	
A Plus Realty Group	Love & Light
All Star Landscaping & Masonry Service	Melissa Landry Nutrition LLC
Anthony's Tax Service	Paul Lymneos Insurance Agency
At Your Service Landscaping	Platt Anderson Freeman
Bay State Society of Model Eng	Pofcher, Disciullo & Petruzzello
Bonillas Wireless & Multiservice	Richard C Alvord Architect
Boston Party Machine	Rodriguez Tax Services
Carmen Travel & Tours Corp	Roslindale Public Library
Citizens Bank	Schmidt's Landscaping Service
Copley Tax	Studio Luz Architects
Futura Productions Inc	The Cooperative Bank
Guirado & Cantor	The Eon Foundation, Inc
John Kramer Design	The Muncey Group
LaRoche Law Office	Tobin & Tobin PC Lawyers
Law Office 319	Tremont Credit Union
Leise Jones Photography	Vera's Professional Service
Long Knight PC	Workhub at the Substation
OTHER SERVICES (EXCLUDING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION)	
Adore Salon (Styling)	Alexandre Design
Albanian Private Social Club	Alliance For Inclusion Prevention
Aldrich Dry Cleaners	Aseel Family + Cosmetic Dentistry

Askasha Yoga	Image Dry Cleaners
Before and After Hair Fashion	Kutting Korner
Best of Boston Inc	Lachapelle Barbershop
Binta Africa Hair Braiding	Lee Dry Cleaners
Boston Fetch	Little Craft's daycare
Boston Paws	Lovely Nails
Carmen Travel Agency	Magia Barber Shop
Castro Barber Shop	Massachusetts Adult Day Service
Centre Cuts	Melindas Beauty Salon and Supplies
Cesi's Hair Styles	Mike Loc S & Braids
City Appliance Service	Moreno Auto Collision
Dazzles Beauty Supply Store	Musiconnects Inc
Dazzles Hair Salon	Nuvo Beauty Bar
Easy Fix	Order Sons of Italy in America
Emerald Society	Peter's Auto Service
Fit Choice	Quick Wash Laundromat
G+M Auto Repair	Rialto Barber Shop
Greener Dry Cleaners	Rogerson Communities, Inc
Guinean Islamic Cultural Organization	Ron's Automotive
Guys and Girls Salon	Rosanna Zayas Acne and Esthetic Center
Hellenic Soccer Club of Boston, Inc.	Roslindale Baptist Church

OTHER SERVICES (EXCLUDING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION) CONTINUED	
Roslindale Barbershop	The Nail Bar
Roslindale Congregational Church	The Razor Barbershop
Roslindale Senior Housing Corp	Threading For Beauty
Ruff Translating	Tina's Nails and Spa
Saint Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church	Tonymax Electronics
Science Sites Inc	Tracy's African Hair Braiding and Supply
Sebastian's Barber Shop	Uncomfortable Conversation Inc
Shona Stylez Hair Studio	Urban Waxologist
Space 119 collaborative work space- PromoPrintss, Kriss Law, Longwood Residential, TLC (The Leadership Consortium)	
Studio M New Hair New Life	Williana's Beauty Salon Inc
Taly Auto Repair	Wonder Nails

PRODUCTION, WHOLESALE TRADE, CONSTRUCTION, UTILITIES, AND LOGISTICS	
A & F Construction	Ma Roslindale Redemption Center LLC
ACA International LLC	Miller Custom Craftsmen
All in Energy Inc	Sunshine Roofing
Deluxe Plumbing	Tbros-Trethewey Brothers Inc
Forest Hills Taxi	United States Postal Service
GPQ Maintenance Inc	

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
Social Security Administration

RETAIL TRADE	
Advance Auto Parts	Quality Meat Market
African International Market	R & R Food Market
Birch Street House & Garden	Roslindale Fish Market
Bob's Pita	Roslindale Liquors
Boston Can + Bottle	Roslindale Market
Busted Knuckles Bicycle Shop	Roslindale Variety Store
Carolina's Market	Rozzie Bound Coop
CVS Pharmacy	Russ + Mimi's
Delicious Yogurt	Seymore Green
Family Dollar	Shaking Seafood
Hunte Group Inc	Target
Joanne Rossman Design	The Thrift Shop of Boston
Lost & Found Treasures	The Village Market
MVP Liquors	Threads
Petersen Furniture & Turning Pros Cellular	Wallpaper City Inc
Punta Cana Beer and Wine	Welcome Buddy Convenience



IV.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS REPORT

OVERVIEW

Since it was published in early 2017, Boston's Citywide Transportation Action Plan, Go Boston 2030, has guided the City of Boston's transportation investments. The plan outlines important goals and targets:

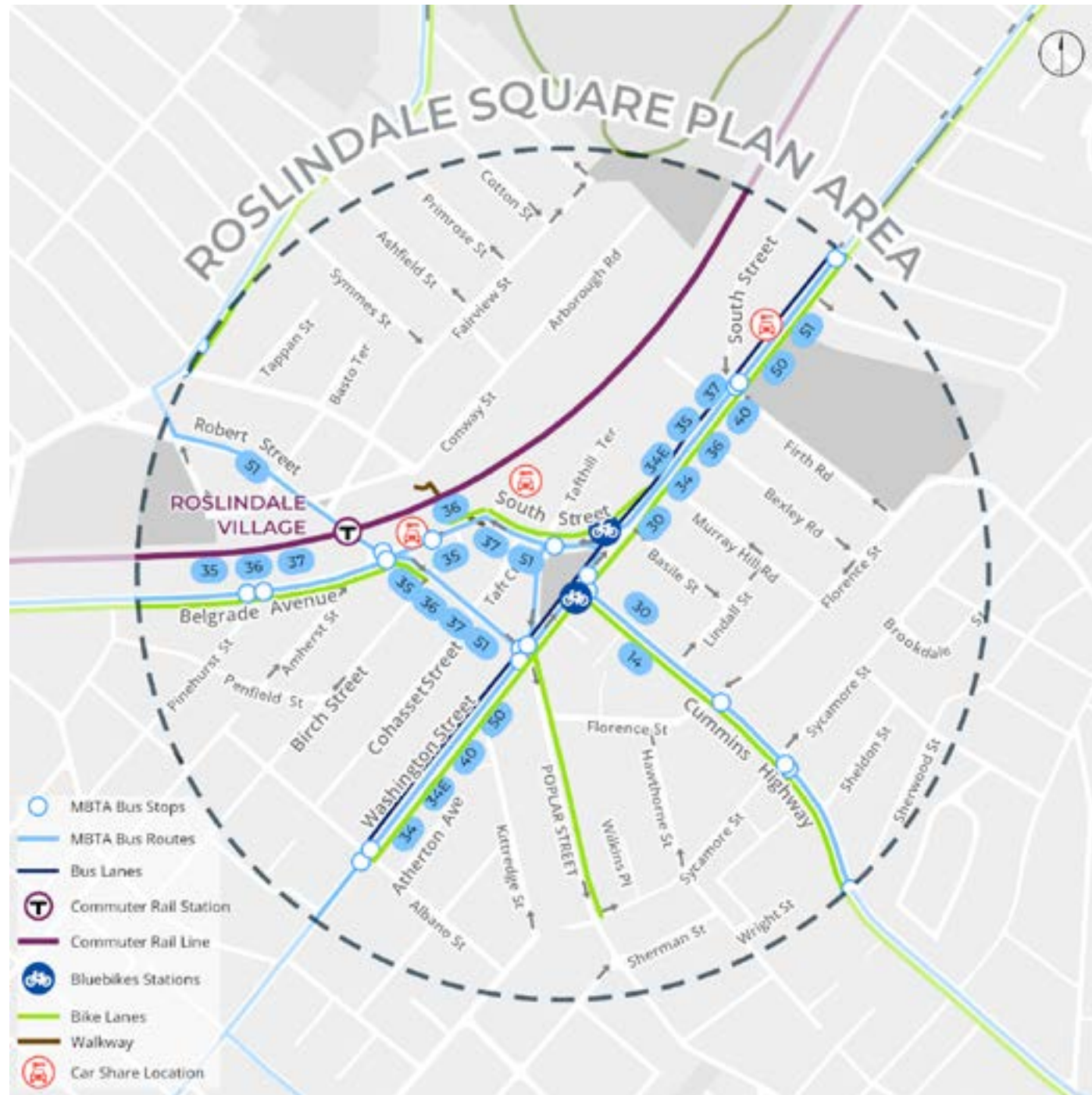
1. Eliminate severe and fatal traffic injuries
2. Provide access to transit, bikeshare, and carshare within 10 mins of every home
3. Reduce average commute times by 10%
4. Reduce car trips to work by 50%, increase transit trips to work by 33%
5. Achieve carbon neutrality by 2050
6. Reduce transportation costs

Today, the Roslindale Square Planning Area is served by a range of transportation options. Commuter rail service is accessible at Roslindale Village Station with 139 park and ride spaces. There is also extensive bus service provided by ten bus routes connecting north to the Orange Line at Forest Hills and connecting in all other directions via Belgrade Avenue, Cummins Highway, and to the south via Washington Street. Two bikeshare stations with nearly 30 public bikes, a public parking lot containing 108 spaces, and many public streets and sidewalks all provide connectivity for all modes of travel. Within the Planning Area, bike lanes or shared bus/bike lanes are provided on Belgrade Avenue, South Street, Poplar Street, Cummins Highway and Washington Street, however no protected bike lanes currently exist.

All together, bus and commuter rail options in the Planning Area provide an exceptional amount of transportation capacity: Buses and trains through the Planning Area can carry 59,800 daily passengers, including 4,200 daily passengers between 8am and 9am and 4,600 passengers between 5pm and 6pm.

SERVICES	MAJOR CONNECTIONS	FREQUENCY
MBTA COMMUTER RAIL	Roslindale Village	• South Station 60 mins (weekdays)
		• Back Bay 120 mins (weekends)
MBTA BUS	14	• Heath St 45 mins (weekdays)
		• Franklin Park 60 mins (Saturdays)
	30	• Nubian Sq 15-55 mins (weekdays)
		• Forest Hills 50-60 mins (weekends)
	34	• Cummins Hwy 15-30 mins (weekdays)
		• Dedham Sq 40-60 mins (weekends)
	34E	• Forest Hills 15-30 mins (weekdays)
		• Washington St 30-60 mins (weekends)
35	• Dedham Mall 18-30 mins (weekdays)	
	• Forest Hills 35-40 mins (weekends)	
36	• West Roxbury 16-18 mins (weekdays)	
	• VA Hospital 30-35 mins (weekends)	

SERVICES	MAJOR CONNECTIONS	FREQUENCY	
	37	• Baker St 18-30 mins (weekdays)	
		• Forest Hills 35 mins (Saturdays)	
	40	• West Roxbury 35-40 mins (weekdays)	
		• Georgetowne 60 mins (Saturdays)	
50	• Washington St 25-30 mins (weekdays)		
	• Cleary Sq 60 mins (Saturdays)		
51	• Forest Hills 30 mins (weekdays)		
	• Cummins Hwy 65 mins (Saturdays)		
	• Reservoir Station 30 mins (weekdays)		
BIKE SHARE	2 stations (45 bikes)	400+ stations across the region	On Demand
CAR SHARE	3 locations (7 cars)	Unlimited	On Demand



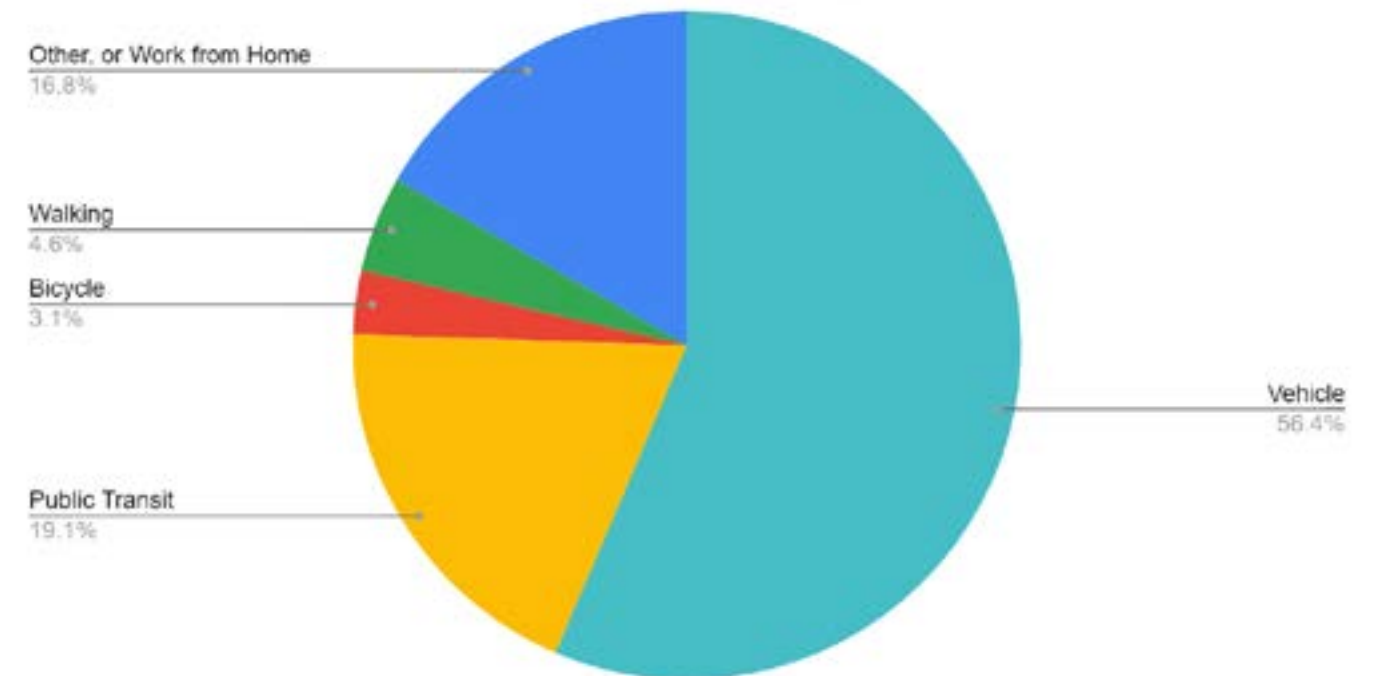
Existing Transportation Networks in Roslindale Square

COMMUTING TO WORK

Although the travel mode for commuting to work in the Roslindale Square planning area is predominantly by vehicular travel (56.4% of commuters), approximately 19% of commuters take public transit, and **12.4% of all households in the planning area, do not have access to a vehicle**, reflecting the need for strong transit and active transportation connections to and from Roslindale Square.

Mode of Transportation to Work in Roslindale Square

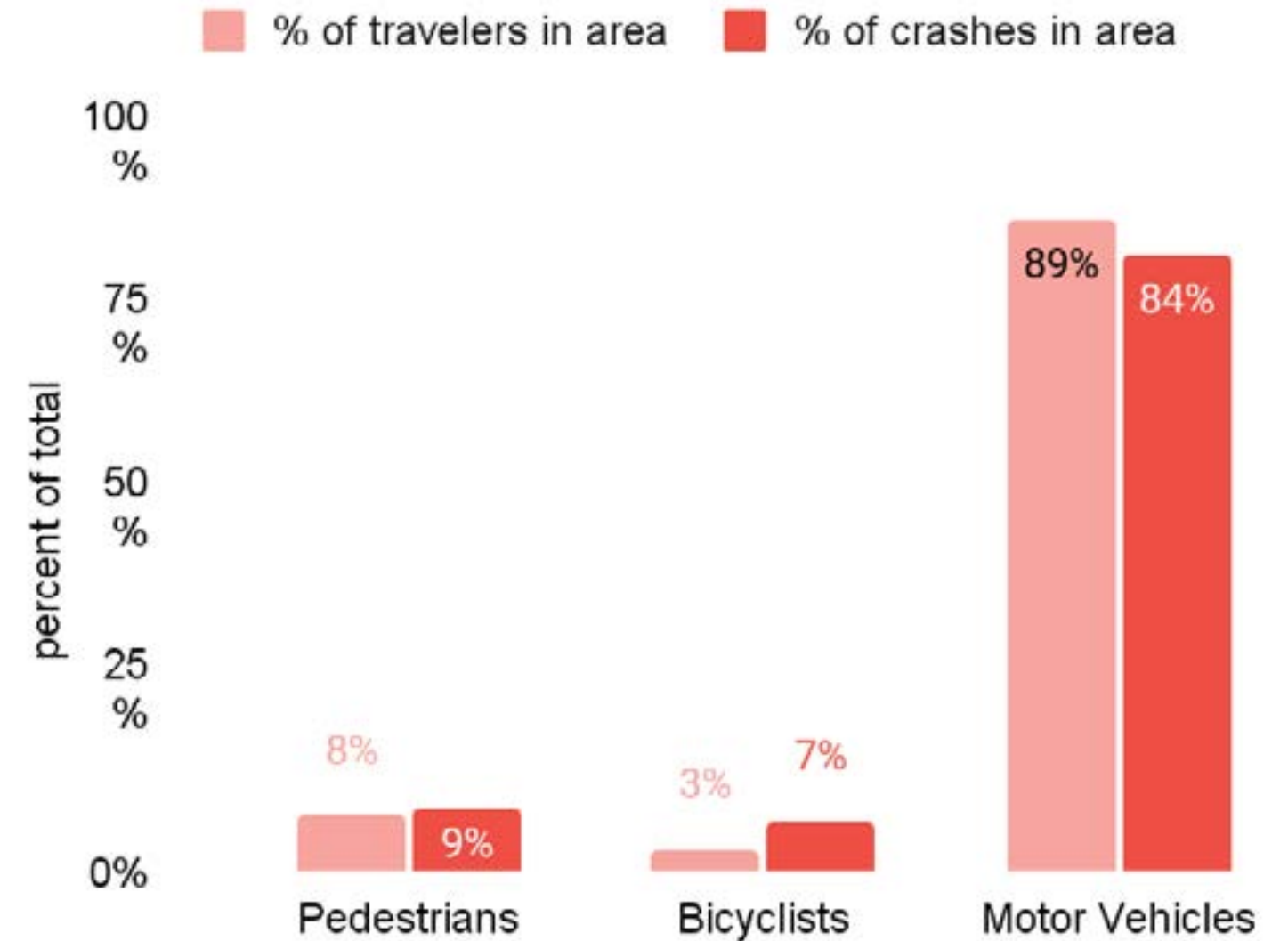
(Source: 2018-2022 ACS)



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

From 2021 to 2023, there were 58 traffic crashes requiring an emergency response in Roslindale Square. In February of 2024, a person riding a motorized scooter was killed in a crash on Washington Street near Bexley Road.

- Over 55% of all crashes within the Planning Area occurred on Washington Street, including three out of four bike crashes.
- Outside of Washington Street, crashes in the Planning Area were concentrated on major streets including Cummins Highway, South Street, Belgrade Avenue, and Corinth Street.
- Whether walking, biking, or driving, several intersections stand out as crash hot spots within the Planning Area:
 - » Washington St at Bexley Rd
 - » South St at Taft Hill Ter
 - » Washington St at Poplar St
 - » Robert St at Corinth St/Belgrade Ave
 - » Washington St at Albano St
- The majority of crashes that occurred within the Planning Area (84%) involved cars only. However, when compared to how people travel through the Planning Area it is clear that people biking are disproportionately impacted by crashes. While recent traffic counts show that bicyclists make up roughly three percent of travelers in the Planning Area, people on bikes were involved in over eight percent of all crashes.



Comparison of Crashes and Volumes of Travelers By Mode¹

¹ User volumes presented in the chart represent an average of three sets of count data collected in 2022 and 2024 within the Planning Area

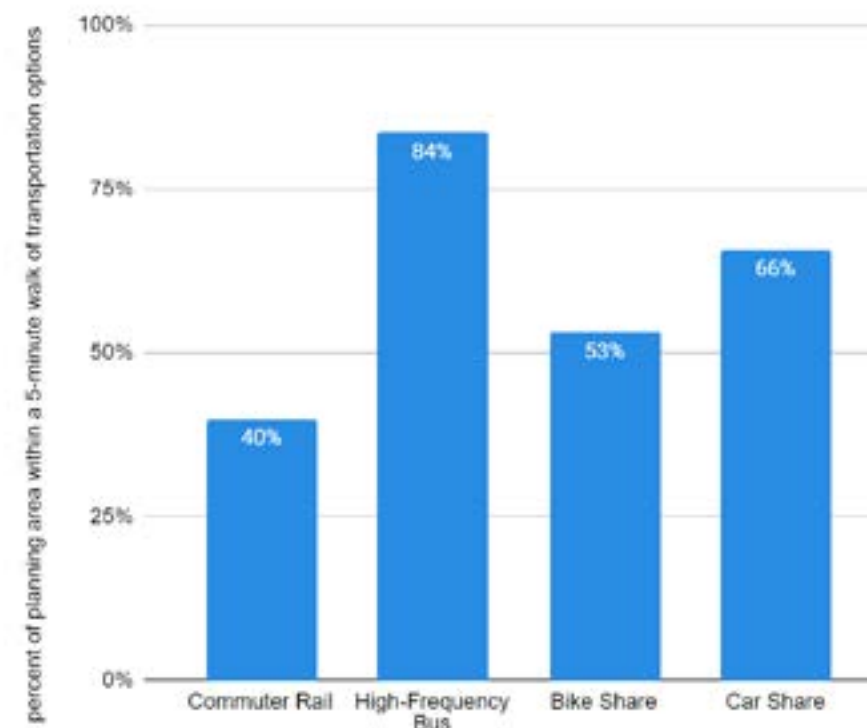


Crashes Requiring an Emergency Response, January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2023

ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Today, 84% of Roslindale Square residents live within a 5-minute (quarter-mile) walk of a bus stop with frequent bus service.

- With 10 bus routes operating within the Planning Area, buses arrive at bus stops within the Planning Area very frequently. Almost all of the bus routes that serve Roslindale Square connect to the major transit hub at Forest Hills where additional commuter rail, subway, and bus connections are available. Forest Hills is also the terminus for the Southwest Corridor Park, one of the most well-used paths for bike commuting in the City.
- While the commuter rail provides a very quick, one-seat ride from Roslindale to major destinations like Ruggles, Back Bay, and South Station, only 40% of the Planning Area lives within a five-minute walk of Roslindale Village Station.
- Existing Bluebikes and carshare locations are centrally located within the Planning Area. These shared transportation resources are available within a five minute walk to 53% and 66% respectively to residents in the study area.



Percent of Residents Within the Planning Area With a 5-minute Walk to Transportation Options

PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT

The density of streets and destinations in the heart of Roslindale Square makes it a very walkable place. However, crosswalks are missing in a few key places.

- In particular, there are marked crosswalk gaps on Washington Street between Albano Street and Corinth/Poplar Street and Murray Hill and Firth Street. As a result, several bus stops on Washington Street do not have crosswalks
- There are additional long crosswalk gaps along Belgrade Avenue past Robert Street and on Cummins Highway between Florence and Washington Streets
- Eight bus stops have constrained sidewalk dimensions. In addition to making it difficult to travel using a wheelchair or side-by-side with

friends and family, narrow sidewalks also limit the space available for street trees, light poles, benches, bus shelters, and other amenities that help make streets comfortable and inviting for pedestrians and passengers waiting for the bus.

- While both Taft Court (which runs between Corinth and South Streets) and Taft Hill Terrace (which connects to the main municipal parking lot) provide vehicular access to parking, both provide important pedestrian connectivity but lack adequate sidewalks.

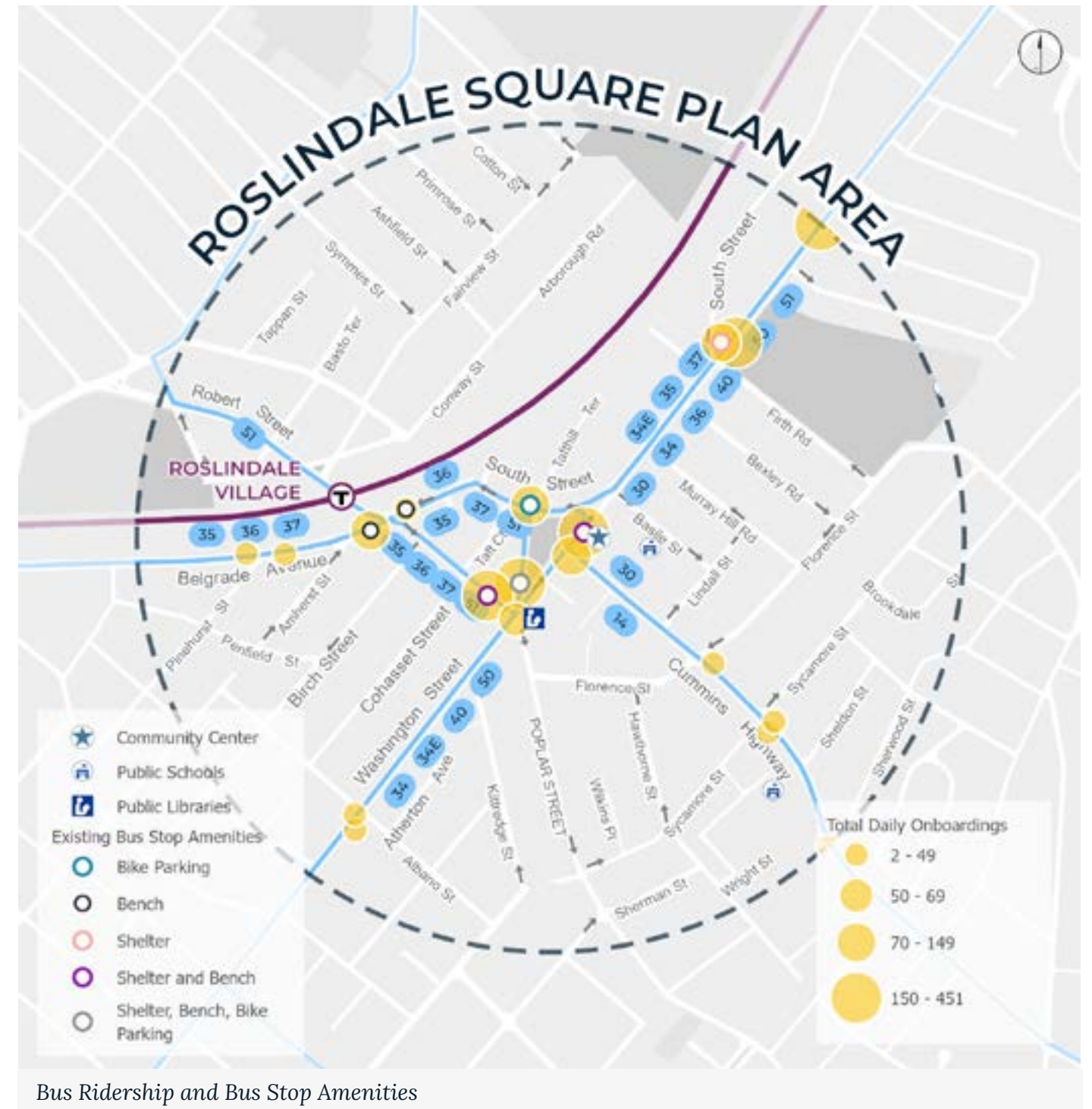


Overview of Pedestrian Conditions

TRANSIT CONDITIONS

In 2023, nearly 4,000 people got on and off the bus in the planning area each day. In addition, roughly 14,000 passengers ride the bus on Washington Street in Roslindale up to/from Forest Hills Station.

- With peak-hour dedicated bus lanes installed in 2018, travel times for bus passengers improved by 20-25% and the average bus rider saved at least an hour per week as a result of quicker bus trips.
- All bus routes in Roslindale Square experience some crowding in peak periods/peak directions (inbound direction in the morning and outbound in the evening). Crowded conditions do occur on Route 34 during the morning for the inbound direction with peak loads observed between 6 AM and 7 AM. There is little to no crowding outside the peak periods on most bus routes in Roslindale Square.
- Most riders get on and off the bus at stops around Adams Park. Most of these stops have bus stop amenities like benches and shelters. One of the busiest bus stops for boardings in the morning is the northbound stop on Washington Street at Cummins Highway with 206 onboardings in the morning between 5AM and 12PM.



Bus Ridership and Bus Stop Amenities

VEHICLE PARKING

Following a parking study and engagement with residents and businesses, new parking regulations will soon be implemented throughout portions of the Planning Area.

- Informed by a thorough community process and surveys that engaged both businesses and residents that was supported by thorough analysis, it was determined that there was a clear need for encouraging more frequent turnover of on street parking and providing locations for short term deliveries to support local businesses. To accommodate longer term parking needs, the City’s municipal lot will be extended from two hour parking to four hour parking.
- The new parking regulations include a mix of pick-up/drop-off zones (PU/DO), two hour parking (including some metered parking on high demand portions of Washington St, Corinth St, South St, and Cummins Highway), four hour parking, and parking reserved for people with disabilities.



Bus Ridership and Bus Stop Amenities

- 15 Minute PU/DO & Delivery* (8a-10p at most locations)
- 2 Hour Metered Parking 8a-6p M-S*
- Unmetered 4 Hour Parking 8a-6p M-S
- PU/DO & Delivery 7a-11a M; 2 Hour Metered Parking 11a-6p M, 8a-6p T-S
- 2 Hour Metered Parking 8a-4p M-S; PU/DO & Delivery 4p-10p
- ADA Accessible Parking*
- Reserved for Medical Van
- Unmetered Municipal Lot 4 Hour Parking 8a-6p M-S

*No parking on inbound Washington Street 5am-10am M-F



V.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT
STUDY**

INTRODUCTION

The City of Boston Planning Department is undertaking a planning and zoning initiative focused on neighborhood centers throughout the city, known as Squares + Streets. Key to this process is the development of Small Area Plans for each study area, producing recommendations for housing, public space, small businesses, arts and culture, and transportation. This historic context study is intended to assist the Planning Department in understanding the historic events and patterns of development that have influenced today’s built environment in Roslindale Square.¹ While the Roslindale Square Squares + Streets study area covers a roughly 1/3-mile radius around this commercial core, this commercial context necessarily takes a broader approach in recognition of the fact that development and the evolution of the built environment is influenced by social patterns and events that can occur on a neighborhood, city, and/or regional scale.

This study makes extensive use of the Massachusetts Historical Commission’s *Inventory of Historical and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth* (MHC Inventory). The Inventory is the result of more than four decades of documentation, and is always growing. There are more than 1,200 Inventory entries for the City of Boston, largely due to the efforts of the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) and Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). This Inventory is available to the public online through the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) at maps.mhc-macris.net/ (map interface) and [mhc-macris.net/](https://maps.mhc-macris.net/) (database only). Notations in this study such as “BOS.#” refer to a property’s identification code in the Inventory.

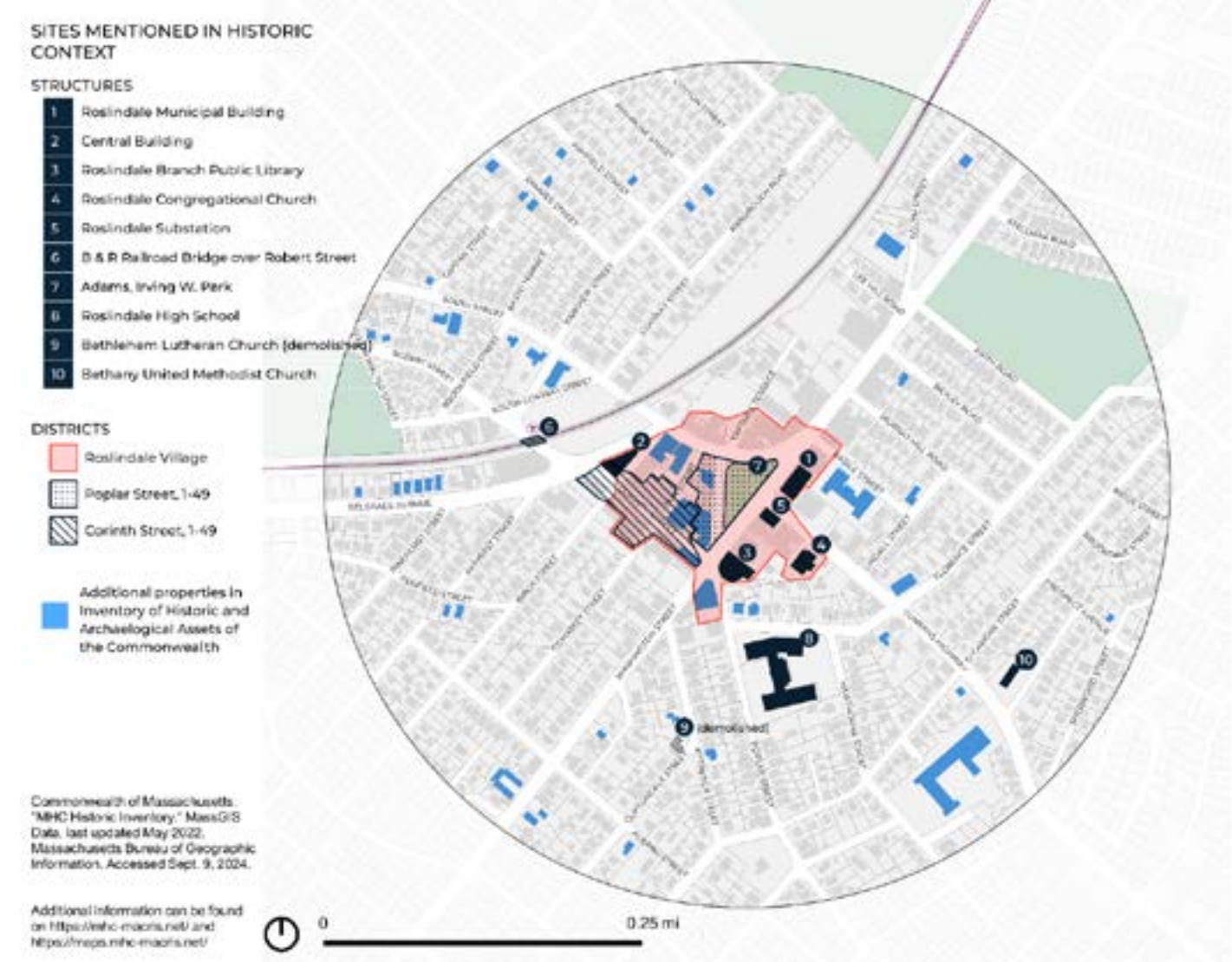


Figure 1. Properties Mentioned in Historic Context Study, Data Source: MHC Historic Inventory, MassGIS Data (May 2022), analyzed & visualized by Utile

SETTING

Roslindale Square (also known as Roslindale Village) is a largely irregular-shaped commercial and institutional center located in the northwest section of the Roslindale neighborhood of the City of Boston, approximately six miles southwest of downtown. The Square is centered on the triangular-shaped Irving W. Adams Park (Adams Park), bounded by Washington, Poplar, and South streets, from which much of the commercial core branches out. This commercial and institutional center is roughly bounded by Healy Field and the Arnold Arboretum to the north, Corinth and Poplar streets to the south, Florence Street to the east, and Belgrade Avenue and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) Needham commuter rail line to the west. The Roslindale Village MBTA station is located near the west end of the Square.

The layout of Roslindale Square has largely been determined by its topography. Geographically, Roslindale Square is nestled amongst several hills, specifically between two drumlins (glacially formed hills), Peter's Hill to the northwest and Metropolitan Hill to the southeast. These hills have influenced the development of Roslindale Square since its inception as a neighborhood center in the late 18th century. The commercial core and the MBTA rail corridor sit in the valley while the surrounding residential development climbs up the surrounding hills; this often results in a somewhat abrupt transition from the commercial/institutional streetscape to a residential one

CONNECTION AND DISCONNECTION

Washington Street serves as the primary north-south vehicular corridor traveling from the Forest Hills neighborhood of Jamaica Plain in the north to Dedham in the south. Also starting north in Forest Hills, South Street briefly merges with Washington Street on the north side of the Square before turning southwest towards West Roxbury. Cummins Highway forms the Square's final major arterial, running from Washington Street across from Adams Park west to Mattapan Square. Corinth Street between Washington Street and Belgrade Ave, functions as the primary

commercial artery. The section of Washington Street across from Adams Park, Cummins Highway, and Belgrade Avenue feature many of the Square's institutional, religious, and municipal buildings.

The MBTA corridor forms a major physical and visual division between the Square and its immediate residential neighborhoods to the northwest. Crossings between these two areas are few, consisting of a grade-separated crossing at Robert Street, a pedestrian tunnel directly underneath the tracks at the northern corner of the MBTA parking lot, and a pedestrian underpass at South Street. Vegetation lines the rail corridor through most of the study area, forming an important buffer between the tracks and abutting development but also reinforcing the visual disconnect between the Square and the residential development to the north.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The commercial and institutional development comprises mostly low-scale buildings of one to three stories, representing a diverse mix of construction periods between the 1850s and the present day. This low scale helps to lend a village feel to this village center, which is complemented by the tree-lined perimeter of Adams Park. Commercial blocks are often separated by curb cuts or wide swaths of parking along streets and in alleyways; combined with the circular, multi-directional pedestrian and vehicular traffic patterns around Adams Park, this can make the Square feel disjointed. Built environment interventions, such as the creation of the pedestrian-only Birch Street Plaza, Alexander the Great Park, and vibrant murals have served to knit parts of the Square together into a more cohesive center.

Residential neighborhoods surround Roslindale Square, consisting primarily of late 19th and early 20th-century two to three story multi-family dwellings and later post-war single-family residences. These are nearly all the result of subdivision of larger estates and landholdings, either through small-scale subdivisions or by large corporate ventures that purchased a volume of these properties and created subdivisions on a greater scale. Generally speaking, much of the residential development does not appear to have been built on speculation but instead constructed individually or in small concentrations on these subdivided parcels.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROSLINDALE SQUARE AREA

Roslindale Square didn't become a distinct village center until the late 19th century, having previously been part of Roxbury and West Roxbury. European settlers included the area now known as Roslindale in the 1630 Town of Roxbury. In 1711, the area was included in a portion of the town that broke off to establish its own parish, a secession that was formalized with the 1851 incorporation of West Roxbury, which included the modern-day neighborhoods of Roslindale and Jamaica Plain. In 1874, West Roxbury was annexed by the City of Boston and the village center was renamed from South Street Crossing to Roslindale Square.

Like many of Boston's village centers, Roslindale Square's development was largely dictated by major transportation routes and the evolution of transportation technology, which changed this rural area into a densely developed streetcar suburb by the early 20th century. While the current built environment of Roslindale Square does not reflect much of the Indigenous stewardship of the area, some of the major roads seen today in Roslindale Square and the immediate vicinity have early roots. The road now known as Centre Street, just north of the study area, was a major connection to the thin strip of land, known as Boston Neck, that originally connected the peninsula of Boston to the mainland. Prior to the extensive landfilling activities that formed the current footprint of the city, this would have been an important route for both Indigenous people and later European colonizers. In the early 19th century, the Dedham Turnpike (now Washington Street) was constructed to provide a more direct route between Boston and Providence.

Through the study area, the turnpike largely paralleled the earlier route along Centre Street (then serving as the Dedham Post Road). Although the railroad came through the area in the 1830s, a branch route included a station directly in what is now the village center in the 1840s, heralding the evolution from a turnpike stop to a destination. This was further enhanced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when streetcars through the village encouraged residential development along their entire routes. While challenged economically by the development of larger suburban centers and shopping malls, easily reachable by new parkways that bypassed the

village, in the mid- to late 20th century, Roslindale Village remained an important institutional and municipal center and was identified as an excellent candidate for one of the first Main Streets programs in the country and the first in the City of Boston proper. Since the 1980s, this robust program has fostered commercial revitalization in what is one of Boston's most successful village centers.

Though not considered part of the built environment, Roslindale is undoubtedly rich in both ancient and historic archaeological sites which are as vital to the character of the neighborhood as its existing structures and should be considered in any planning or zoning recommendations.

ANCIENT NATIVE AND EARLY EUROPEAN COLONIAL SETTLEMENT, CA. 1630 – CA. 1830

Indigenous Habitation of Roxbury and the Boston Area

Prior to the arrival of European colonial settlers, the area encompassing what is today West Roxbury and Roslindale Square was inhabited by the Massachusetts Tribe. Local histories indicate the Old Dedham Post Road, now Centre Street, was originally a trail created by the Massachusetts².

There are several known Native sites along the length of Stony Brook ranging in use from campsites to lithic workshops as well as a fishweir, and ranging in time from the Middle Archaic (8,000-6,000 BP, or Before Present) through the arrival of European settlers. This is indicative of the continuous exploitation of riverine resources over thousands of years by Native people in the area. Archaeological investigations conducted at the Arnold Arboretum have revealed that Indigenous peoples likely utilized the surrounding area as hunting ground as well as seasonal camps dating back to the Archaic and Woodlands periods (7,500 – 400 BP).^{3,4}

Evidence indicates that these peoples likely hunted “deer and other mammals during the cooler months, and waterfowl and other aquatic life” in areas such as the North Meadow of the Arboretum as well as Jamaica Pond during seasonal migrations.⁵ During the later Woodland periods, Indigenous peoples’ seasonal habitation primarily moved towards establishing semi-sedentary settlements at the coastal areas of the Charles and Neponset rivers.⁶

Contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples occurred as early as the 15th century between Basque and French fishermen who established seasonal fisheries in what is today the Newfoundland and Labrador Province of Canada. By 1700, these fisheries began trading with Indigenous peoples along the Eastern Seaboard south to Massachusetts Bay. From here, however, the story becomes one of colonial eradication of much of the Indigenous population, and the loss of early landscape features due to intense development in and around Roslindale Square.

Increased trade also introduced diseases to which the Indigenous peoples had no natural immunity. Between 1616 and 1619, a devastating plague swept through the Indigenous population of the region, hitting the Massachusett People in what is today the area of Boston particularly hard. Evidence suggests as much as 90% of the Indigenous population in the area were wiped out, “depopulating large areas of coastal New England in what would become the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies.”⁷ A second epidemic of smallpox in 1633 killed more Massachusett people.⁸

In 1650, English missionary John Eliot (1605-1690), a prominent colonial settler who moved to Roxbury in 1632 and founded the congregation of what is today the First Church of Roxbury and the Roxbury Latin School, also established the first “Praying Town.” These were English-style towns, where Indigenous peoples were sent to be converted to Christianity and, according to European settlers, to be “civilized.” Praying Towns are emblematic of the types of ways that the Indigenous peoples increasingly saw their lands encroached upon and their freedoms curtailed as European settlement spread throughout the colony.

Early European Colonial Settlement

The area known as Roslindale Square was initially part of Roxbury, one of the six villages established by the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630 along with Boston, Charlestown, Watertown, Medford, and Dorchester.⁹ Formed as a business venture, the Colony attracted over 14,000 English settlers between 1630 and 1640, many of whom were Puritans led by William Pynchon (1590-1662). In 1632, the First Church of Roxbury was established in what is today John Eliot Square and a permanent settlement developed around it at the entrance to the Shawmut Peninsula.¹⁰ In 1638, the Massachusetts General Court granted Roxbury some 4,000 acres of land southwest of the town proper as part of a border dispute resolution with Dedham. Known as the “Great Lotts” grant, the General Court’s ruling more than doubled the land holdings of Roxbury. The following year, the town’s leaders began allotting this land to Roxbury citizens.¹¹

At that time, the area of today’s Roslindale Village was still integral to the rural land grants rather than recognizable as an individual concentration of development. One of the most prominent grantees in the area was Thomas Bell (1606-1672), a London merchant and early settler of Roxbury as well as an early supporter of John Eliot’s Roxbury Latin School. Bell was granted several tracts of land including one in the area of the present-day Woodbourne neighborhood northwest of Roslindale Square and one in the current Bellevue Hill neighborhood south of the Square.¹² In 1643, Joseph Weld (1599-1646) was granted approximately 300 acres of land which stretched across the northwest section of Roxbury from Forest Hills to the existing Brookline border, a history marked by the naming of Weld Street, located north of the study area.

In addition to prominent citizens such as Thomas Bell and Joseph Weld, succeeding generations of Roxbury residents established farmsteads on the outskirts of Roxbury proper in the early 18th century. By 1706, about 45 families settled in the section of Roxbury between Jamaica Pond and Dedham, then known as “Jamaica End,” which contains the Roslindale neighborhood. Located far from the nucleated settlement around the First Church of Roxbury, the residents of this sparse section petitioned the General Court to form a separate parish. In 1711, without having received official

approval, the petitioners built a meetinghouse on land donated by Joseph Weld off today's Walter Street within the Arnold Arboretum. In 1712, the petitioners received official approval from the First Parish's leaders, and the meetinghouse was formally established as the Second Church of Christ in Roxbury.^{13,14} Into the latter half of the 18th century, settlement in the area continued south primarily along Centre Street in West Roxbury. In 1733, the congregation relocated to a new meetinghouse on Centre Street; today the site is occupied by the Theodore Parker Unitarian Universalist Church (1900, BOS.10463). Because Centre Street was the main road to Dedham prior to the establishment of the Dedham Turnpike in 1804, development during this period gravitated along the corridor, with only scattered settlement in Roslindale.^{15,16}

In 1804, the Dedham Turnpike, today known as Washington Street, was constructed as a toll road running through Roxbury from the corner of Washington and Bartlett streets in Nubian Square southwest to Dedham. The turnpike was one section of the Norfolk and Bristol Turnpike, established by the Massachusetts General Court in 1802, which ran from Boston to Providence, Rhode Island.^{17,18} The construction of Dedham Turnpike laid the groundwork for the layout of Roslindale Square. A portion of the turnpike's route intersected with South Street and Poplar Street such that it formed a triangular intersection that is today Irving Adams Park (Figure 2).¹⁹

Around the time the turnpike opened, a tavern was built within the triangular intersection, presumably to capitalize on the traffic along the route. Little evidence is available about the tavern's construction and early ownership, except that it was kept by two gentlemen by the names of Sharp and Dunster.²⁰ An 1820 map of the area shows the tavern as the "Halfway House", and later maps identify it as "Taft's Tavern."²¹ Despite these early steps towards the development of a village center, Roslindale Square remained a sparsely populated area of Roxbury comprising large landholdings such as those owned by the Bell and Weld families into the mid-to-late 19th century.

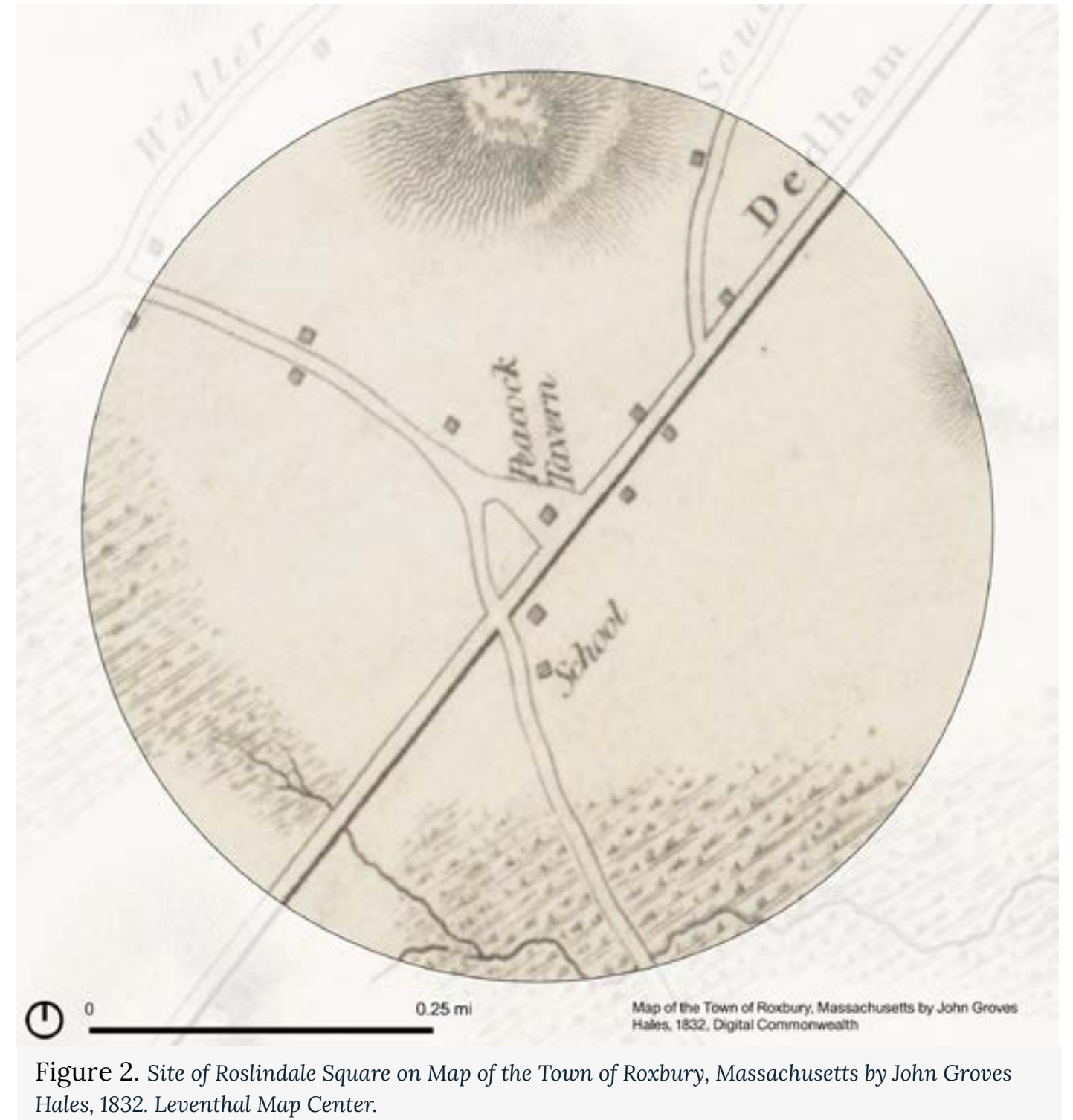


Figure 2. Site of Roslindale Square on Map of the Town of Roxbury, Massachusetts by John Groves Hales, 1832. Leventhal Map Center.

EARLY RAILROAD GROWTH AND ESTABLISHMENT OF WEST ROXBURY, CA. 1830 – CA. 1875

The opening of the Boston and Providence (B&P) Railroad's main line and West Roxbury Branch in 1834 and 1849 respectively, as well as early horse-drawn railroads along the Dedham Turnpike and Centre Street, spurred development in the area in the mid-19th century. The growth of the area led community leaders to petition Roxbury to form a separate seat of government. On May 24, 1851, the Town of West Roxbury was established, comprising modern-day Jamaica Plain, Forest Hills, Roslindale, and West Roxbury. Initially, town meetings were held alternately at Taft's Tavern and a village hall on Thomas Street in Jamaica Plain, the new town's more populous section. In 1870, the Roslindale Postal District was established. According to local history accounts, it was at this point that Roslindale, previously referred to as "South Street Crossing" on the railroad line, got its name. Local landowner and Englishman by birth John Pierce evidently championed the name, suggesting a portmanteau of "Roslin" and "Dale," combining the name of a Scottish town whose environs reminded Pierce of the local landscape, and the Scottish term for an open valley, referencing the landform in which Roslindale Square is sited. 1874, West Roxbury, including Roslindale, was formally annexed by the City of Boston.²²

Development of Railroads through West Roxbury and Roslindale

During the 1830s and 1840s, several railroad lines were established throughout the metropolitan Boston region including the Boston and Worcester, Boston and Lowell, Boston and Maine, Boston and Providence, and the Old Colony railroads, each of which spurred development along their main lines and branches. The evolution of Roslindale Square into a prominent commercial and residential center began during this period, specifically with the completion of the Boston and B&P Railroad Main Branch in 1835. The line ran east of Roslindale Square with a stop at the present-day Forest Hills MBTA station, initially called "Toll Gate" station as a reference to its location near a toll along the Dedham Turnpike.²³ The main line's Mount Hope Station (not extant) served the Roslindale neighborhood to the east of the village center. In July 1849, the B&P Railroad started operations on its West Roxbury Branch (also known as the "Dedham Branch") running through what is now Roslindale Square

from Toll Gate station to Dedham, including a stop on South Street in the village (now Roslindale Village station). The B&P Railroad led to faltering financial stability for the Dedham Turnpike's operators. During the late 1840s and early 1850s, several towns along the turnpike voted to turn their portion of the road over the public domain, and by 1857 the entirety of the turnpike was reclassified as a public road.²⁴

Initially the high fare cost along the Turnpike favored passengers traveling longer routes, rather than "commuters" looking to travel shorter distances between home and work. Horse-drawn stagecoaches, which began operating in the 1820s with "hourly" service served this purpose and connected communities like Roxbury, Charlestown, and South Boston to Boston-proper. In the 1850s, horsecar railways began operating throughout Boston and adjacent suburbs on the public roads, providing commuter passenger service as well as furnishing "feeder transportation between and to the steam railroad stations."²⁵ By 1860, approximately 40 miles of horse-drawn railways were operated by five companies throughout Melrose, Somerville, Cambridge, Roxbury, West Roxbury, and Malden. The introduction of this service increased the value of property near the railway line and led to the growth of "railroad villages" such as Roslindale Square. To better compete with the horse-drawn railway companies, the B&P Railroad and the region's other railroad operators began offering lower, commuter-oriented fares. This was formalized in 1872 by the Massachusetts legislature, which mandated the provision of a "workingman's car" with specified low-fare tickets along the route of any town which successfully petitioned for the service.²⁶

Early Residential Development around Railroad Stations

In June 1858, the estate of Charles Taft was auctioned, opening up Roslindale Square to real estate development on a larger scale (Figure 3).²⁷

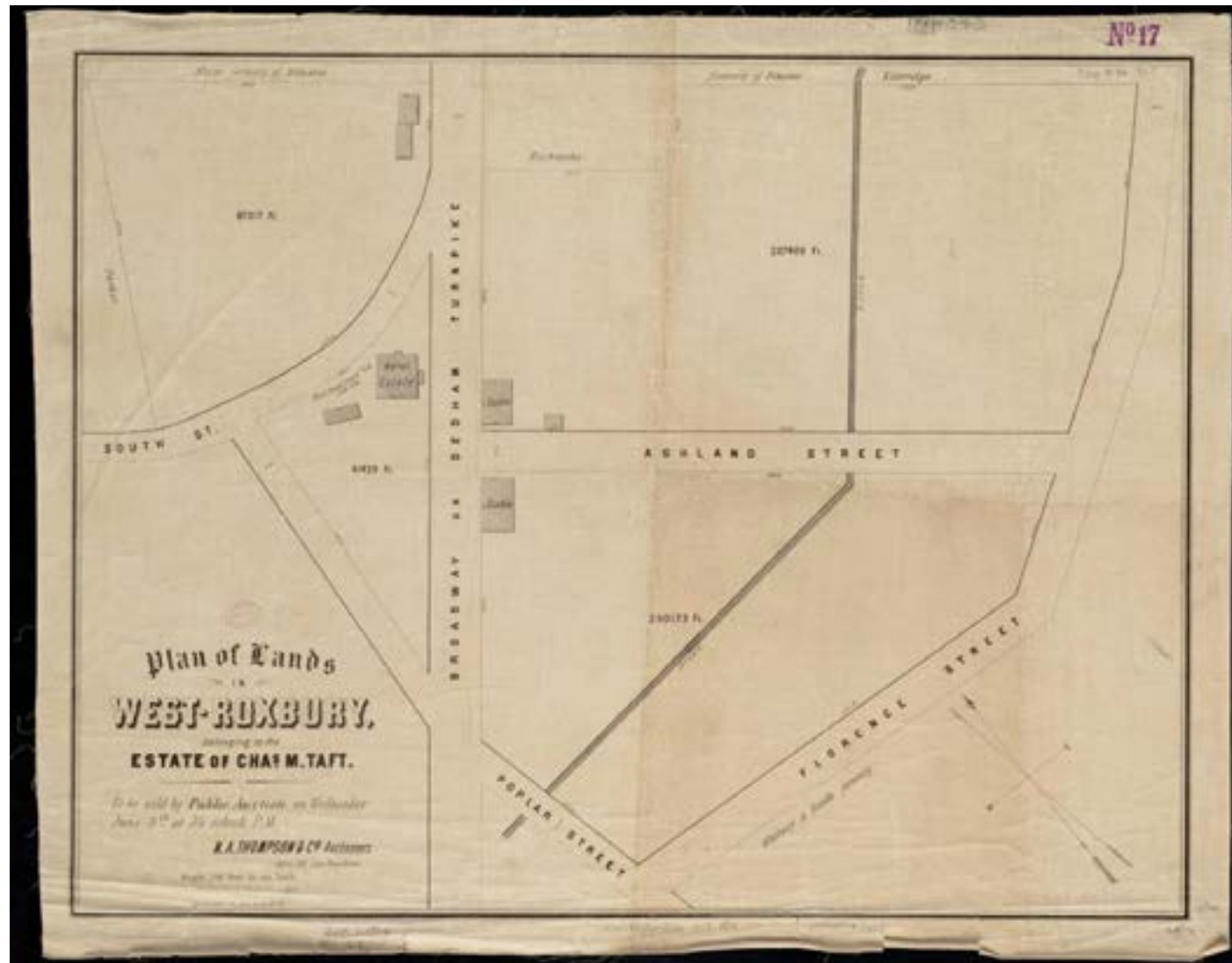


Figure 3. Plan of the Estate belonging to Chase M. Taft, 1858 by Meisel Brothers, Lithographers. Leventhal Map Center.

Taft's estate included approximately 49 acres on the southwest side of Poplar Street and a large portion of the land roughly bounded by Poplar, South, Florence, and Basile streets just southeast of Roslindale Square. His estate included the triangular turnpike intersection containing the roadside tavern. References to his estate in Roslindale Square include Taft Hill Terrace and Taft Hill Park, both roads north of the square. By this time, single-family dwellings and small farmsteads had been built

on the portion of the former Taft estate southwest of Poplar Street, as well as on the former holdings of other wealthy Bostonians such as Stephen M. Weld. Historic maps indicate this development was primarily along the Square's arterial roads such as the Dedham Turnpike, Poplar Street, and Ashland Street (today Cummins Highway), which shared proximity to both the West Roxbury Branch of the B&P Railroad's Roslindale Station in Roslindale Square and the B&P Railroad's Main Line Mount Hope Station (built 1869; formerly Monterey Station) to the east. Additional early residential subdivisions are still evident north of Cummins Highway along Florence Street and Brown Avenue, a location likely chosen for their close proximity to the Mount Hope Station to the east off Blakemore Street (Figure 4).

Large sections of the Metropolitan Hill neighborhood to the southeast of the Square were owned by the Metropolitan Land Company, who likely purchased this land from the Taft Estate auction and laid out two primary streets, Metropolitan Avenue and Delano Park, in anticipation of residential development (Figure 4).²⁸



Figure 4. West Roxbury map from "Atlas of the County of Suffolk, Massachusetts," 1874 by G. M. Hopkins and Company. Leventhal Map Center.



Figure 5. Image of Florence Street Primary School, ca. 1900. Boston Public Library, Arts Department, Boston Pictorial Archive.

Beginnings of Roslindale Square as a Municipal and Institutional Center

Roslindale Square's residential growth in the 1870s was accompanied by municipal and institutional growth. The city established a fire house, Engine No. 3, on the corner of Washington and Poplar streets (today the site of the Roslindale Branch of the BPL). In 1862, West Roxbury established two schools. One school, later known as the Florence Street Primary School, was located on the corner of Florence and Hawthorne streets, which is now occupied by the former Roslindale High School (1922, BOS.10664).²⁹

A second public school was constructed on Poplar Street near Mount Vernon Street (not extant) accompanied by a Post Office on the corner of Ashland and Florence streets. Roslindale Square's first church, the Bethany United Methodist Church, was built on the corner of Cummins Highway and Sheldon Street in 1874 and was also the first Methodist church established in the area. What became known as the Bethany congregation previously met in the Poplar Street School beginning in 1857. The original Stick-style church burned in 1940, and the present Colonial Revival-style building replaced it in March 1941 (BOS.10503). Despite the growth in and southeast of the Square, much of the land to the north and west of remained large estates into the late 19th century.³⁰

GROWTH AS A STREETCAR SUBURB, CA. 1875 TO CA. 1930

Roslindale Village's most intense period of growth began in the latter half of the 19th century, which legend attributes to one of the first major rail-related disasters in the United States. On March 14, 1887, the Bussey Bridge over South Street on the B&P Railroad's West Roxbury Branch, located north of Roslindale Square, collapsed while an inbound train was traveling over it. The train derailed, killing 23 of the 300 passengers and injuring 40 more.³¹

Local history accounts tie Roslindale's growth during late 19th and early 20th centuries to the Bussey Bridge Train Disaster, asserting that those who came to assist with recovery efforts "were reportedly so taken with the beauty of the surrounding landscape that they moved to the developing area." It is likely that trends in real estate speculation and development already in motion were supercharged by the increased attention Roslindale received in the wake of the disaster.

Promoting Roslindale as a “Garden Suburb”

One way in which the increased attention was capitalized upon was with the publication of directories by the area’s railroad operators as well as local businesses. An 1889 directory published by the Providence Division of the Old Colony Railroad (OCR) titled *Suburban Homes on the Old Colony* promoted the commercial and residential development opportunities in communities along its rail lines throughout Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. The directory specified fare rates, distances to major destinations, touted local scenic and recreational landmarks, and even advertised home designs suitable for prospective residents. Roslindale was highlighted as a rapidly growing “suburb of Boston, very fine for summer or permanent home,” with close proximity to the Arnold Arboretum (referred to as “Bussey Park”), and boasting an “almost unlimited” amount of eligible building sites. Published as a supplemental issue of the *West Roxbury News and Roslindale News*, a 1904 pamphlet titled *West Roxbury and Roslindale, Residential Suburbs* promoted the area as a “garden ward” of Boston, “ideal...for residential purposes:”

“With immense tracts of undeveloped land and a low tax rate, it is doubtful if a better place can be anywhere be found for the investor, whether he wishes to buy acres or simple a small house lot.”

In addition to touting West Roxbury’s extensive transportation amenities, the pamphlet highlighted the Arnold Arboretum, Franklin Park, Stony Brook Reservation, and the area as a whole for its “beauty and health-giving qualities.”

Combining pastoral landscapes, woodlands, and rock outcroppings with road and bridle path systems, the Arnold Arboretum, Stony Brook Reservation, and Franklin Park, were significant draws for prospective residents looking to live closer to open spaces, and enjoy recreational activities common of the time such as horseback and carriage riding and picnicking.³⁴ The established development of recreational and green spaces is what made Roslindale the attractive “garden suburb” OCR and other

boosters portrayed it to be. In 1872, Harvard implemented James Arnold’s bequest of \$100,000 and established the Frederick Law Olmsted-designed Arnold Arboretum on the expansive former estate of Benjamin Bussey north of Roslindale Square, which had been left to Harvard following Bussey’s death in 1842. The establishment of the 475-acre Stony Brook Reservation south of Metropolitan Hill by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) in 1894 served the dual aim of preserving the Stony Brook Valley and providing a future route for a parkway connecting the Blue Hills Reservation to Boston-proper. In 1898, Turtle Pond Road (later known as the Enneking Parkway and Turtle Pond Parkway) was developed through the reservation from Washington Street east to West Glenwood Avenue in Hyde Park.³⁵

Infrastructure Improvements

Concurrent with the promotion of Roslindale as an ideal setting for suburban residential development were a series of infrastructure improvements designed to address safety concerns and the area’s growing population. First was the channelization of Stony Brook, a roughly 8.5-mile tributary of the Charles River that flows from the Stony Brook Reservation (Dedham/Boston) through Roxbury into the Back Bay before emptying into the river. The brook had a tendency to flood, becoming a nuisance to the encroaching residential and industrial development and affecting their land values. A long-term construction campaign to contain Stony Brook via partially underground channels that would run directly into the Charles River began in Roxbury in 1851. The effort continued in fits and starts into the 1870s, when the annexation of West Roxbury to Boston spurred a renewed coordination of improvements to the brook. After a legal challenge by an abutting industrial concern, the project was finally completed in 1884.³⁶

In the late 1890s, the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad (NY, NH & H) controlled the OCR/B&P Railroad and carried out a series of grade elimination improvements to the West Roxbury branch. A bridge was constructed over Robert Street in Roslindale Square in 1898 to raise the rail corridor above the street level (BOS.9353, replaced 2021), while South Street was converted into a pedestrian-only underpass under the tracks. Roslindale Village Station was shifted and replaced a short time afterward, in 1899 (1899 structure not extant).³⁷

The Rise of Roslindale Square's Commercial Core

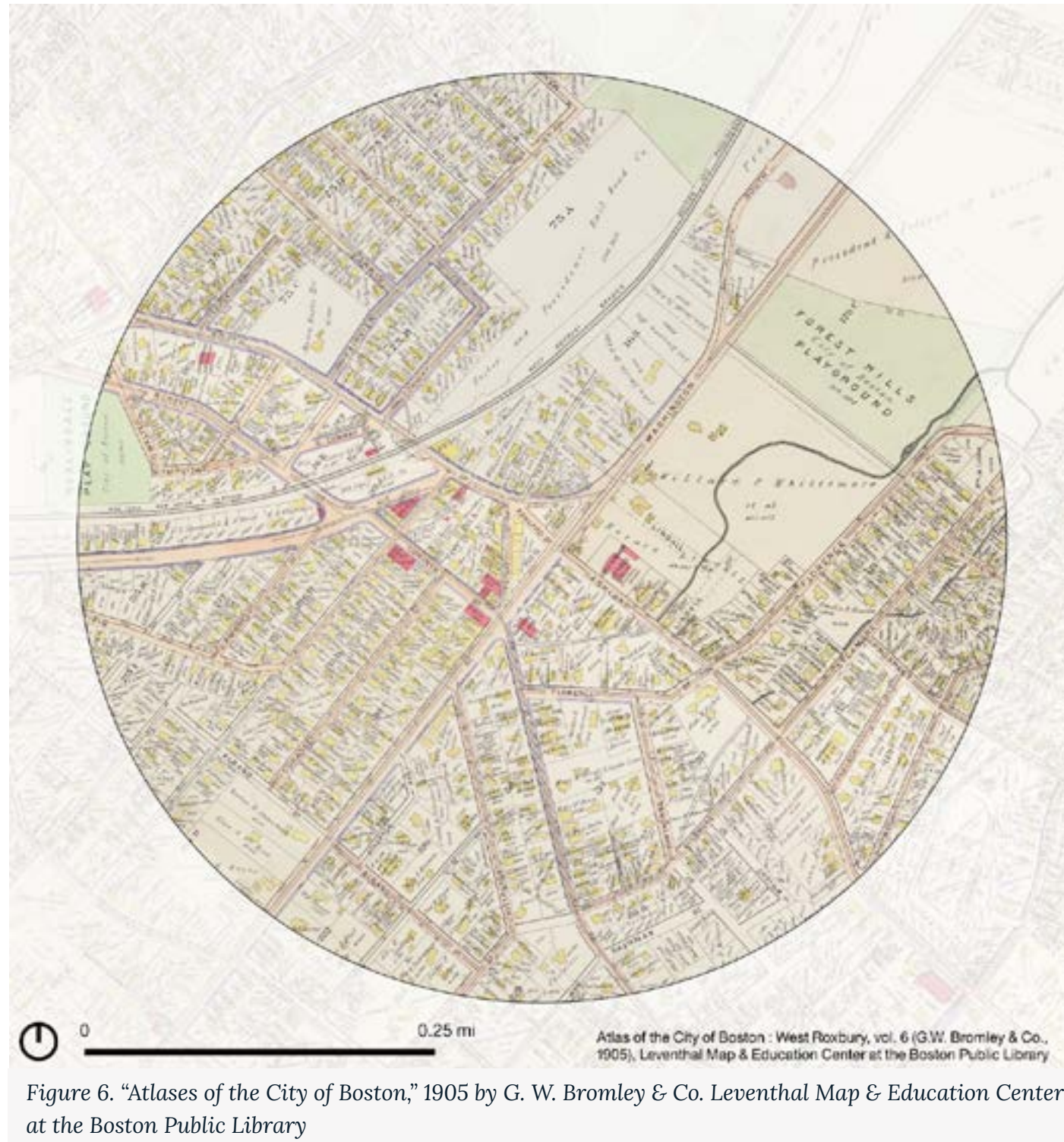


Figure 6. "Atlases of the City of Boston," 1905 by G. W. Bromley & Co. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library

OCR and local businesses' boosterism of Roslindale was aided by the introduction of electric streetcar service through Roslindale Square in 1896. First developed by the West End Street Railway and then the Boston Elevated Railway Company (BERy), these streetcar lines ran along Washington and South streets to West Roxbury and Dedham, as well as to Mattapan and Hyde Park via Cummins Highway and Poplar Street.³⁸ Constructed in 1911, the Classical Revival-style Roslindale Substation (BOS.10767) is a prominent physical indicator of the area's growth as a transportation corridor as well as the Square's only extant industrial building. Today, the Substation is a multi-use event, co-working, and entertainment space. Designed by Robert S. Peabody and Stone and Webster Engineers, the Substation was one of five such facilities constructed in 1911 in conjunction with the South Boston Power Station (BOS.12943) which consolidated Boston's power generation. The Roslindale Substation and its siblings in Kendall Square in Cambridge, Arlington, Coolidge Corner in Brookline, East Boston, and Malden, "converted alternating-current electric power from the power station to direct-current electric power for streetcar use."³⁹

These streetcar lines converged at Irving W. Adams Park (Adams Park), another significant, green space developed during this period that continues to be the heart of Roslindale Square today. The triangular parcel that today forms the park was originally bisected by what is now Cummins Highway (then called Ashland, Figure 6).⁴⁰

By 1874, Taft's Tavern changed hands and was operated as the Union Hotel until a fire in 1891 heavily damaged the building. The building largely sat vacant, briefly serving as classroom space in 1894, until it was remodeled as the first branch of the Roslindale Public Library.⁴¹



Figure 7. Image of the Roslindale Branch Library, ca. 1910. Boston Public Library, Arts Department, Boston Pictorial Archive.

In addition to the Library building located on the northern side of the triangle, a block of wood-frame commercial buildings owned by Francis A. Wise lined the east side of Poplar Street within the southern portion from ca. 1895 to 1919. In 1920, the entire parcel was cleared for a public park dedicated to Irving William Adams, a Roslindale resident who was killed in France during World War I (1914-1918) (Figure 8).⁴²

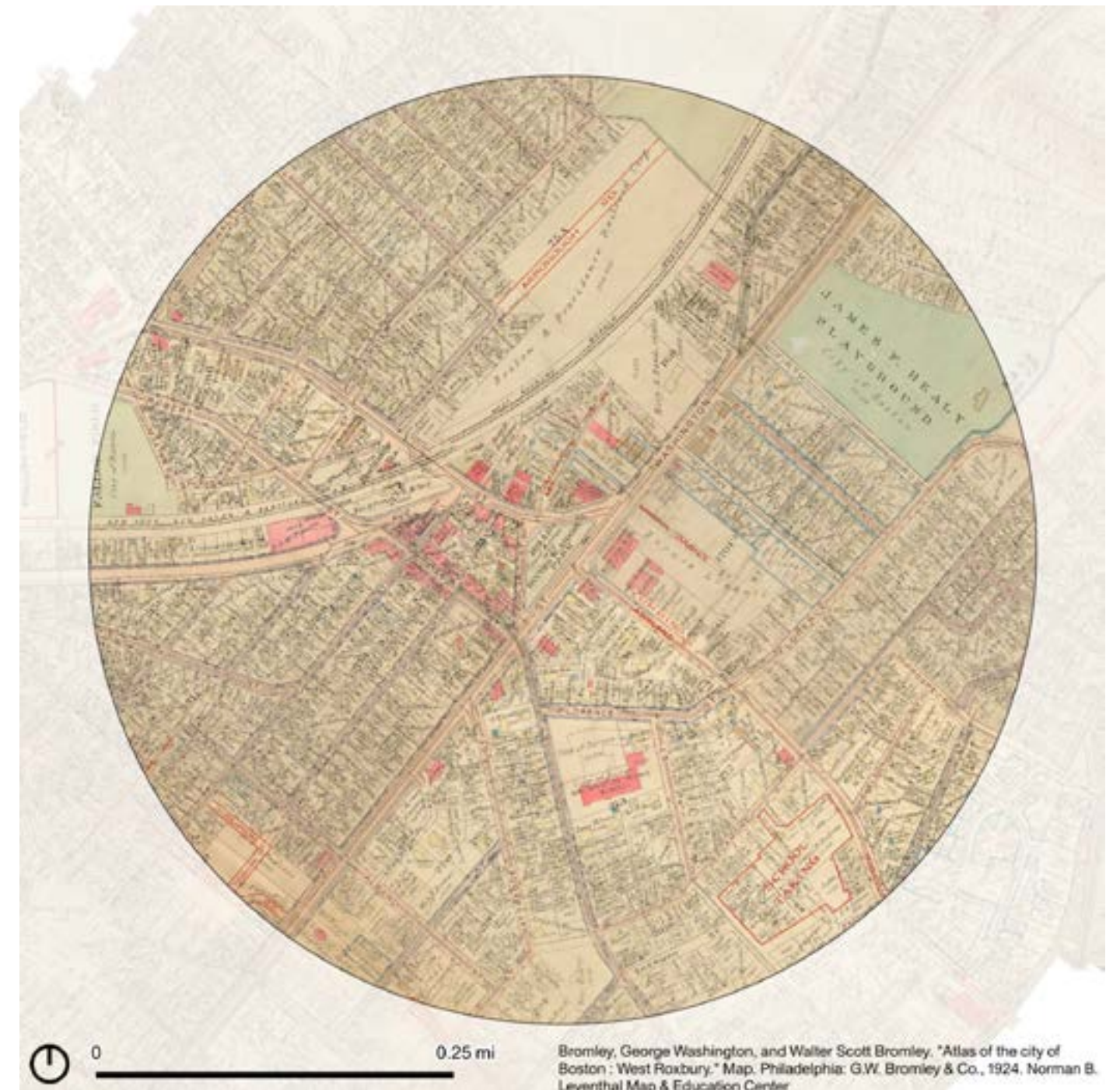


Figure 8. Map from "Atlas of the City of Boston," (West Roxbury, Vol. 6) 1924 by G. M. Hopkins and Company. Leventhal Map Center.

Around Adams Park and along the streetcar routes, the commercial core of Roslindale Square as it is recognized today grew during this period. Prominent businessmen and developers, as well as recent immigrants, opened businesses in primarily Classical, Colonial, and other Revival style commercial blocks built between ca. 1890 and 1924 along Washington, South, Poplar, and Corinth streets (Figure 9, 10).



Figure 9. View along South Street, 1948. Note historical architectural details which reference previous popular architectural trends. Features that may be associated with one or more of these various “Revival” styles include columns flanking doors and windows; keystones at the center of the lintels above the windows (center left); orderly facades framed by cornices above shop windows and at the roofline; and the use of wood and stucco mimicking medieval half-timber construction. Boston City Archives.

One of the most prominent extant commercial blocks built during this period is the B.F. Cobleigh Block (also known as the Masonic or Central Building; BOS.10434) - now home to several businesses including a brewery, Centre Cuts, and the Square Root - built in 1899 on Belgrade Avenue (Figure 10). Like many organizational halls of the time period, it was designed with a large hall on the second story for dancing and other gatherings. The building was developed by Benjamin F. Cobleigh who moved from Waltham to Roslindale in 1870 and was initially engaged in the plumbing business. By 1884, Cobleigh transitioned to real estate development. Centrally located across from the Roslindale Station, the Cobleigh Block was designed by local architect Oscar A. Thayer (1870-1950) and hosted a variety of tenants including the Roslindale post office branch from 1899 to 1915, and a branch of the First National Bank of Boston. In 1921, the Roslindale Masonic Building Association purchased the building and added a third story⁴³.



Figure 10. On May 7, 2018, the Office of Historic Preservation highlighted the Cobleigh Block on Belgrade Avenue in a Facebook post, comparing a modern image of the building (left) to one from 1988 (right).

Residential Growth and Early Immigration to Roslindale

The combination of park development, boosterism, and commercial growth aided by new streetcar lines resulted in waves of residential growth in and around Roslindale Square between ca. 1875 and 1905. During this approximately 30-year period, the section just south of the Square between Corinth Street south to Walworth Street and from Belgrade Avenue east to Washington Street was further subdivided for residential construction near Adams Park and Roslindale Station and later extending to Bellevue Avenue by the turn of the century. Residential construction continued to move east of the Square between Poplar and Florence streets during this period. The Bradford, Dudley, and Skinner estates along South and Walter streets just northwest of the Square were also subdivided during this 30-year period, although actual construction remained sparse into the 20th century. A small, two-road subdivision along Fairview and Skinner streets was carved out of a portion of the Skinner estate on the north side of South Street, north of the railroad station. Similarly, while the remainder of the Metropolitan Land Company's holdings were sold off by 1905, the Clarendon Park and Metropolitan Hill sections on the southeast side of Poplar Street remained largely undeveloped.⁴⁴

Arrivals to Roslindale during this period comprised primarily Irish, British-Canadian, German, and Italian immigrants. German immigrants initially settled in the southeast corner of Roxbury in the 1860s, in an area bounded by Washington and Grove streets known as "Germantown." In the 1880s and 1890s, successive generations of German immigrants settled in the Clarendon Hill and Metropolitan Hill sections of Roslindale Square. The Bethlehem Lutheran Church on Kittredge Street (BOS.10479), built in 1887, is one extant marker of this community while another is shown by the four blocks along Washington Street between Beech Street and the West Roxbury Parkway, which features several streets named for German and Austrian composers (Figure 6).

While primarily settling near the Dedham border, the growing Irish community established the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church (BOS.10505) on Cummins Highway in 1893, led by Father John Cummins for whom the street was later named. The increasing population led to the establishment of several other churches within Roslindale Square-proper including the Roslindale Congregational Church (BOS.10500) in 1894, also on Cummins Highway.⁴⁵

Growth of Roslindale Square's Municipal and Religious Institutions

In response to Roslindale's immense growth during this period, several schools and municipal buildings were built by the City of Boston, many of which remain today. The earliest school built during this period was the three-story Charles Sumner School on Cummins Highway, designed by George Albert Clough and built in 1876 (not extant). The Classical Revival-style Stephen M. Ward School (BOS.10701) designed by City Architect Harrison Atwood (1863-1954) was built on Seymour Street at the eastern edge of Roslindale Square. The Victorian Gothic-style Longfellow Elementary School (BOS.10712) was built three years later on South Street just west of Roslindale Square.⁴⁶ Today, the building is called the Longfellow House, containing 44 apartments for low-income elders.



Figure 11. Image of Longfellow School, 1890. Boston Public Library, Boston Pictorial Archive.

Indicative of the rapid pace of residential growth, the size of the Longfellow School was inadequate by the time it opened in 1897, and the city had to rent rooms in area buildings. A wing fronting Farquhar Street was finally built in 1914 to provide additional classroom space. Built at the tail end of this period, the Roslindale High School (BOS.10664) on Poplar Street was built in two sections between 1922 and 1926. The building initially served as the junior high school until a new one was built on Cummins Highway in 1936. In 1916, the Classical Revival-style Municipal Building (BOS.10499) was built on the corner of Washington Street and Cummins Highway, which now serves as the Roslindale Community Center. Also designed by Harrison Atwood, the Municipal Building hosted various city departments and at one point served as the Roslindale Branch Library. The Municipal Building formed an anchor to the eastern side of the commercial and institutional core of Roslindale Square, alongside the Roslindale Fire House which was rebuilt on the site of the original fire house in 1888 as a two-story Richardsonian Romanesque-style building (Figure 12).⁴⁷



ROSLINDALE FIRE HOUSE

Figure 12. Image of 1888 Roslindale Fire House, ca. 1904 (now site of the Roslindale Branch Library). From pamphlet “West Roxbury & Roslindale Residential Suburbs,” 1904 by Nickerson and Cox.

INTER-WAR PERIOD AND POST-WAR II REVITALIZATION, CA. 1930 TO CA. 1990

During the period between World War I (1914–1918) and World War II (1939–1945), also referred to as the Inter-War Period, residential and commercial development trends began to shift southwest, away from Roslindale Square towards the towns of Brookline and Dedham. While not greatly affecting the Square’s population levels, the shift led to a period of disinvestment in the neighborhood’s commercial core in the 1960s and 1970s, exacerbated by a series of fires and declining commuter rail traffic. Beginning in the 1980s, however, Roslindale Square experienced a revitalization thanks to recently settled immigrant communities, the stability of the neighborhood’s municipal and religious institutions, and city improvement programs.

Parkways as the New Corridors of Development

The shift in development trends noted above was driven by the construction of the West Roxbury Parkway (BOS.YJ/BKL.AW) in 1929 and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Parkway (BOS.YD/BKL.AT) in 1938. The MDC developed these two parkways, as well as others throughout metropolitan Boston, during the early 20th century in an effort to provide both park space and transportation corridors in the region. By this time, more urban areas such as Roslindale Square were judged by state and municipal officials to be “crowded with commercial traffic and electric-powered streetcars,” not dissimilar to how areas such as downtown Boston were viewed in the mid- to late-19th century. Coupled with the rise of the automobile during this period, parkways sought to provide “pleasurable uninterrupted driving” as well as open up more rural and vacant lands to development.⁴⁸ Residential development occurred rapidly along both Parkways within two decades following their completion. Single family homes began to be built as early as the 1920s with the completion of the West Roxbury Parkway’s first section in the Bellevue Hill neighborhood; however, the majority of residential development along both parkways occurred after World War II, primarily in the form of residential subdivisions. Housing tracts such as Hancock Village (BOS.ABK/BKL.BA) attracted

prospective residents with a wide variety of amenities, recreational facilities, and easy vehicular access within modern subdivisions, drawing them away from existing, more urban areas.

Interestingly, this shift in development did not have an outsized effect on Roslindale Square's population. Between 1950 and 1970, the neighborhood's population remained relatively steady, and actually increased slightly from 37,036 to 39,558. This was likely due to the construction of several public housing complexes in the area during this period, such as the development off Archdale Road north of the Square completed in 1951 with 287 units, and the 263-unit complex on the corner of Washington and Beech streets completed in 1952. Limited residential development in the Metropolitan Hill neighborhood and along Cummins Highway also likely helped maintain the population during this period. This infill development ranged from Colonial Revival multi-family and Postwar Traditional single-family residences to more modern brick apartment blocks. While limited, the effects of urban renewal did impact the neighborhood's housing stock and population, particularly north and east of the Square. In anticipation of the Southwest Expressway project, the state seized a number of residences along the former OCR rail corridor, demolishing some properties near Blakemore Street before the project was shelved in 1972. Five years later, the houses in the former project corridor remained in "deteriorating or dilapidated condition." The effects of the failed Southwest Expressway project, in addition to suburban residential growth and commercial disinvestment discussed below led Roslindale's population to decline nearly 6 percent by 1980.⁴⁹

New Immigrant Communities Provide Continued Stability

Despite these trends, Roslindale remained a largely middle- and working-class neighborhood of Italian and Irish immigrants. Following World War I, immigration trends began to shift with the arrival of Greek and Arabic-speaking Syrian and Lebanese immigrants. Beginning in the 1980s, Haitian and Dominican immigrants began arriving primarily outside Roslindale Square along Washington Street and in the Forest Hills/Woodbourne neighborhoods. Greek immigrants in particular began arriving in the 1960s and 1970s following military coups in the country. They quickly

established a robust community in Roslindale, opening bakeries, repair shops, and grocery stores as well as fostering community events such as a Greek food festival beginning in 1974, which continues to today. In 1977, the Greek Diocese of Boston purchased a former furniture warehouse on the corner of Robert Street and Belgrade Avenue built in ca. 1920 and parishioners began renovating the building for use as a church. Despite a fire that heavily damaged the building during renovations, the Saint Nectarios Church was consecrated in 1978, and in 1989 the warehouse was renovated again to its present-day form in order to conform with Greek Orthodox architecture. The Roslindale Greek population's stewardship of their adopted community continued as the 20th century drew to a close. In April 1997, the Athenian Mayor Dimitri Avramopoulos presented a statue of Alexander the Great to the community as part of festivities across Boston celebrating Greek Independence Day. The statue was placed in a small park bearing the name of the Greek Macedonian king opposite Saint Nectarios Church, and continues to be cared for by the church and community groups today.⁵⁰

Commercial Disinvestment, Institutional Staying Power, and City Reinvestment in Roslindale Square

Commercial activity was most affected during this period, particularly in the late 1960s and 1970s, as businesses relocated to suburban shopping centers or closed as a result of the competition posed by such destinations. For most of the mid-20th century, Roslindale Square remained a vibrant commercial core for West Roxbury.⁵¹

After World War II, however, shopping complexes such as the Dedham Mall (opened 1968) and others along VFW Parkway in Dedham and West Roxbury diverted business investment away from Roslindale Square. The decline of commuter rail ridership into Boston following World War II as the interstate highway system was developed further impacted foot traffic into the shops and businesses in the Square. While the Roslindale Village Station maintained operations and was reconstituted as a commuter rail stop on the MBTA's Needham Line in 1979, the Mount Hope Station east of the Square was shuttered as part of the failed Southwest Expressway and

subsequent Southwest Corridor project, diminishing passenger foot traffic into the neighborhood. A series of fires in the early 1970s resulted in the closure of several major businesses and dissuaded other retailers from remaining in the area, exacerbating the trend of disinvestment. In 1975, a fire destroyed the former Corey's Market on Corinth and Cohasset streets and burned and heavily damaged the commercial block next door. A second fire on the block in January 1978 damaged the former Parke Snow Department Store building so badly that it had to be demolished. A fire at the Rialto Theatre on South Street in the early 1970s led city officials to acquire the parcel and demolish the building in 1975.⁵²



Figure 13. Image of the Rialto Theater, 2946. Boston Public Library, Warren Favor Collection..

The resulting landscape of boarded up, vacant buildings and the large gap left by the former Parke Snow building left the Square feeling desolate, deterring customers and leading other retailers to leave the area.⁵³

While commercial disinvestment had an outsized impact, Roslindale Square continued to be a relatively important municipal and institutional center. In the years following World War II, the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church undertook an expansive construction and renovation program overseen by the Boston-based firm Maginnis and Walsh. In 1953, the firm completed renovations to the Church, and completed work on the church's Catholic school on Canterbury Street (BOS.15307). The Modernist-style catholic school featured 18 classrooms, a library, gymnasium, offices, and other facilities and opened to students in 1954 with 520 enrolled. That same year, the Modernist-style convent for the Sisters of Saint Joseph (who staffed



Figure 14. Architectural rendering of the Roslindale Branch Library 1961, by Isidor Richmond and Carney Goldberg, Architects. Boston Public Library, Boston Pictorial Archive.

the church's schools) opened next door. In 1956, the former Saint Francis Xavier School on Cummins Highway reopened as the Saint Clare High School, the original 1916 building having been doubled in size thanks to a large addition to the east. In 1961, the Roslindale Branch Library moved from the Municipal Building to its present location on the corner of Washington and Poplar streets.⁵⁴

Designed by Brookline architects Isidore Richmond and Carney Goldberg, the Modernist-style building was constructed on the site of the former Engine House. By 1969, the Modernist-style branch of the United States Postal Service (USPS) opened on Cummins Highway next to the Municipal Building on the site of the former Charles Sumner School. The biggest impact to the Square's institutional role during this period appears to have been in the form of school consolidations and closures. In 1956, the Stephen M. Ward School on Seymour Street was purchased by the Sacred Heart Parish in 1956 for use as a parochial school. The building was seized under eminent domain in 1965, however, as it was located within the proposed corridor for the Southwest Expressway. After plans for the proposed highway were shelved in 1972, the building sat vacant until it was rehabilitated into senior housing five years later. In 1976, the West Roxbury Educational Complex on VFW Parkway near the Dedham line opened, resulting in the consolidation of several schools in West Roxbury and the closure of the Roslindale High School. In 1987, the high school reopened as the Roslindale House, a senior living center offering many social services that continues operations today.⁵⁵

In the mid-1960s, City officials began initiating a variety of programs to revitalize Roslindale Square. In 1968 the City directed public funds under its Capital Improvement Program towards the reconstruction of streets and utility lines as well as the renovation of recreational spaces such as Healy and Fallon fields. In 1975, approximately \$200,000 was spent renovating the Municipal Building for use as a community health center. Between 1975 and 1977, nearly \$800,000 was spent on utility and site improvements to the public housing complexes off Archdale Road north of the Square and on Beech and Washington streets to the south. During this period, the city also undertook a number of programs aimed at improving Roslindale Square and its commercial spaces. The former Rialto Theatre was acquired and demolished. Over \$300,000 was spent constructing surface parking lots around

the Square to entice shoppers back to the area, and a further \$170,000 was spent installing new lights and benches in Adams Park and along the Washington and Centre Street corridors. The establishment of Roslindale Village Main Street (RVMS) by then City-Councilor Thomas M. Menino in 1985 funneled technical assistance and grant monies from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program to the area. Within five years, RVMS supported over \$5 million in new investment to the Square, through the rehabilitation of 33 storefront facades and 43 commercial buildings, the establishment of 29 new businesses, and the creation of over 130 new jobs. The rapid success of RVMS helped foster Roslindale Square's revitalization into the 21st century and served as a model for the establishment of the city-wide Main Streets program in 1995.

The groundbreaking Main Street effort was further enhanced by the 1989 Roslindale and West Roxbury Preservation Study, spearheaded by the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) with the cooperation of the Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC), Boston Redevelopment Authority, and the Boston Environmental Department. This robust historical and architectural survey recorded dozens of individual and district properties in these neighborhoods,⁵⁶ and included recommendations of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places.

ROSLINDALE IN THE PRESENT DAY

In the last few decades, the Roslindale community and the City have completed a number of preservation-based initiatives for the neighborhood at large and at individual sites, even as the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered several local businesses. As summarized in the Roslindale Square Small Area Plan, the 2007 Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan included several goals and actions related to retaining, protecting, and preserving historic resources. The plan notes that consideration of historic resources is key to maintaining the village character of the neighborhood while encouraging further development and improvements, and an important economic catalyst. Recommendations include designating properties as Boston Landmarks and listing them in the National Register, maintaining viewsheds to historic buildings, and incorporating local cultural and historical themes into the streetscapes and signage. In 2008, the Roslindale Neighborhood Design Overlay District (NDOD) was established to help preserve the scale and character of the area (Section 67-26 of the Boston Zoning Code).

RVMS' efforts helped spur other private investment in the Square at the close of the 20th century. An early example, the Longfellow Elementary School (BOS.10712), which was closed in 1989, was rehabilitated into senior housing by 1999.⁵⁷ Longfellow House, as it is now known, is fronted by The Roslindale Public Gardens at Longfellow House, demonstrating how historic resources can be adapted and reused as community assets.

Among the specific recommendations in the 2007 Strategic Plan was the rehabilitation of the Roslindale Substation (BOS.10767) and listing the building in the National Register. A true success story, this long-vacant building reopened as The Substation in 2016, the result of a partnership between RVMS, Historic Boston Inc., the Peregrine Group, and the community. This project illustrates the creative opportunities that historic resources provide. The Substation serves as a coworking hub, beer hall, and community space for pop-ups and events, while accompanying new construction on other sites added over 40 residential units. The project received nationwide attention, receiving recognition by the Boston Preservation Alliance, Preservation Massachusetts, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the City of Boston Community Preservation Fund, the George B. Henderson Foundation, and the Amelia Peabody Foundation.

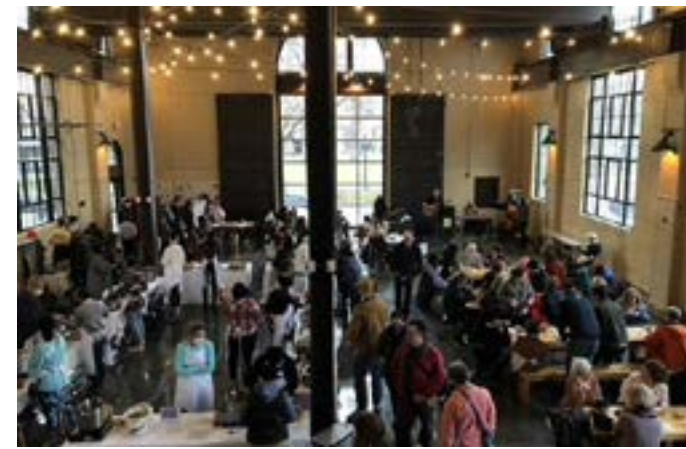


Figure 15. The Roslindale Substation as a relatively new building (top left, exact date unknown) and The Substation. Note the new residential building to the right of The Substation (top right), which was constructed as part of the redevelopment project. This new building was designed to be compatible with the historic building and streetscape. Historic Boston, Inc.

Perhaps not so far away from its roots as a turnpike stop and hotel, Adams Park (BOS.9358) still serves as a focal point for the village. Over 100 years after the founding of the park, many of the village's civic and institutional buildings are still clustered near the perimeter. The park has hosted community events such as movie nights and concerts, and is the site of the popular annual Roslindale Tree Lighting celebration and a weekend farmers' market that attracts residents from several surrounding neighborhoods. Another example of a building still open to the public as a gathering space, the C.F. Cobleigh Block (BOS.10434) is currently popular with craft brewers (most recently Distraction Brewing Co., transitioning to 13 Volt Brewing and Roasting as of this writing). Featuring an instantly recognizable flatiron building shape, it benefits from a prominent place on Belgrade Avenue, bordering the newly pedestrianized Birch Street Plaza.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Roslindale Square and the study area have long been recognized for their historic character. As far back as the 1989 Survey, stakeholders have encouraged the designation of several neighborhood properties as Boston Landmarks or through National Register listing, including individual resources and groups of resources. The 2008 establishment of the NDOD recognizes Roslindale Square as a historic district eligible for the National Register. The NDOD also calls attention to some of the area's individual historic buildings.

There are several tools available to encourage the preservation and reuse of historic buildings, including designation through listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and designation as a Boston Landmark. Citywide, there is significant overlap between these classifications, with individual resources and collective districts being designated as both National Register-listed and Boston Landmarks. However, this is not automatic and many properties have one recognition but not the other.

The National Register is defined as “the official list of the Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation” by the National Park Service, which administers the program in coordination with each State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). While the National Register is more widely-known than its local counterpart, it is important to note that listing provides limited protection from adverse effects resulting from a small subset of construction and improvements projects; namely, those involving federal funding and approvals. A primarily honorific and planning tool, listing in the National Register does not, in itself, necessarily limit future improvements to a property or even prevent its demolition. However, National Register listing is beneficial because it opens up potential opportunities for funding and technical assistance, including historic tax credit incentives.

In contrast, designation as a Boston Landmark is a more hands-on preservation

strategy, with proposed changes reviewed by the BLC or one of the City’s several Landmark District Commissions. Through the review process, the Commissions and BLC staff work with property owners to develop design solutions that allow evolution and improvements to their buildings in a historically sensitive manner. Owners of landmarked properties can benefit from the input provided during the design review process, as the appointed Commissioners not only represent their respective communities, but also a diverse range of professional expertise and personal experience. The benefits of designation of Boston Landmarks are tangible community-wide and are integral to maintaining the unique feel of our buildings, streetscapes, and village squares while the city grows.

VHB offers the following recommendations for further study and evaluation for potential designation, taking into account current existing conditions and the evolution of philosophies and practice used by the

National Register. While this is not an exhaustive list of potential historic properties, it can be considered an updated starting block for evaluating priority commercial and institutional historic resources.⁵⁸ The next step for the Boston Landmarks Commission is to complete an Area Form update - including an updated inventory of potentially historic resources and structures - for the Roslindale Square area to file with the Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC).

Roslindale Village (BOS.NW) remains a strong candidate for historic significance and designation as the historic and current commercial, municipal, and institutional core of Roslindale. While the center has evolved with new construction and alterations, it remains a cohesive and distinctive architectural set of streetscapes. The approachable scale of the village’s historic buildings and diversity of architectural features make this area particularly visually interesting from a pedestrian perspective. In the next decade, Roslindale Village may also

be considered eligible for designation as one of the first Main Street programs in the country, as RVMS reaches 50 years old.⁵⁹ Designation of the district may have a proactive economic benefit, as it removes one of the hurdles associated with the usage of historic tax credit incentives for rehabilitation projects. The precise boundaries of the district will need to be established, and smaller sub-areas that have been inventoried should be examined to see if separate historic recognition is warranted and/or beneficial, such as **Corinth Street (BOS.MS)** and **1-7/49 Poplar Street (BOS.NG)**.

The village also contains several properties that may be eligible for individual designation as well as contributing to the Roslindale Village Historic District. The **Cobleigh Block (2-14 Belgrade Avenue, BOS.10434)** retains Colonial Revival features and original design characteristics such as strong cornices, pilasters separating storefronts that are framed by paneled bulkheads and signbands, keystones and other details made of cast stone that contrast sharply with the brick facade, and its hallmark wedge flatiron shape. Alterations such as replacement

windows, storefront elements, and signage are present but are noted as common interventions that likely will not detract from the building's architectural significance. Similarly, the **Municipal Building (6 Cummins Highway, BOS.10499)** has been altered with replacement windows and doors, but maintains a strong presence with a recessed, two-story entrance flanked by large Doric pilasters. Other prominent Classical Revival features include a cornice frieze above the second story with exaggerated dentils and triglyph/metope pattern. It may be historically significant as the primary municipal building for the village, hosting several different departments and community institutions since its construction in the early 20th century.

The Modernist **Roslindale Branch Library (4246 Washington Street, BOS.10768)** is distinctive for its dramatic curved facade, which helps negotiate an otherwise oddly-shaped lot. The curve allows for nearly continuous glazing along Washington Street, while a wide rooftop dome contains clerestory windows designed to allow more

light toward the center of the space. This well-designed and well-preserved example of Modernist municipal architecture retains nearly all of its exterior historic elements while the interior was fully renovated in 2019-2021 to international recognition.

FOOTNOTES

¹ This study is not intended to be a comprehensive history of Roslindale Square and its surroundings, but an overview of the themes, events, social histories, and community developments that resulted in the character of the built environment.

² Kunze, David C. and Judy P. Kunze, “Superb Suburb,” Roslindale Historical Society, November 2020.

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¹³ The original meetinghouse was torn down, and the materials were used to build part of an earlier iteration of the second church on Centre Street. The only evidence of the original meetinghouse off Walter Street is the Walter Street Burial Ground (BOS.822). Millsap, Davis, and Friedberg, December 2019.

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⁵⁹ The threshold for historic significance of a property is generally considered to be 50 years of age (with exceptions). This allows enough time to pass to help ensure an evaluation of historic significance is as objective as possible, and provides time for the property to be considered within a wider historic and architectural context.

⁶⁰ Section 67-26 of the Boston Zoning Code, establishing the Roslindale NDOD, refers to this building as the "Georgian Revival Masonic Building."

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VI. THE CHARACTER AND CULTURE OF ROSLINDALE SQUARE

The Squares + Streets plan aims to add new development into existing Squares in a way that respects the sense of place and architectural character of each neighborhood. As part of this effort, the team has been collecting information in the form of a 'Community and Cultural Asset Map' to understand how the public realm (such as parks and sidewalks) and built form (such as storefronts and architectural character) shape the identity of Roslindale Square. Prior to making recommendations, it is critical to document what makes Roslindale unique, what draws people here, and what makes Roslindale feel like home. This section identifies existing elements of the built environment in Roslindale, values that are important to the community on this topic, and prompts to gather ideas for how we can achieve the community's vision for built form and design through the Roslindale Square Squares + Streets Small Area Plan.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Throughout this planning process, we've been soliciting community input on how the built environment can contribute to the neighborhood's sense of place. The feedback has fallen into 3 larger themes - history, public realm, and gathering spaces.

Through History

Roslindale Substation, Roslindale Congregational Church, and Roslindale Baptist Church are the only buildings within the plan area that hold a National Register of Historic Places designation. However, many buildings in the Square contribute to the sense of history, a distinct architectural expression, and neighborhood identity, and the diversity of materials and building types speaks to the continued evolution of the character of the area. See the Historic Context Study for more information on the social and cultural history of Roslindale Square and how it has influenced the built environment today.

Through the Public Realm

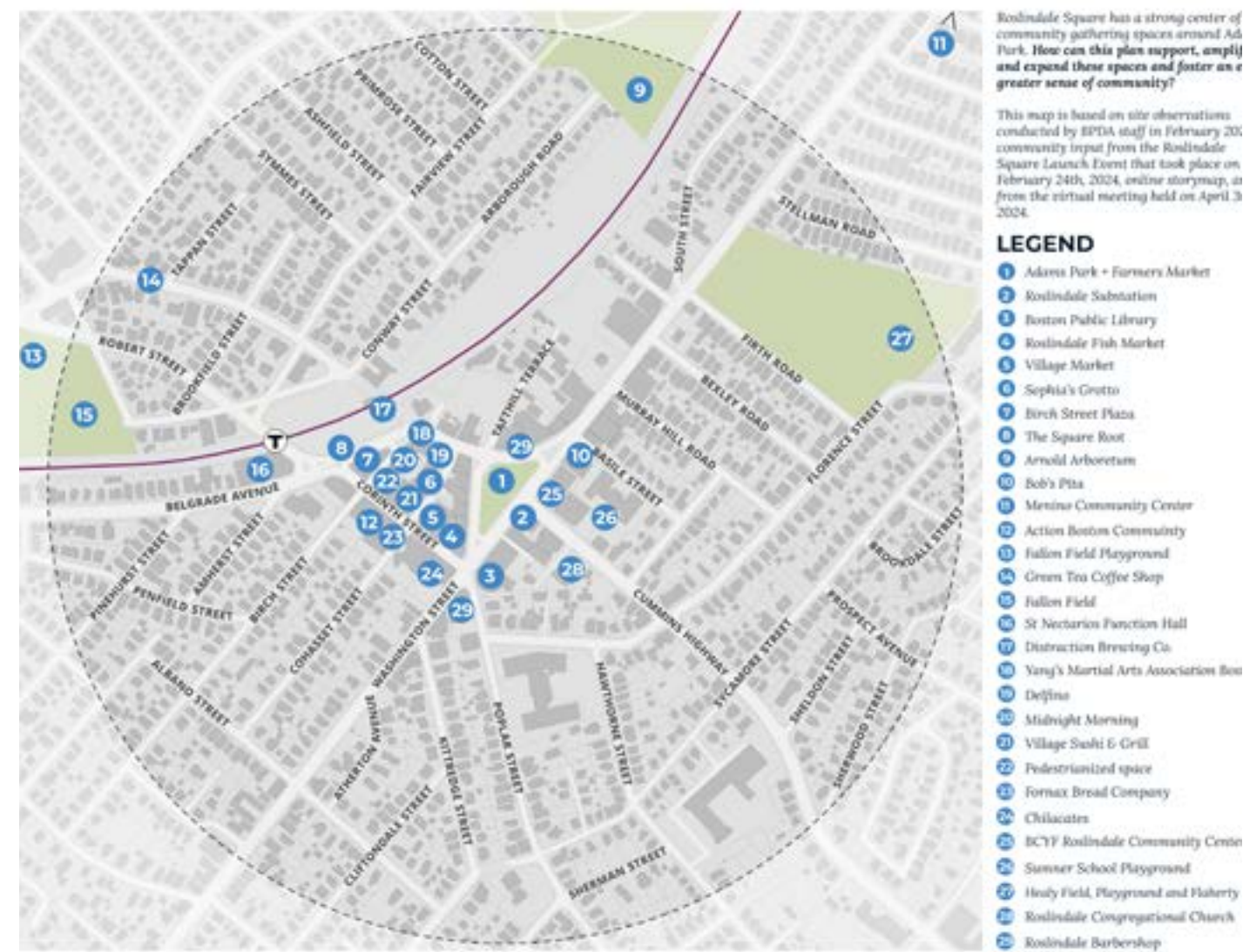
During the Engagement Report Out meeting, when prompted with the question ‘What creates a sense of place in your neighborhood?’, many responded with outdoor spaces, including Adams Park, Birch Street Plaza, the Arboretum, and Fallon and Healy Field; as well as the streetscapes and sidewalks within the Square. Some murals and outdoor sculptures are important neighborhood identifiers. The ‘Roslindale’ mural and nearby kinetic sculpture were noted for their visibility from the train station, providing a visual cue that one is entering Roslindale Square.

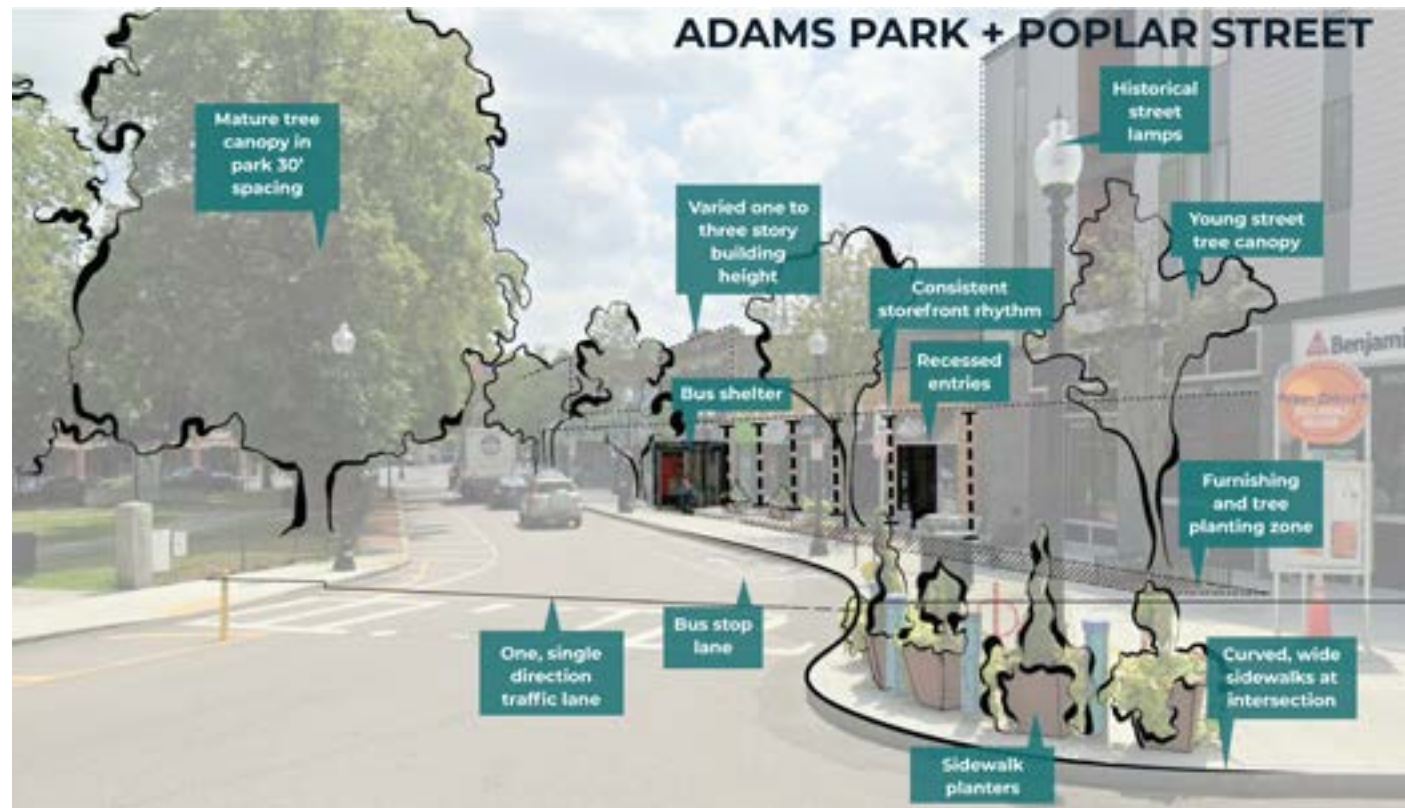
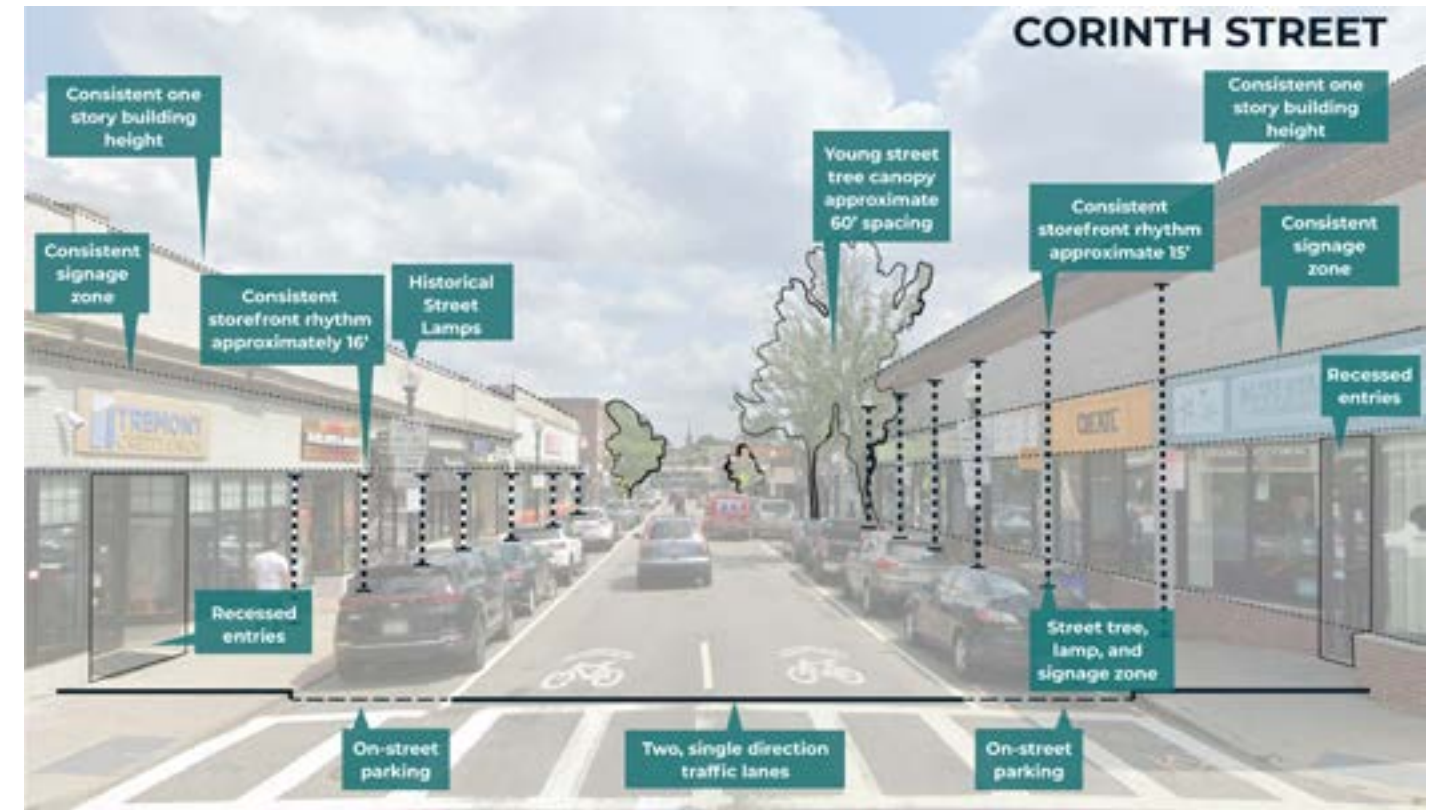
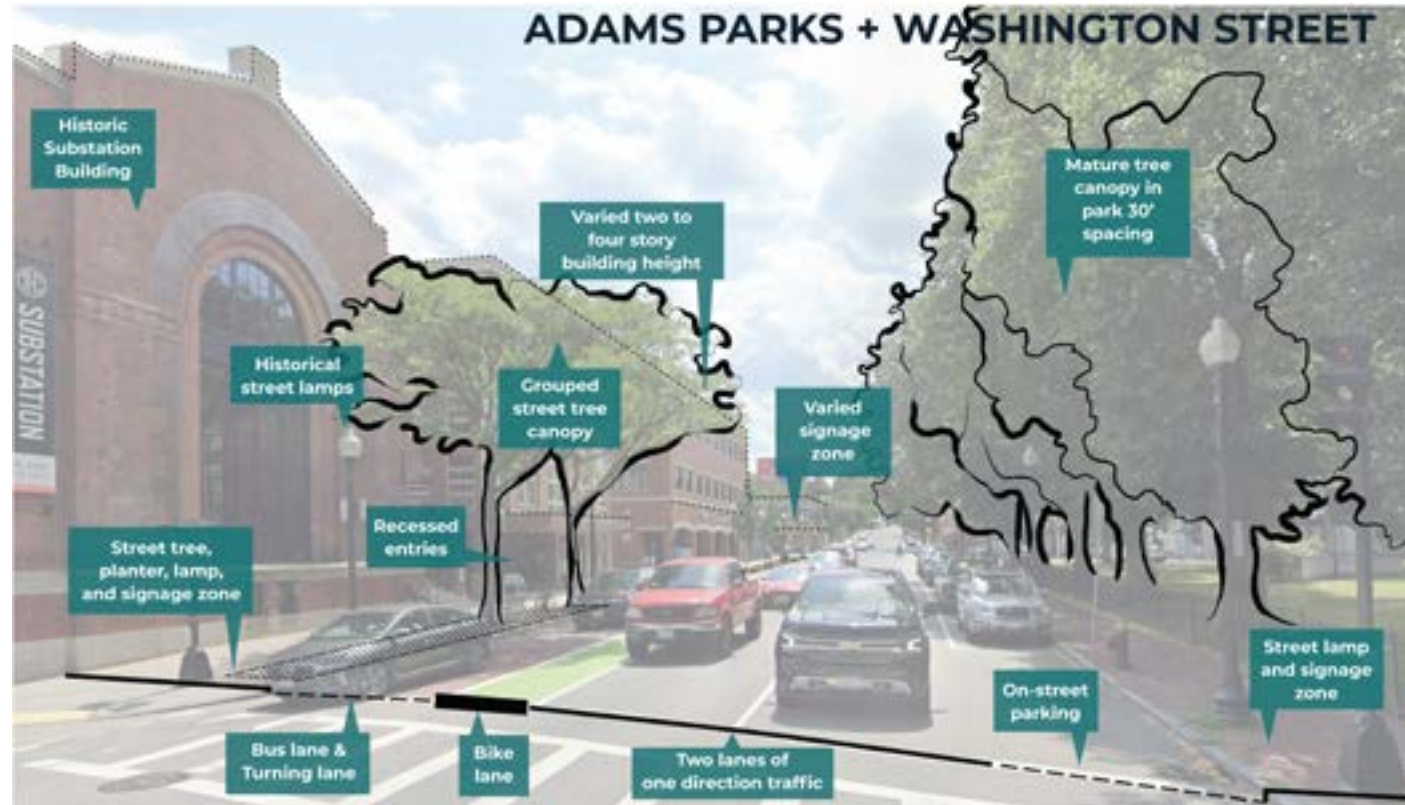
Through Spaces that Foster Community Gathering

We’ve also heard about the important role that places of gathering play in defining Roslindale Square. These include civic and institutional buildings such as the library, places of worship, the Community Center, as well as locally-owned businesses like Distraction Brewery, Square Root, the Village Market, and Fornax Bakery.

This map is based on site observations conducted by Planning Department staff in February 2024, community input from the Roslindale Square Launch Event that took place on February 24th, 2024, Community and Cultural Asset Online Mapping, and a Community Walkshop held on April 7th, 2024.

WHERE DO YOU GATHER IN ROSLINDALE SQUARE?





ELEMENTS OF THE PUBLIC REALM

Adams Park creates a strong neighborhood center within Roslindale Square. Its open lawn and mature trees create an ideal gathering place for the residents of the Square, whether to enjoy day to day activities or for an event like the Farmer’s Market or the Holi Festival. The streets that surround the park, Poplar and Washington, have active storefronts, historic lamp posts, public art, and amenities such as benches and planters. The civic and historic buildings on Washington Street are some of the tallest in the neighborhood. A new development on Poplar Street is of a similar scale, adjacent to a string of one- and two-story buildings.

As one moves away from Adams Park, along Corinth Street, one sees predominantly single story buildings, with consistent zones for signage and a rhythm of about 15’ storefront widths. The sidewalks are narrow and offer less space for additional amenities. This analysis is documented in the annotated drawings here.

COMMUNITY + CULTURAL ASSETS



INFORMING RECOMMENDATIONS

All of this analysis was combined into one 'Community and Cultural Asset' map. This was used as the basis for the open space and built form recommendations. By starting with the existing community character and culture, this plan aims to support, amplify and enhance the existing neighborhood fabric.

HOW HAS ROSLINDALE SQUARE CHANGED OVER TIME?

1905 - TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY

- 1 Taft/Union Hotel, now Adams Park
- 2 Poplar Street, 1912
- 3 Corner of Belgrade Avenue and Aldrich Street, 1931
- 4 Firehouse, now Roslindale Library, 1895

1969 - MID 20TH CENTURY

- 5 Corinth Street at Belgrade Avenue, 1970s
- 6 Rialto Theater, 1960s
- 7 Roslindale Library, 1967

2024 - PRESENT DAY

- 8 Site of Taft/Union Hotel, now Adams Park
- 9 Poplar Street, 2022
- 10 Corner of Belgrade Avenue and Aldrich Street, 2021
- 11 Roslindale Library, 2022

WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THE FUTURE?

- 1. Affordable Housing
- 2. Community Retail
- 3. Protecte Bike Lanes
- 4. Public Transport
- 5. Public Art
- 6. LGBTQIA+ friendly
- 7. Sustainability
- 8. Density balanced with Amenity
- 9. Increased Shade

Roslindale Square:

VII. ZONING EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

This report covers an analysis of existing land use and zoning conditions as well as small- and large-scale development patterns within the Roslindale Square area. The goal is to understand how existing zoning conditions enable or obstruct opportunities for community development that supports local needs.

In Roslindale Square, current zoning regulations do not reflect what exists in the area and do not allow for new development or redevelopment that aligns with local and city needs.

Many existing and desired activities or uses are not allowed by zoning. This makes it **difficult for new businesses (especially small businesses) to open or for existing businesses to transition to new activities**. For example, if an existing restaurant owner would like to add a take-out component, they will likely need zoning relief because take-out is not an allowed use.

In addition, rules about the size and shapes of buildings make much of the existing buildings physically illegal. This makes it **difficult for business owners and homeowners to make additions or changes to their properties**. It also **discourages new development that would make adaptive use of existing buildings or that would be similar to the current building context**.

As a result, projects often require zoning relief, such as a variance or a conditional use permit, from the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA). This makes the development process significantly more **unpredictable for residents and inequitable, costly and timely for property owners**. Property owners with the least resources and technical support are the least able to navigate the ZBA process to complete projects, worsening equity issues.

Updating the zoning rules in Roslindale Square can begin to **remove barriers to the development of a variety of housing, cultural, commercial and community spaces**. This report details what the impact of those existing barriers are and **where the**

zoning regulations do not align with previous visions, planning goals and trends in proposed projects in the community.

Through the Squares + Streets Small Area Plan, the Roslindale Square community sets a vision for the possible futures of development in the area to better predict what development will look like. That vision will be supported by updates to zoning rules that reflect is currently built today and what can be built that meets needs in the future. That starts with understanding the status quo of zoning and development today.

HISTORY

Roslindale Square's first zoning was adopted in 1924 as part of the 1924 Zoning Law of the City of Boston, the City's first zoning regulations. Prior to the 1924 Zoning Law, buildings and development in Boston were only regulated by building code which included height regulations but didn't regulate the activities in buildings.

Similar to the area today, Roslindale Square in 1924 featured business districts along Belgrade Ave, Washington St, and Corinth St, with residential districts filling up the surrounding area.

In the 1924 zoning, buildings were allowed to be between 40 and 65 ft in the business districts (with the taller heights allowed in the center of the square around Washington and South Streets) (see L-40, L-65 and B-65 districts in Figure 1).

The surrounding residential districts allowed heights between 35 and 40 ft (see R-35 and R-40 districts in Figure 1). During this period, the residential district options were either "S" for "Single Residence" buildings or "R" for "General Residence" buildings, meaning that residential buildings in "R" districts had no maximum unit count for residential dwelling.

The allowed heights for business districts and some residential districts during this period were taller than the 35 ft height limit set by today's residential and business zoning districts in the Boston Zoning Code for the Roslindale neighborhood (see Article 67, Tables C and E of the Boston Zoning Code).



Figure 1: 1924 Zoning Map of Roslindale Square.

Source: "City of Boston zoning map." Map. Boston, Mass.: City Planning Board, 1924. Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.



Figure 2: 1962 Zoning Map of Roslindale Square.

Source: "Zoning districts, city of Boston." Map. Boston, Mass.: Zoning Commission, 1962. Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

In 1962, the area received a zoning update as part of the 1962 update of the Boston Zoning Code and Enabling Act. The 1962 zoning update lowered the allowed heights to between 35 and 40 ft in most of the business districts (see L-.5, L-1, B-1 and B-2 districts in Figure 2). It also lowered the allowed heights to 35 ft in the residential districts, bringing them to today's maximum height regulations (see the R-.5 and R-.8 districts in Figure 2).

The exception was for the area from South St to Corinth St and Belgrade Ave to Poplar St where there was no height restriction in the 1962 zoning. Instead, the size of the buildings were only restricted by minimum yard requirements and a maximum FAR of 2.0.

Importantly, the 1962 zoning update introduced a regulation that made “Multi-Family Dwellings” (meaning 4 or more dwelling units) a Forbidden land use within R-.5 and R-.8 General Residence districts. While the 1924 zoning did not have a maximum unit limit, this 1962 zoning update placed a hard limit and reduced the opportunity for multifamily housing development across this segment of Roslindale Square.

This shift in the zoning was part of a trend within the greater region towards citywide downzonings which reduced the scale of buildings and thus reduced the opportunity for multifamily housing like apartments and mixed-use development.

In practice, this shift and the overall lack of multifamily housing supply increased the exclusion of potential residents who could not afford or access the more commonly built one-, two-, or three-family residences.

The 1962 zoning for Roslindale Square was replaced in 2008 with the adoption of the Boston Zoning Code's Article 67 (Roslindale Neighborhood District), which is the zoning applicable in the area today.

The Planning Department (then the BRA) worked with an Advisory Group of fifteen community leaders, members of various neighborhood associations and longtime Roslindale residents, as well as held three (3) community-wide meetings. This resulted in the [Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan](#), which was adopted in 2007, followed by the preparation of the new zoning article (Article 67) reflecting the plan recommendations.



Figure 3: Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan (2007)

Article 67 (“Roslindale Neighborhood District”) was written as part of the neighborhood-based rezoning that Boston undertook starting in the late 1980s, rewriting much of the existing 1962 zoning. Roslindale was one of the last neighborhoods to be rezoned in this process. The zoning was adopted in 2008 after a three year public process and the adoption of the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan.

The Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan (2007) set a series of goals for future development and recommendations related to land use and zoning for Roslindale Square that stem from that planning process. **Most prominent of those goals area:**

Promote a mixed-use and commercial character throughout the area:

- “Improve the vibrancy of Roslindale Square by providing a wide variety of services / shopping / entertainment opportunities with local character but appealing to patrons from outside the Neighborhood.” (p. 14)
- “Concentrate retail uses in Roslindale Square and in smaller, mixed-use nodes along major thoroughfares.” (p. 14)
- “Encourage mixed-use, sustainable development that incorporates compact and “green” building design, with adequate transportation options to reduce reliance on cars” (p.14)
- “Develop zoning that reflects existing development patterns and supports appropriate infill development.” (p. 14)
- “Create zoning that encourages a mix of commercial and residential uses with appropriate parking in order to animate the Square.” (p. 14)
- “Encourage the development of commercial uses serving the whole population, including children and teenagers.” (p. 14)

Promote housing growth in the area and near the Commuter Rail Station

- “Maintaining existing allowable densities, in most locations, and allowing some increase in residential densities for mixed-use development around Roslindale Square and other key locations will allow developers to create new housing units at prices affordable to this middle-income bracket.” (p.22)
- “The plan recommends relatively higher densities and lower parking ratios in Roslindale Square around the Roslindale Village commuter rail station” (p.67)”

The building dimensions allowed in the current zoning adopted in 2008 do not conform with many of the existing historic structures in Roslindale Square. Buildings such as the Roslindale Community Center (1899) and the Substation (1911) were built before any zoning existed and would not be allowed under current zoning rules. Meanwhile, newer developments that seek to introduce mixed-use buildings or multifamily housing opportunities within the area often do not comply with the zoning regulations due to the scale needed for buildings to accommodate those uses.

The following report outlines common constraints of the existing zoning in supporting stated community goals as well as provides a general overview of small- and large-scale development that has occurred in the area for reference. This information is meant to provide an understanding of why updated zoning within the Roslindale Square area is necessary to better align regulations with community needs and produce more predictability.

EXISTING ZONING SUBDISTRICTS AND OVERLAYS



- Neighborhood Business Subdistricts
- Residential Subdistricts
- Open Space Subdistricts

Zoning districts or subdistricts dictate which zoning rules apply in which locations. Each zoning district or subdistrict has its own set of regulations that allow for distinct urban forms and activities, and the rules that apply on each parcel depend on which district or subdistrict it falls within.

Roslindale Square is within the Roslindale Neighborhood Zoning District, which is regulated by Article 67 of the Zoning Code. This district is further split into **11 different zoning subdistricts:**

- **Four (4) neighborhood business subdistricts:** Community Commercial-1 (CC-1), Community Commercial-2 (CC-2), Neighborhood Shopping (NS), and Local Convenience (LC)
- **Three (3) residential subdistricts:** One-Family (1F-6000), Two-Family (2F-5000), Three-Family (3F-4000)
- **Four (4) open space subdistricts:** Recreation Open Space (OS-RC), Parkland Open Space (OS-P), Urban Plaza Open Space (OS-UP), Botanical/Zoological Garden Open Space (OS-BZ)

The regulations for each of these subdistricts can be found in different sections and tables of Article 67*. See the **How to Find and Read Existing Zoning Regulations** section for more information on how to view these subdistricts in detail.

**Except for the Open Space subdistricts, which are regulated by Article 33 and Article 55.*

NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN OVERLAY DISTRICTS



Figure 5: Existing Neighborhood Design Overlay District in Roslindale Square

Neighborhood Design Overlay District (NDOD)

An overlay district is a zoning district that lies on top of existing (or “underlying”) zoning districts and creates additional zoning requirements. Parcels within the boundaries of overlay districts must follow the rules of both their underlying district and subdistrict and any overlay district(s).

The Roslindale Square study area contains **one (1)** zoning overlay district, the Neighborhood Design Overlay District, which requires additional design review for certain projects that are proposed within this overlay.

Neighborhood Design Overlay Districts (or NDODs) are established to protect the existing scale, quality of the pedestrian environment, character of the residential neighborhoods, and concentrations of historic buildings. Within an NDOD, certain projects must be reviewed and approved by Urban Design staff at the Planning Department, a process known as Planning Department Design Review (previously BPDA Design Review).

The projects which require design review must be visible from a public street or public open space and propose a change altering a roof shape or building height or an alteration or new construction which is over three hundred (300) sq ft. The requirements for NDODs are found in Section 80E-2.1.iii of the Zoning Code.

Within Article 67 (Section 67-28: Design Review and Design Guidelines), there is an additional requirement that any project within the Hyde Park Neighborhood District must receive design review if it is visible from a public street or public open space and proposes any additions or new constructions which are more than 750 sq ft. These projects are also subject to a 14 day public comment period.

Since 2013, there have been zero projects which have triggered design review through the NDOD or the neighborhood-wide design requirement processes. This is because all the projects that these provisions would have applied to also required zoning relief. Therefore, they went through the Zoning Board of Appeal process and it was in that specific process that they triggered the Planning Department design review process.

This is indicative that while the NDOD is important in its intent to promote community design characteristics, it is not useful in the case where projects need zoning relief, which is common when many projects and existing buildings do not conform with the zoning requirements.

LAND PARCEL AND ASSESSING DATA ANALYSIS

This analysis is done using **FY 2024 Property Assessment Data provided by the City of Boston’s Assessing Department** and is meant to help illustrate trends in Roslindale Square of broader land uses, land parcel conditions, and the building form. This analysis also compares building and land data to dimensional regulations for zoning districts within Roslindale Square.

While it is difficult to determine exact zoning compliance for an entire area due to the complexity of existing zoning regulations, we can use available data to estimate zoning conformity based on three existing zoning requirements that are feasible to measure based on available data: **floor area ratio (FAR), height, and land use.**

Notes: *The calculations for this analysis are limited by the amount of property-level data that is available to the City of Boston Assessing Department. The following analytics are approximations based on that data and may capture the occupancy and compliance of each unique parcel in the study area. In addition to assessing data, existing building height was also estimated using Lidar data.*

Government-owned parcels were treated the same as private parcels in this analysis, even though most government entities are not required to comply with zoning regulations. This is to help the reader understand how existing zoning aligns with the current built form throughout the study area. Land area that was assessed as ‘unusable’ in Assessing parcel data was omitted from this analysis.

80% of parcels in the study area have a floor area ratio that is higher than the maximum floor area ratio requirement (see the glossary of this document for more information on floor area ratio).

This means that the floor area ratio regulation does not align with or affirm the size of existing buildings within the area. Since floor area ratio is a measurement of building scale, this means that the existing floor area ratio regulation is outdated

in comparison to the scale necessary for residential, commercial and mixed-use buildings in Roslindale Square today.



Figure 6: Map of Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Conformity

- Nonconforming with Floor Area Ratio Maximum
- Conforming with Floor Area Ratio Maximum



Figure 7: Map of Height Conformity

- Nonconforming with Height Maximum
- Conforming with Height Maximum

Only 8% of parcels in the study area have a building height measured in feet that is higher than the maximum height regulations.

This means that most buildings are at the maximum building height allowed by zoning in the residential and/or neighborhood business subdistrict where they are located, which is typically a maximum of 35 feet. This aligns with the current built form of the area where most commercial or mixed-use buildings are under 3 stories/35 feet and residential buildings vary between 1 story and 3 stories in height.

It is important to note that other zoning regulations often restrict property owners from building up to the maximum height limit, like the restriction on floor area ratio. This may be caused by a building maximizing its FAR limit due to its width, which means it cannot include additional floors or height without going over that limit. For example, this residential building in a 2F-5000 residential zoning district (Two Family Residential) at 157 Poplar St has a conforming height below the 35 ft height limit but it has a floor area ratio that is higher than the 0.5 ratio limit in this part of Roslindale Square (Figure 8).



Figure 8: 157 Poplar St (Example of conforming height and nonconforming floor area ratio)



Figure 9: Map of Land Use Conformity

- Nonconforming with Land Use Regulations
- Conforming with Land Use Regulations

16% of parcels contain land use activities that are forbidden within their current zoning districts.

The most common nonconforming land use activities are three family residential buildings and multifamily buildings (four or more units). These nonconformities were mostly located within the 2F-5000 residential zoning district. This indicates that the zoning does not allow or affirm a common trend of residential density (three or more units) in areas that are currently restricted to 1 or 2-unit homes. That means those property owners of homes with nonconforming land uses need to seek zoning relief for future improvements or additions due to that existing nonconformity and misalignment of zoning regulations with existing buildings.

Notes: The terms used for specific land use activities within Property Assessment data are similar but not exact matches to the terms used within the Boston Zoning Code. For this analysis, the land uses were approximated based on how closely the activities listed within Property Assessment data aligned with a representative land use in the Zoning Code.

ZONING BOARD OF APPEAL

BUILDING PERMITS

Approved Permits

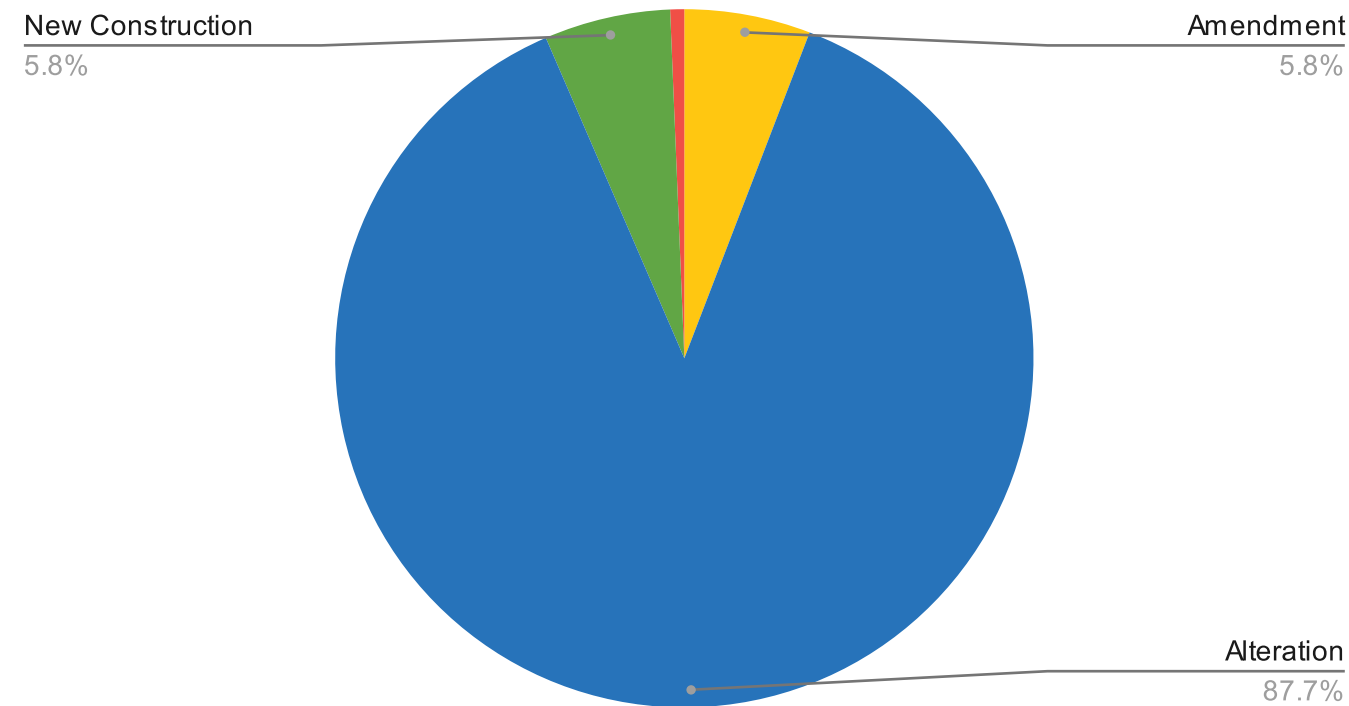


Figure 10. Approved Building Permits

Between January 2013 and December 2022, **154 projects in the Roslindale Square study area received zoning approval without the need for zoning relief.** This means that these projects proposed developments or alterations that adhere to the existing zoning regulations.

The majority of these projects were alterations (87.7%) (Figure 10). These alteration projects include interior renovations, the installation of commercial signage, changing a zoning use with no renovation, and small building additions.

There were **only 9** new constructions approved without zoning relief in the study area over the 10-year period. Another 22 new construction projects were approved or approved with provisos through the ZBA process.

Note: This analysis is based on both Zoning Board of Appeal data and building permit tracker data, which does not have accurate data for every single parcel or project proposed within this time period. Therefore, this analysis is an approximation based on available data. Additionally, Zoning is just one part of the approval process – this does not reflect what was ultimately approved or built and the end of the development review processes.

Sources: Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) Tracker and Inspectional Services Department Data, City of Boston.

ZONING BOARD OF APPEAL (ZBA) PROJECTS

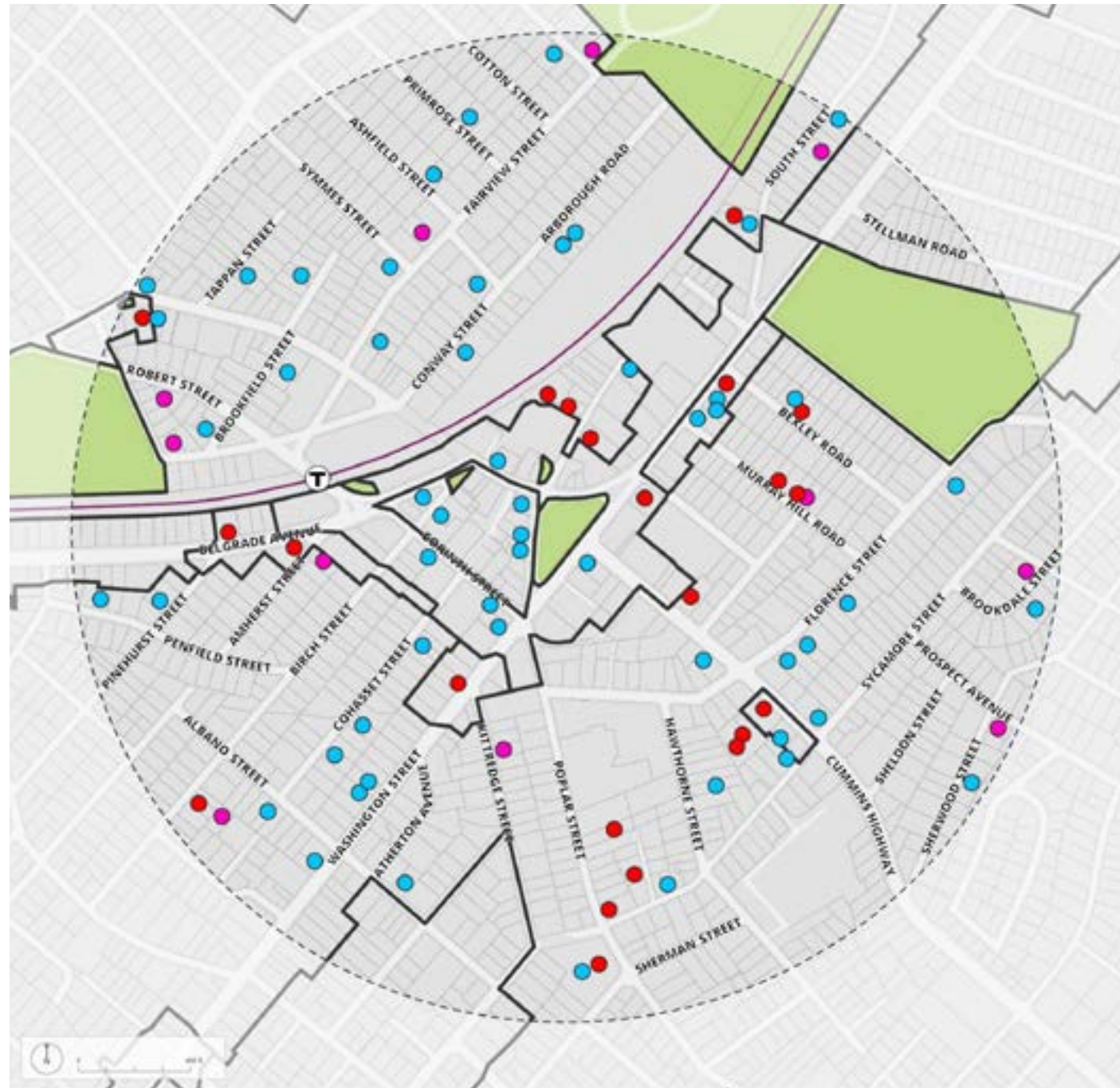


Figure 11. Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) Projects in Roslindale Square from 2013 to 2022

- Alteration
- New Construction
- Use of Premises

Between January 2013 and December 2022, 98 projects went through the ZBA process within the Roslindale Square study area to seek zoning relief.

NOTE: The following summarizes the 98 projects which occurred in Roslindale Square over the 10-year time frame. Because this is a small geographic area, the sample size is small, and therefore generalizations based on this data should be limited.

ZBA DECISIONS

ZBA Decisions

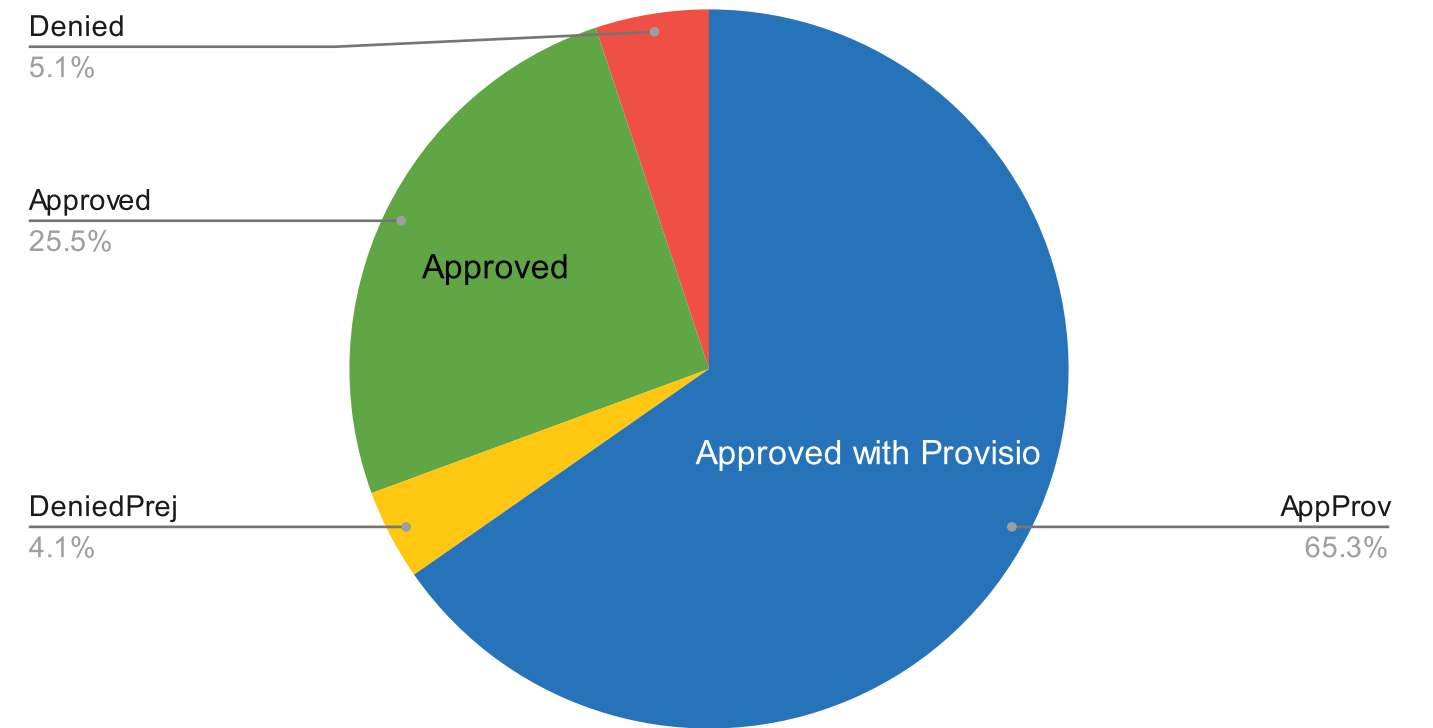


Figure 12. Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) Decisions for All Projects in Roslindale Square from 2013 to 2022

Of the 98 projects that went through the ZBA process, most were approved with proviso (Figure 12).

NOTE: 12 out of the 64 (19%) projects which were approved with provisos were closed without receiving final zoning approval.

ZBA PROJECT TYPES

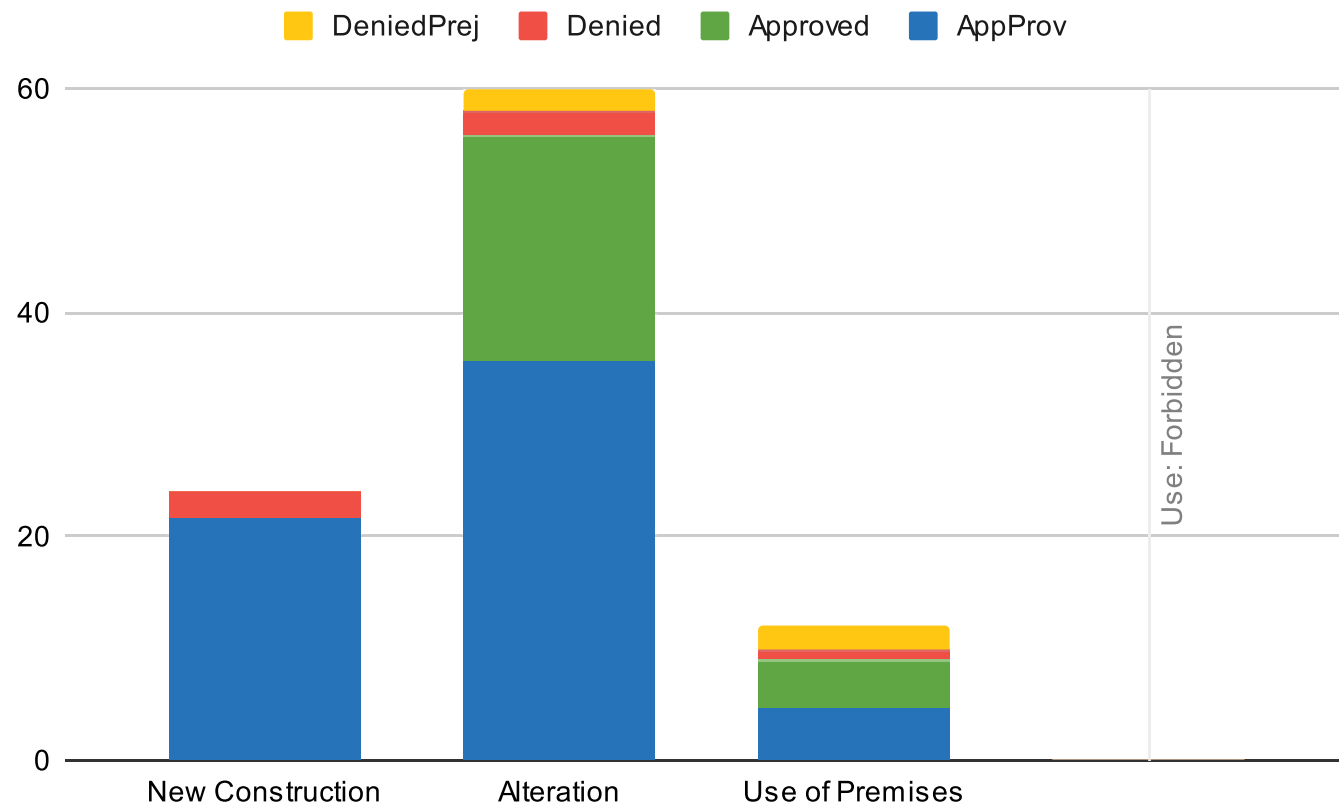


Figure 13. Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) Projects from 2013 to 2022 by Type

In neighborhood business districts alone and across all zoning districts, **most proposed ZBAs were for alterations** (Figure 13). Alterations were also more likely to be approved without provisos, with **no new constructions approved without provisos during the ten year period.**

This demonstrates that **many building owners have to go through the ZBA process for more simple renovations** and that **all new developments in this period required some form of condition or review requirement** placed on it by the ZBA during the appeal process.

COMMON ZONING VIOLATIONS

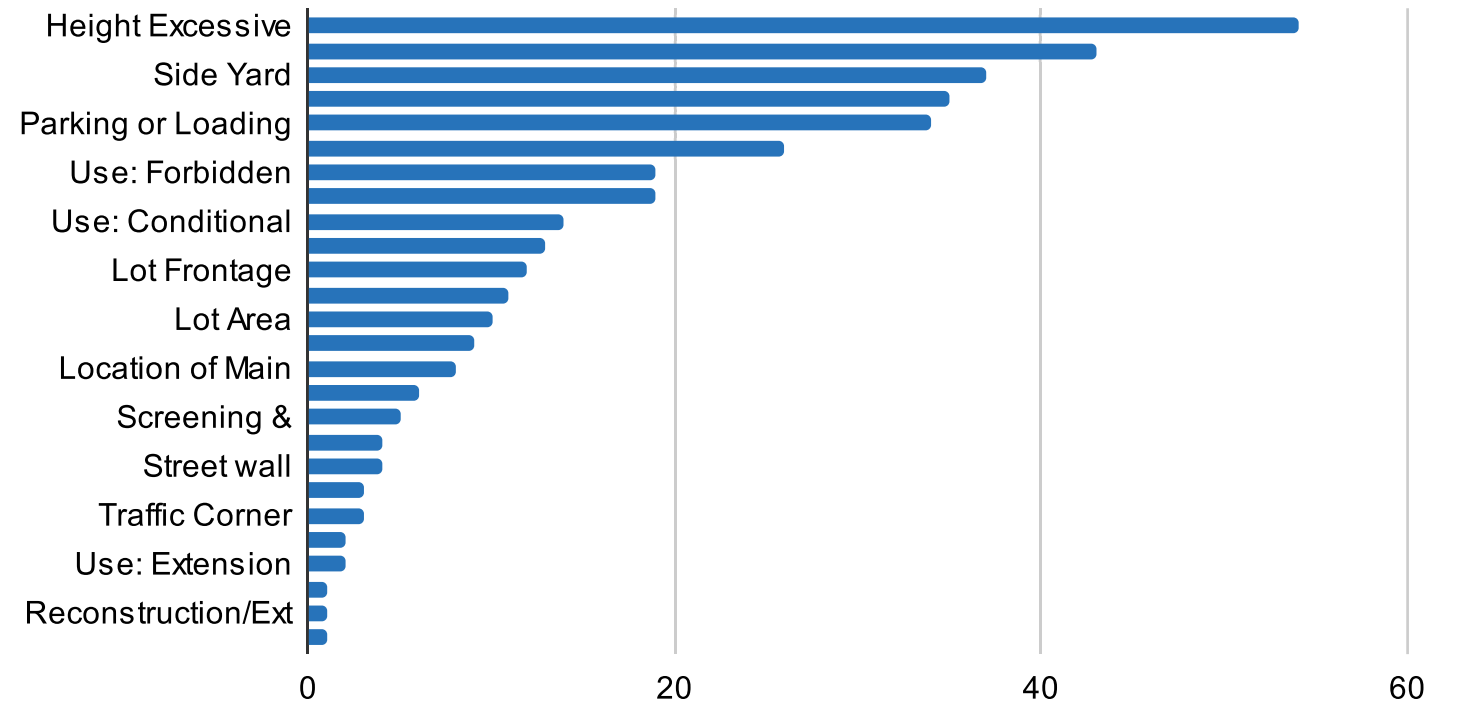


Figure 14. Zoning Violations across All Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) Projects from 2013 to 2022

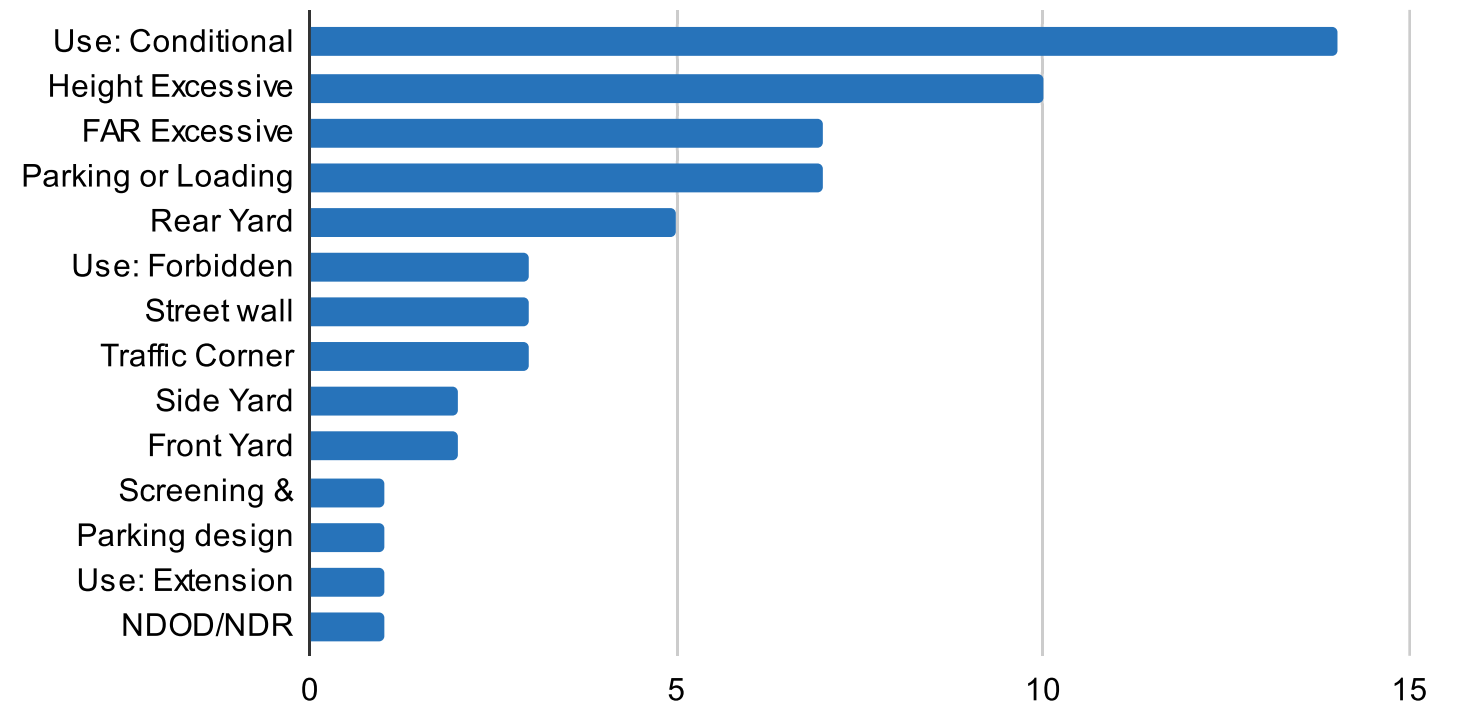


Figure 15. Zoning Violations across Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) Projects from 2013 to 2022 in Only Neighborhood Business Zoning Subdistrict

The most common violations overall were excessive height, **excessive FAR**, and **insufficient side yard** (Figure 14).

When looking only at the projects within the neighborhood business subdistricts, the most common violations were **conditional use**, **excessive height**, followed by **excessive FAR and insufficient parking or loading** (Figure 15).

Most projects had three (3) or fewer zoning violations (61%). This means that most projects that went to the ZBA complied with the majority of zoning regulations. Alteration projects were more likely to have a small number of violations; **85% of alteration projects had three (3) or fewer violations**, while 9% of new construction projects had three (3) or fewer violations.

ZONING RELIEF FOR CONDITIONAL AND FORBIDDEN LAND USES

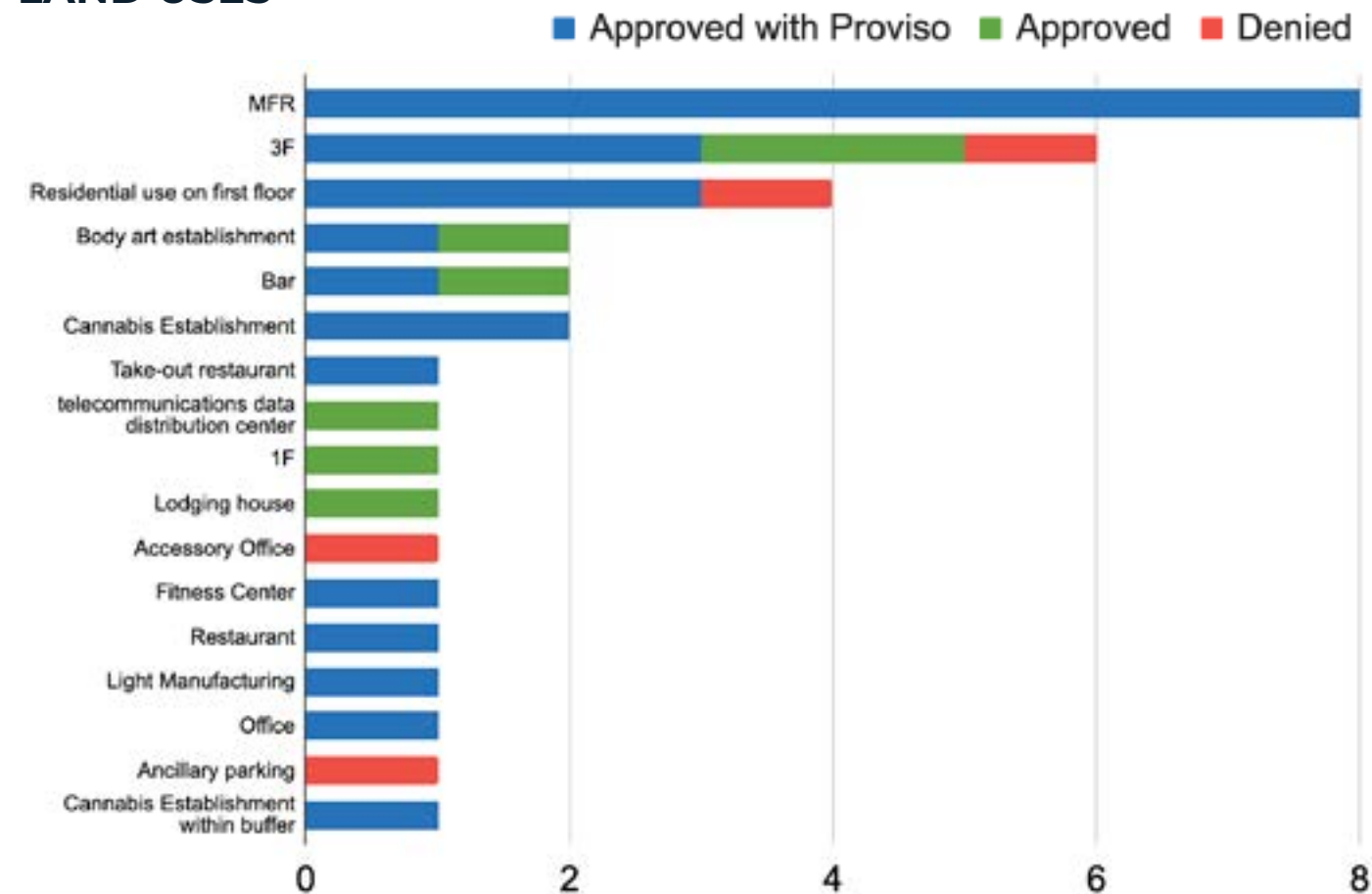


Figure 16. Use Violations across All ZBA Projects from 2013 to 2022

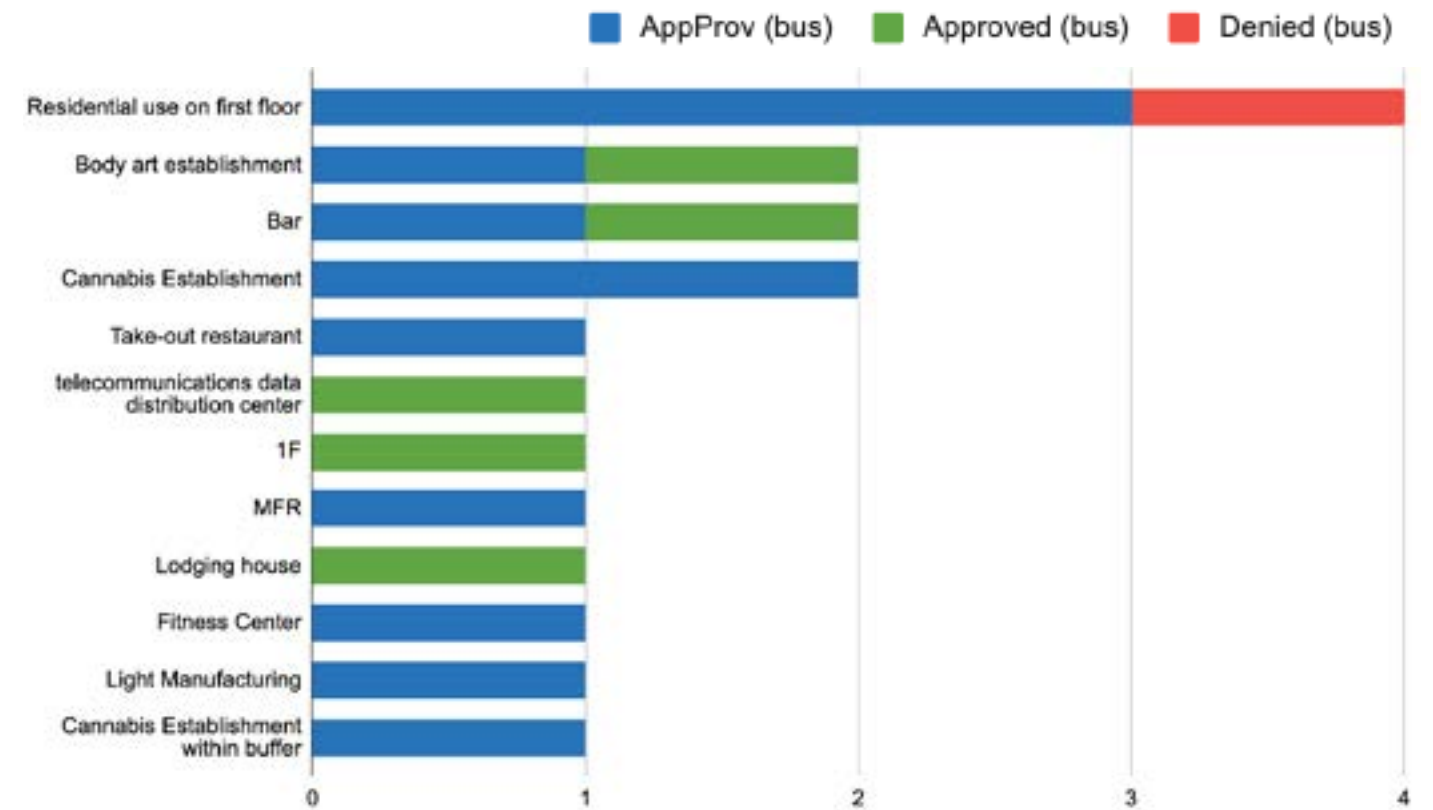


Figure 17. Use Violations across ZBA Projects from 2013 to 2022 in Only Neighborhood Business Zoning Subdistricts

Within the entire study area, projects which were flagged by ISD as conditional or non-conforming uses were **most likely to be multi-family residential projects (23% of use violations)** (Figure 16).

Looking at only the business districts, the most common uses to be flagged as conditional or non-conforming was **residential on the first story** (which is conditional in Roslindale Square’s business subdistricts) (Figure 17).

CASE STUDY – RESIDENTIAL OVER EXISTING COMMERCIAL

Figure 18. Wallpaper City in Roslindale Square

Wallpaper City (3 to 7 Poplar Street)

This project went to the ZBA in 2018 and was approved with a proviso for Planning Department Design Review. The project added two residential stories over an existing one story commercial building, resulting in 8 new units. It sits in a Neighborhood Shopping Subdistrict and required variances for excessive FAR, insufficient rear yard, and insufficient off-street parking.

CASE STUDY – RESIDENTIAL OVER EXISTING COMMERCIAL

Figure 19. Wallpaper City in Roslindale Square

The Substation (4228 Washington Street)

This project went to the ZBA in 2013 and was approved with a proviso for Planning Department Design Review. The project converted an existing, historic building (previously an electrical substation) to a co-working and restaurant space. It sits in an Community Commercial-1 Subdistrict and required variances for excessive height (due to the existing height of the historic structure) and insufficient off-street parking. The Substation returned to the ZBA 2019 in order to add a beer garden, which is a conditional use in the Roslindale CC Subdistricts.

CASE STUDY – REMOVING PROVISOS



Figure 20. Triple Eatery in Roslindale Square

Triple Eatery (77 Cummins Highway)

This project went to the ZBA in 2014 and was approved with various provisos (including Planning Department Design Review, use granted to this petitioner only, and various provisions related to the treatment of garbage and paper products). The project established a take-out restaurant in the location of a previous take-out restaurant. Because take-out is a conditional use in all of Roslindale’s commercial districts, the previous restaurant went to the ZBA in 2010. This approval included a proviso that the relief was granted to “this petitioner only.” Therefore, Triple Eatery was required to go to the ZBA in 2014 in order to remove this proviso. This was the only variance needed for this project.

ARTICLE 80

[Article 80 Development Review](#) is the City of Boston’s process for reviewing larger-scale development projects. The guidelines for this review process are outlined within [Article 80 \(Development Review and Approval\) of the Boston Zoning Code](#) and the review process is coordinated by the [BPDA’s Development Review Department](#).

The following section summarizes the analysis of Article 80 projects in Cleary Square that have gone through the Article 80 Development Review process between January 2014 and December 2023 (a ten-year period). This analysis highlights the status, zoning conditions, land use proposals, and amenities proposed by these projects to identify unique and common traits about Article 80 projects within Roslindale Square.

The following section summarizes the analysis of Article 80 projects in Cleary Square that have gone through the Article 80 Development Review process between **January 2014 and December 2023 (a ten-year period)**. This analysis highlights the status, zoning conditions, land use proposals, and amenities proposed by these projects to identify unique and common traits about Article 80 projects within Roslindale Square.

NOTE: *This analysis focuses on projects after they have received board approval to showcase existing and confirmed development projects that represent finalized projects that have gone through review processes with communities as well as design, zoning compliance, and environmental review processes.*

Since the sample size is small for this analysis, generalizations based on this data should be limited and summaries are based solely on what information is available for this set of projects.

PROJECT LOCATIONS + ZONING CONTEXTS



Figure 21. Article 80 Project Locations and Project Status

PROJECT STATUS

- Board Approved
- Construction Complete
- Permitted/Under Construction

These **four (4) Article 80 projects** received **BPDA Board approval within this ten-year period in the Roslindale Square study area**. Each introduces more multifamily housing in both residential and neighborhood business zoning subdistricts of the area. They vary in terms of their building scale as well as if they are solely residential or include non-residential land uses like community space or retail storefronts.

PROJECT PROFILES

These projects are in order of when they were approved for development by the BPDA Board from oldest to most recent. More information on the project land uses, dimensions, and specific zoning relief needs are in the BPDA Board memos on the project pages linked below

20 Taft Hill Park:

bostonplans.org/projects/development-projects/20-taft-hill-park

Status: Construction Complete – BPDA Board-approved in December 2015



11 Taft Hill Terrace:

bostonplans.org/projects/development-projects/11-taft-hill-terrace

Status: Construction Complete – BPDA Board-approved in September 2019



4198 Washington Street:

bostonplans.org/projects/development-projects/4198-washington-street

Status: Board Approved – approved by the BPDA Board in April 2023



59-63 Belgrade Avenue:

bostonplans.org/projects/development-projects/59-63-belgrade-avenue

Status: Board Approved – approved by the BPDA Board in June 2022



ZONING CONDITIONS AND ZONING RELIEF

Two of these four projects were proposed in neighborhood business zoning districts (CC-1 and NS) while the **other two projects** were proposed in the 2F-5000 residential zoning district. The way that these projects relate to and are regulated by these zoning districts impacts the final result of what is approved after the Article 80 Development Review process and Zoning Board of Appeal process.

All four projects were required to go through the ZBA process to appeal for zoning relief. Article 80 projects are still required to appeal for a variance or conditional use permit from the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) if the development project proposal includes a zoning violation or a use that requires a conditional use permit in the given zoning district. All four (4) projects were approved with provisos.

ARTICLE 80 ZBA PROJECT TYPES

All four projects were new construction projects. For the two projects in neighborhood business zoning districts – **4198 Washington St** and **59-63 Belgrade Ave** – will be constructed on the site of former commercial properties, a retail storefront and a funeral home. 4198 Washington Street will include retail space in the new construction and 59-63 Belgrade Avenue will serve entirely as a multifamily dwelling.

The other two projects that are in residential zoning districts – **20 Taft Hill Park** and **11 Taft Hill Ter** – were constructed on the site of former smaller scale multifamily dwellings, thus retaining the land use and increasing the number of housing units.

COMMON LAND USE VIOLATIONS

There were **three projects** that required relief for Multifamily Residential (MFR) as a land use – **20 Taft Hill Park**, **11 Taft Hill Ter** and **59-63 Belgrade Ave**. The first two projects were located in the 2F-5000 zoning district which was originally created to promote a Two-Family Residential land use trend, thus requiring Multifamily Residential (MFR) to be a forbidden use. 59-63 Belgrade Avenue is located in the NS zoning district which was created to encourage ground floor commercial activity and makes residential land uses conditional on the ground floor.

COMMON DIMENSIONAL REGULATION VIOLATIONS

The most common violations across these projects were related to dimensional standards: **excessive FAR, excessive height (in stories and feet), insufficient side yard, and insufficient rear yard**. As multifamily dwelling projects, these projects represent a typology of scale that is possible when trying to produce more multifamily housing under the existing zoning regulations.

OFF-STREET PARKING VIOLATIONS

Three (3) of these projects propose off-street residential parking spaces and **two (2) of these projects** propose bike parking spaces. In many instances, the Planning Department would ask the proponent's of these projects to reduce the number of parking spaces being proposed.

The Planning Department's requests for reduction during the review period are usually in alignment with a variety of citywide priorities: climate goals to reduce dependency on private vehicles and related emissions, standards set by the Boston Transportation Department around maximum parking ratios based on an area's strength of mobility options and site analysis by the Planning Department's transportation planners with attention to proximity to an MBTA station.

Three of the projects had off-street parking and/or loading violations – **20 Taft Hill Park**, **4198 Washington St**, and **59-63 Belgrade Ave**. Only the projects in the neighborhood business zoning districts had insufficient off-street loading. These zoning restrictions on off-street parking conflict with the goals of the Roslindale Neighborhood Strategic Plan in regards to promoting transit-oriented development by way of higher densities and lower parking ratios in Roslindale Square within distance of the Roslindale Village MBTA commuter rail station – of which all these projects are in walking distance.

PROJECT PROGRAM AND AMENITY TRENDS

All four (4) projects are multifamily residential projects with **16 or more residential units** that total **97 residential units** in the area. All of these projects also include income-restricted units affordable to households between 70% and 100% AMI, including units required through the Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP). These projects have **27 units in total of income-restricted housing**, about **28%** of the total number of proposed units.

Only one (1) project, 4198 Washington Street, has a ground-floor commercial space proposed and is within an existing CC-1 subdistrict. Since only two projects were proposed within neighborhood business subdistricts and only one proposed ground-floor commercial activity does indicate a potential trend towards developers not proposing projects or land uses within projects that are supportive of the goals in strengthening this commercial activity of this district.

As seen in the **various project length periods**, it is difficult to establish a trend for project length with this sample because each project varies in their zoning, permitting and construction needs that can result in faster or slower approvals and overall development.

Sources: BPDA Development Projects and Plans Database, BPDA Board Memos, Article 80 Records Library, and Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) Tracker, City of Boston.

STAY INVOLVED – HOW TO THINK ABOUT ZONING IN YOUR AREA!

As stated, this report is meant to help **start** conversations around zoning in your area and how updates to zoning can work well with other policies and programs to meet your communities needs! Thinking about zoning when you're going through your day doesn't require all of this data though, and we encourage you to take some of these steps to think about and talk about zoning and development in your area:

Look at the *WHOLE* building!



If there's a building that you think is interesting, take some time to think about all parts of it. How much of the lot does it cover and how does it compare to other nearby buildings? How big does the lot that it's on look and is there space to gather on the lot? What kind of activities are happening in the building and how active is it with people going in and out?

When you can look at a building for more than just one dimension like height or front yard space, you can think more about the type of building forms and uses that you would want to see in your area – this ultimately relates back to what zoning regulations like land uses and dimensional regulations can impact.

Take a second look at where you go the most in the area and WHY!



Do you spend a lot of time at nearby stores or near your house? Are there spaces for you to meet up with people during different seasons? Who do you see often in the area in some of the local businesses and who do you not see? What about the look, feel and resources around you makes that area one that you visit often?

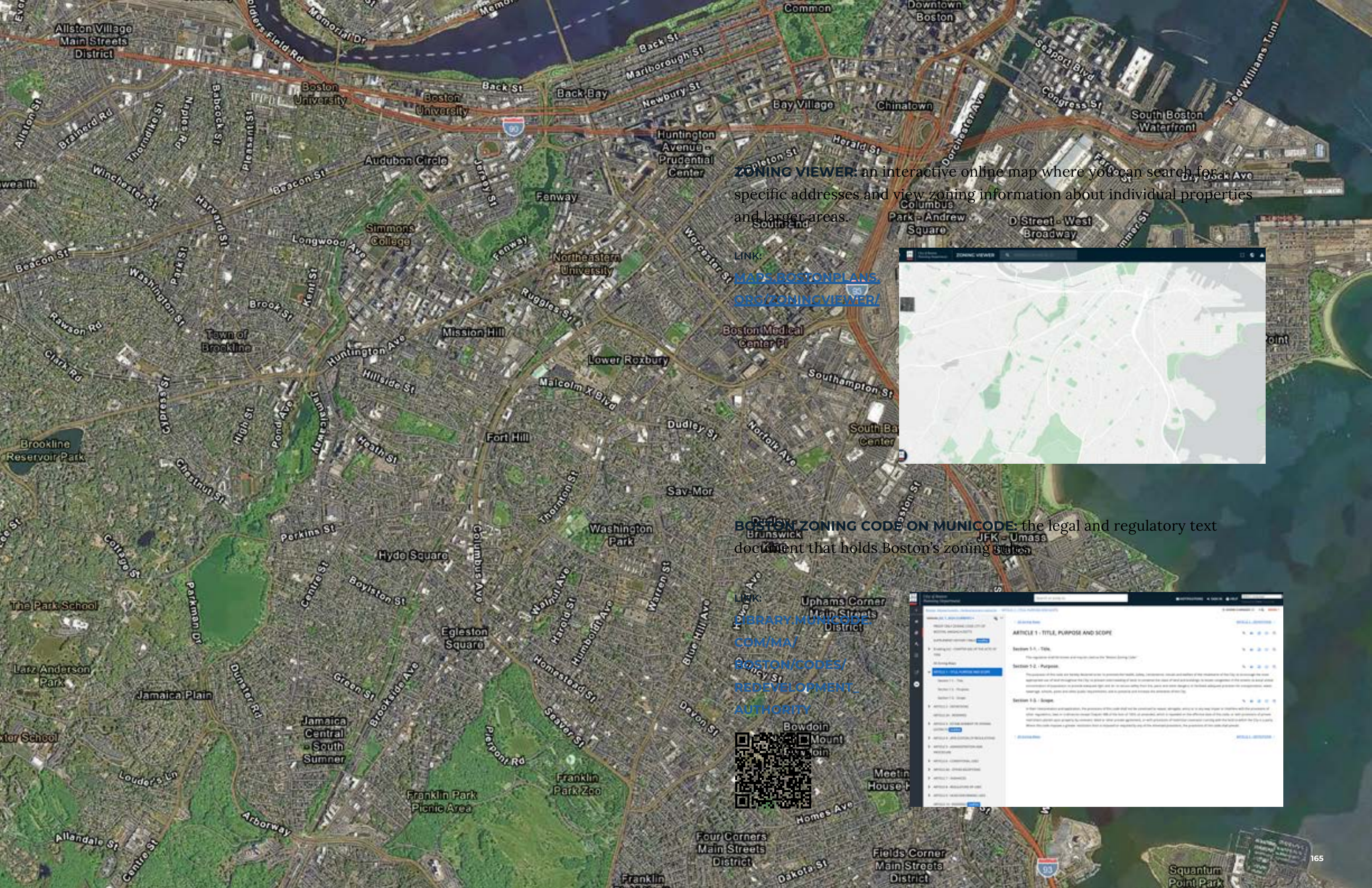
All of these questions and ones like them can get you and your neighbors thinking about what you want to uplift in the neighborhood and what feels missing for you or other members of your community.

Think *BACK* and think *AHEAD*!



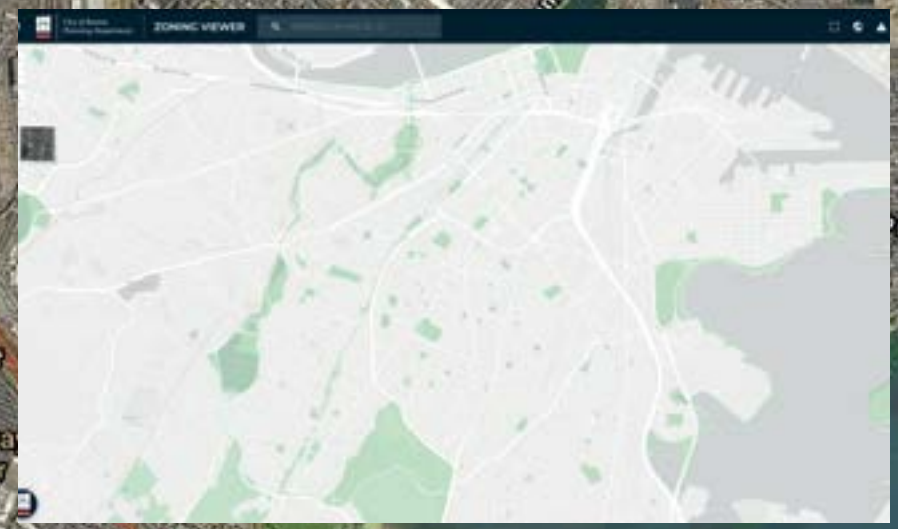
Whether you are a newer resident or have been in the area for years, think about places you have lived and visited in the past and try to name what it seemed like some priorities were for the way those areas were built and felt for those residents at the time. Did you have a role in helping set those priorities?

Think about where you live now and imagine a generation ahead of you. What priorities would you set today for what the neighborhood includes and how it feels that you'd hope are fulfilled realities for the next generation of residents? When you can imagine past and future priorities, then you can think about zoning as a living document that adjusts to the needs and vision of people in the present while setting up building blocks for visions of the future.



ZONING VIEWER: an interactive online map where you can search for specific addresses and view zoning information about individual properties and larger areas.

LINK:
MAPS.BOSTONPLANS.ORG/ZONINGVIEWER/



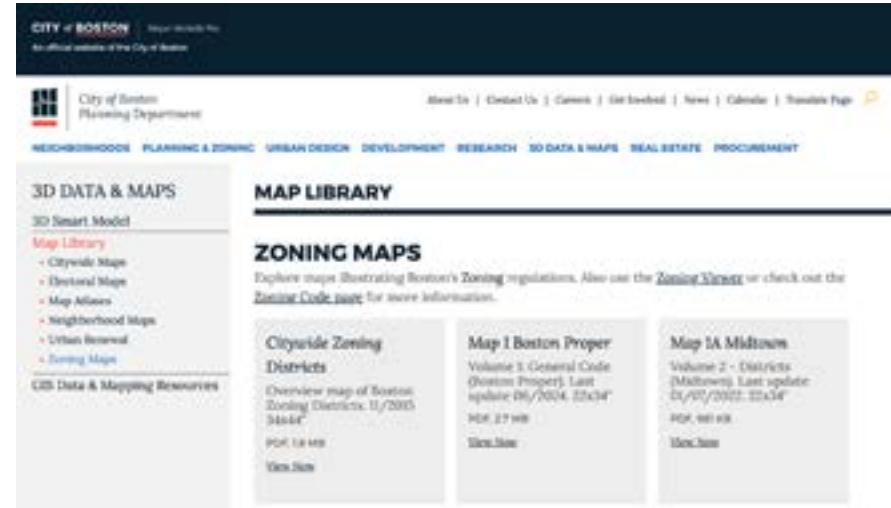
BOSTON ZONING CODE ON MUNICODE: the legal and regulatory text document that holds Boston's zoning rules.

LINK:
LIBRARY.MUNICODE.COM/MA/BOSTON/CODES/REDEVELOPMENT_AUTHORITY

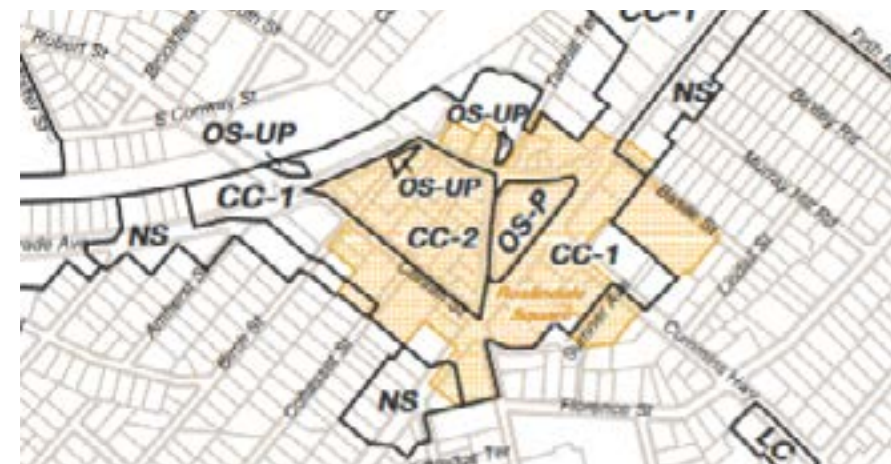
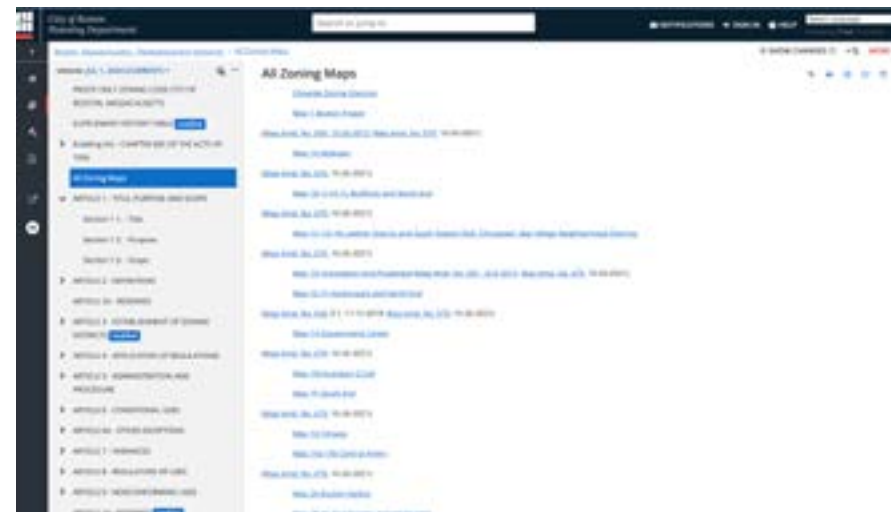


BOSTON ZONING MAPS: visual formal maps (PDFs) of zoning districts as they currently are mapped across the City.

LINK:
[BOSTONPLANS.ORG/3D-DATA-MAPS/MAP-LIBRARY/ZONING-MAPS](https://bostonplans.org/3d-data-maps/map-library/zoning-maps)



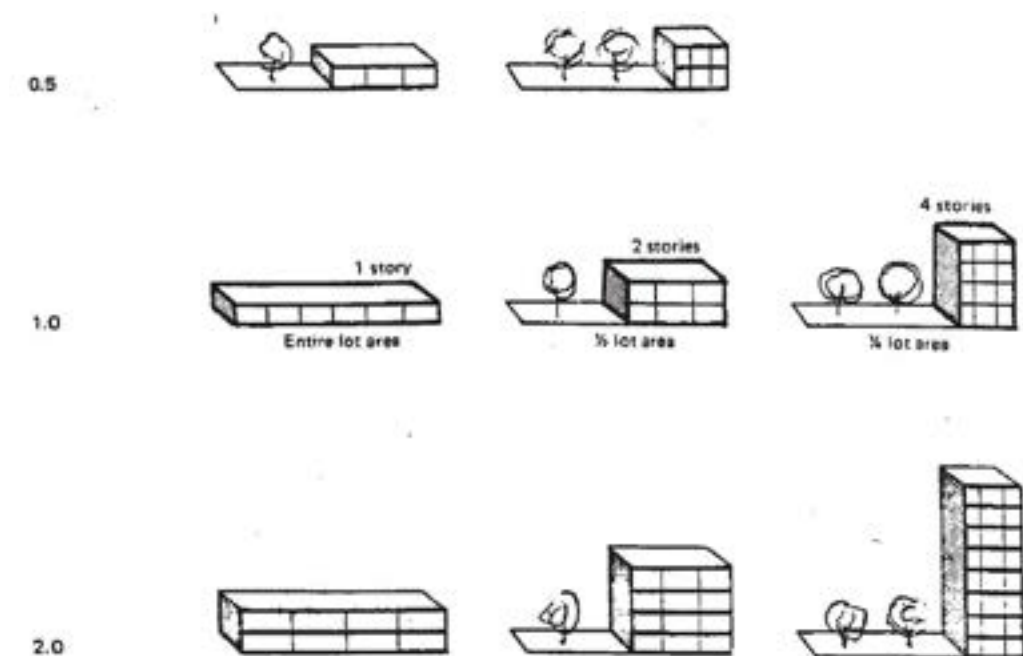
LINK:
[LIBRARY.MUNICODE.COM/MA/BOSTON/CODES/REDEVELOPMENT-AUTHORITY?NODEID=ALL_ZONING_MAPS](https://library.municode.com/ma/boston/codes/redevelopment-authority?nodeid=all_zoning_maps)



GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Many of these terms will come up throughout this report. You can always refer back to this section for a reminder. There are some concepts specific to certain development projects or administrative processes that are also explained in “Learn More” pop-up boxes throughout the document.

- **AMI OR AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI):** the midpoint of a specific area's income distribution. The AMI applicable to Boston is calculated on an annual basis by the Boston Redevelopment Authority using data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). AMI, or a percentage thereof, is used to determine the maximum income that a given household size may receive before becoming ineligible for an Inclusionary Development Unit.
- **ARTICLE 80 DEVELOPMENT REVIEW:** the City of Boston's process for reviewing larger-scale development projects. The guidelines for this review process are outlined within [Article 80 \(Development Review and Approval\) of the Boston Zoning Code](#) and the review process is coordinated by the [Planning Department's Development Review Division](#).
- **FAR OR FLOOR AREA RATIO:** the ratio between a building's **gross floor area** and the size of the lot it sits on. For example, a building with a gross floor area of 4,000 sq ft which sits on a lot of 2,000 sq ft has a FAR of 2 (4,000/2,000). The diagram below shows examples of buildings with FARs of 0.5, 1, and 2.



- **GROSS FLOOR AREA:** the floor area of a building excluding some non-occupiable areas, such as at-grade parking garages or areas used for mechanical equipment and storage.
- **USE OF PREMISES:** A use of premises permit is required in order to add certain outdoor features to land, such as new parking areas.
- **ZBA OR ZONING BOARD OF APPEAL:** is a quasi-judicial body of seven members who are appointed by the Mayor. The ZBA hears requests for conditional use permits, variances, and similar zoning relief.
- **ZONING RELIEF:** Any zoning variance, exception, conditional use permit, interim planning permit, zoning map or text change, PDA Development Plan or PDA Master Plan approval, Institutional Master Plan approval, or any other relief granted by the Zoning Commission or the Zoning Board of Appeal. The most common type of Zoning Relief are conditional use permits and variances, which are granted by the Zoning Board of Appeal.
 - » A **conditional use permit** is required for uses that are considered by the Zoning Code to need some extra review. The conditions for receiving a conditional use permit can be found in Article 6 (Conditional Uses) of the Zoning Code, and include that it is placed in an appropriate location and does not cause any nuisance.
 - » A **variance** is required for projects that do not comply with some zoning regulation, such as dimensional requirements (including height or minimum yards), minimum parking spaces, or because the proposed use is forbidden. The conditions for receiving variance can be found in Article 7 (Variances) of the Zoning Code, and include that the variance is necessary for the landowner to make reasonable use of the land or structure.
 - » Although conditional use permits and variances have different requirements, they are both granted by the ZBA and usually take similar amounts of time to receive.

- **ZBA DECISIONS:**

- » **Denied vs Denied without prejudice :** When the ZBA denies a project, the applicant does not receive zoning relief and they cannot file an application for the same project for one year. When the ZBA denies a project without prejudice, it still means that the applicant does not receive the zoning relief, but the applicant does not have to wait a year to be able to file another application for the same project.
- » **Approved with proviso:** A “**proviso**” is a condition placed on a legal agreement. When a project is “approved with proviso” by the ZBA, it means that the project can be built IF it meets some condition placed by the ZBA. The most common proviso used by the ZBA is “Planning Department Design Review,” which means that the project’s design must be reviewed and approved by Urban Design staff in the Planning Department before it can be built.

An aerial photograph of a park. In the foreground, there is a baseball field with a dirt infield and a green grass outfield. To the right of the baseball field is a large green soccer field with white yard lines. In the background, there are several multi-story residential buildings, trees, and a parking lot with a few cars. A tall stadium light pole is visible in the lower center of the image.

VIII.
**PUBLIC PARK FUNDING
OPPORTUNITIES**

<u>ARTICLE 80 DEVELOPMENT</u>
Parks improvements through mitigation and/or community benefits
<u>MAYOR'S OFFICE OF HOUSING- GRASSROOTS FUNDING</u>
Supports the development of community gardens, urban farms, and other open space.
<u>EDWARD INGERSOLL BROWNE FUND</u>
Supports public art, landscape improvements, and beautification projects throughout Boston.
<u>SOLOMON FOUNDATION</u>
<p>Champions the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’s public green spaces and their unique contribution to the quality of urban life. Our mission is to provide a complete and connected network of beautiful parks and greenways connecting people to open spaces. We focus our technical assistance and grant making within the Greater Boston region – generally the area bounded by Interstate 128. Within this region we direct our technical assistance and grant making to three categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary design studies of specific projects that help policy makers understand the benefits and costs of specific initiatives. • General operating support for a limited number of organizations that provide regional leadership around greenway planning and design. • Public engagement strategies (pilots, activations, surveys, external assessments, civic gatherings) intended to introduce people to a greenway, to animate public spaces and discourse, and test feasibility.

<u>COMMONWEALTH PLACES/PATRONICITY</u>
Commonwealth Places, a collaborative initiative from MassDevelopment and Patronicity, is a crowd-granting challenge program to activate new or distressed public places and community spaces. The program is open to municipalities and nonprofits to improve low- and moderate-income communities in Massachusetts.
<u>NEW ENGLAND GRASSROOTS ENVIRONMENT FUND (NEGEF)</u>
Geared towards groups who have some experience implementing a project in their community. Grow grants support groups to deepen their work by further developing a community vision, lowering barriers to participation, identifying new stakeholders and working to bring more voices and lived experiences into core decision-making processes.
<u>NELLIE LEAMAN TAFT FOUNDATION</u>
The Foundation remains committed to Ms. Nellie Taft’s interest in the arts and the environment. In recent years, the board members have updated the focus of the Foundation and made some changes to its geographic priorities. Grants currently range from \$5,000 to \$15,000. The majority of grants will be awarded in the Cincinnati area with some competitive grants made in Boston, Mid-Coast Maine and Orange County, California.
<u>GEORGE B. HENDERSON FOUNDATION</u>
Devoted to the enhancement of the physical appearance of the City of Boston and immensely contributes to preserving local culture and historic values.
<u>COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT</u>
Use funds to support historic preservation, affordable housing, open space, and recreation.

SQUARES + STREETS

