

A New Housing Partnership: Boston and Its Institutions



Davenport Commons. Northeastern University



THOMAS M. MENINO, *MAYOR*
CITY OF BOSTON

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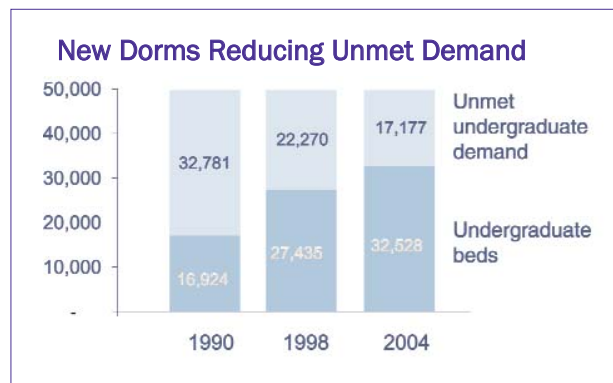
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Boston's colleges, universities, and hospitals play an essential role both in the city's intellectual and cultural life and in Boston's economy. Nearly 74,000 people are employed in Boston's hospitals and another 38,000 in the city's colleges and universities. Together, these two sectors account for nearly one of every five jobs in Boston. Young adults, attracted to our internationally renowned educational institutions, make Boston a vibrant and exciting place to live. Many students remain after graduation, assuring Boston's businesses a young and well-educated workforce.

Students have additional impacts, however, on Boston's families and neighborhoods. Off-campus student apartments occupy housing that could otherwise be used by neighborhood families. By doubling and tripling up in these apartments, students can pay higher rents than working-class Bostonians. This artificial inflation of housing prices impacts the city's institutions as well. Schools report trouble attracting faculty and staff, and new medical personnel are sometimes unwilling to work in Boston, despite the city's prestigious hospitals.

Clearly, Boston's institutions play a major role in the housing market, just as they do in the city's cultural life and economic vitality. Because of their permanence and historic ties with Boston, the institutions and City must work together to address common housing concerns.

Housing is one of Mayor Thomas M. Menino's chief priorities. Making more housing available to Boston's families and workforce is a primary objective of the upcoming housing strategy - *Leading the Way II*. While this plan will not establish housing production targets for Boston's institu-



tions, it will call on them to partner with the City and help develop innovative ways to house the students, faculty, and staff that these institutions bring to Boston. Implementing Boston's housing strategy will significantly add to the city's housing stock across a wide range of prices. *Leading the Way II* will call for maintaining the pace of new construction at 2,500 units per year and will focus on affordable housing production and preservation.

Higher Education and Housing

Enrollment in Boston's colleges and universities has remained relatively steady since 1993. According to the New England Board of Higher Education, there were 136,536 students enrolled in Boston's colleges and univer-

sities in 2002. This includes graduate, part-time, continuing education, and students enrolled in graduate programs in schools whose main campuses are outside Boston. This total enrollment figure of college students in Boston is up from 127,411 students in 1990, but down slightly from a recent high of 137,418 in 1995.

Boston's colleges and universities have been instrumental in creating dormitory beds for the city's large undergraduate population, and the City expects that this trend will continue. On average, more than 1,000 beds have been added annually since 1990. In 1998, a Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)

survey of dormitory units revealed that Boston's colleges and universities added 10,511 dorm beds between 1990 and 1998, freeing an estimated 2,600 housing units for use by permanent residents and families. (See BRA Insight Report 00-2: *Dormitory Bed Increases Welcome in Hot Housing Market.*)



Boston University graduate student housing
580 Commonwealth Avenue
photo credit: Boston University

Since that time, another 5,093 dormitory beds have opened to Boston's undergraduate students and 720 beds for graduate students (including beds that will be available for the 2004-2005 school year.) The total of 16,324 new beds since 1990 is the equivalent to the construction of nearly 4,100 new housing units. The recent additions mean that Boston's colleges and universities now accommodate 33,475 students with on-campus housing. At this writing, an additional 360 beds are under construction. This is occurring while enrollment remains relatively stable, meaning that the new beds are pulling students out of the neighborhood housing stock.

New Production is Reducing Unmet Demand

The pipeline for new dorms, including dormitories in the planning stage, contains approximately 2,500 beds. Despite that large number, more beds will be needed even after these beds are built. The BRA estimates that the unmet undergraduate demand for dormitory beds could be as high as 17,177 beds. Although this number is significant, representing 4,294 housing units in Boston's neighborhoods occupied by students, it is down from 21,795 just five years ago.

Table 2: Summary of Supply and Demand

	Lower limit of demand	Upper limit of demand
Schools with dorms (1999 survey)	34,333	46,423
Schools without dorms (2002 survey)	2,510	3,282
Total Demand	36,843	49,705
Less number of undergraduate beds	32,528	32,528
Unmet demand	4,315	17,177

The BRA arrived at these demand numbers by conducting two surveys of Boston's colleges and universities. The first, conducted in 1999, focused on quantifying the continued demand

Table 1. New Dormitories – Completed and Planned

DORMITORIES COMPLETED SINCE 1998 DORM REPORT (includes projects opening by Fall 2004)		
Dormitory	Institution	Beds
Undergraduate Dormitories		
St. Thomas More Dr.	Boston College	322
Student Village I	Boston University	817
575 Comm Ave	Boston University	201
St. Julie	Emmanuel College	225
Artist's Residence	Mass College of Art	310
White Building	Massachusetts College of Pharmacy	270
Davenport Commons	Northeastern University	610
West Village B&C	Northeastern University	470
West Village E	Northeastern University	290
780 Columbus Avenue	Northeastern University	117
West Village G&H	Northeastern University	530
Somerset St. dorm	Suffolk University	368
550 Huntington Avenue	Wentworth University	563
Total undergraduate beds added since 1998		5,093
Graduate Dormitories		
580 Commonwealth Ave.	Boston University	220
Graduate student housing	Harvard University	360
Executive Housing (graduate)	Harvard University	140
Total graduate beds added since 1998		720
Total beds added since 1998		5,813
DORMITORIES UNDER CONSTRUCTION		
Dormitory	Institution	Beds
Student Residence Hall	Wentworth University	360
Total added or under construction		6,173

at schools that already had dormitories on their campuses. The survey estimated that the total undergraduate demand for dormitory beds ranged from a low 34,333, based on those undergraduate students who requested housing but did not receive it, to a high of 46,423, based upon the number of undergraduates who would require housing, given the location of their permanent homes. (See BRA report #549: *Demand Exceeds Supply of Dorm Beds in Boston.*)

A second demand survey in 2002 examined schools without dormitories. As expected, the undergraduate demand for dormitory beds in these schools was lower, due to their characterization as commuter schools. However, the survey found that one in 12 full-time undergraduate students enrolled in schools without dormitories had a permanent address outside of Massachusetts. One in four came from outside the city. The total demand for dormitory space at these schools is between 2,510 and 3,282 beds. All of this demand is unmet, of course, since there are no dormitory beds at these schools. The total undergraduate demand in all schools ranges from 36,843 to 49,705 beds.

Assuming no significant demand change since the completion of the two surveys, the 32,528 undergraduate beds leave an unmet demand between 4,315 and 17,177 beds. Another 360 undergraduate beds under construction will relieve some of this unmet demand beginning in 2005. However, there is additional demand from graduate students, faculty and staff, and researchers. Increases in total enrollment or increasing the number of students from outside Massachusetts will also increase demand.

Tools for Future Partnership

In moving forward, we look to identify new opportunities for cooperation between the City and its institutions.

Institutional Master Plans (IMP) provide the most important existing opportunity for cooperation. IMPs are required of all institutions before they commence any expansion of their facilities. IMPs capture such issues as institutional demographics, land use, urban design, and transportation impacts. Employment generation and job training needs should also be captured in the IMP. The IMP process benefits the institutions and City alike in that it allows both parties to anticipate future requirements such as infrastructure, transportation, skills training, and housing. By working together, the City can take steps to maintain the community's services and quality of life while institutions can gain a measure of certainty that their long-term plans can be implemented.

Going forward, the BRA will be working with institutions to ensure that IMPs are updated every five years, as required in the Zoning Code. We will be using these updates to encourage institutions to analyze the effect future expansion will have on the housing market and to develop plans to mitigate these impacts. Graduate student housing will be examined as a way of reducing the number of students living in Boston's housing stock. The city's universities are increasingly involved in research and development activities and many schools are actively seeking federal and private grants. Graduate students are conducting much of this research, and institutions expanding their research capacity will most likely require an increase in this population.



Davenport Commons
Northeastern University
photo credit: Northeastern University

As part of its urban planning responsibilities, the BRA has also engaged institutions in certain of its neighborhood planning efforts. In the Longwood Medical and Academic Area (LMA), the BRA has developed Interim Guidelines in recognition of the area's importance to Boston's medical, academic, and research sectors. The BRA will continue to work with LMA institutions to ensure that housing is a key element in the area's future. Balancing residential and institutional growth within the LMA will help manage vehicular traffic in the area and provide much needed housing for LMA employees. In North Allston, the BRA has been working with Harvard University and the community on the growth of that neighborhood and a fusion of institutional, residential, and commercial uses. The BRA will continue to engage institutions in neighborhood planning efforts.

There is much yet to do. Working cooperatively, we can house Boston's students, its workforce, and its families while maintaining both the preeminence of our institutions and the quality of our neighborhoods. □