

Dudley Square



Boston's Dudley Square: Retail/Office Opportunity

Boston Main Streets

Boston, MA; 1998

Main Streets Seen as Avenue to Rebirth: Public-Private Partnership Will Lend Support to 4 Boston Neighborhoods

Mary Hurley; The Boston Globe

Boston, MA; 12-Sep-99

Mean Streets to Main Streets: Neighborhood Aid Program Attracts Attention

Jamal Watson; The Boston Globe

Boston, MA; 27-Jan-00

Plans Presented for Dudley Sq. Site

Mary Hurley; The Boston Globe

Boston, MA; 28-May-00

Building on Commerce: Existing Retail Seen as Foundation for New Housing

Richard Kindleberger; The Boston Globe

Boston, MA; 23-Jul-00

Dudley Square Business District

Dudley Square Main Streets

Dudley Square is a vibrant business district located in Boston's Roxbury Neighborhood. There are over 140 businesses in operation in the district. Based on the 1992 Economic Census, residents in the surrounding area spend over \$150 million annually in the district. Tropical foods, Woolworth, and the district's three full-service banks provide a steady flow of customers to Dudley Square each day. In addition, traffic counts show that 20,000 vehicles travel through the heart of Dudley Square daily. Add to this the district's accessibility by public transportation, and Dudley Square is a practical location for you to open your business. Substantial capital investment has occurred in Dudley Square over the past five years. As a result, the area has a new bus terminal, a new Post Office, the Reggie Lewis Athletic Facility, and the Orchard Park Community Center. Dudley Square was designated a Main Street District in May 1995. As such, Dudley

Square residents, businesses and organizations work to enhance the competitiveness and image of the district. Over a four-year period, the City provides Dudley Square with up to \$213,000 in matching dollars toward staffing needs, organizational development, and physical improvements.

Roxbury Center



Roxbury Center is a modernized eight-story retail/office complex located at 17 Warren Street. Rich with architectural detail, the building is considered a landmark in the Dudley Square area.

15,000 square feet
first floor retail space

Prime corner location along a major commuter corridor to downtown Boston

1.6 million in renovations currently underway

0 space parking lot

Asking rent: \$15.00
per square foot
triple
net



30,000 square feet
office space

10,000 square feet
first floor and mezzanine
retail space

Private parking available

Proposed food court on the ground floor

Boston's *Dudley Square*

Citywide Resources

A range of real estate financing and technical assistance services is available to qualified businesses. Resources can be used to assist your business in obtaining financing for property acquisition, construction, renovation, expansion, new equipment, and inventory costs. The following programs are available citywide:

SBA's Guarantee Loan Program

Flexible term/rate loans up to \$750,000

City of Boston Neighborhood Business Program

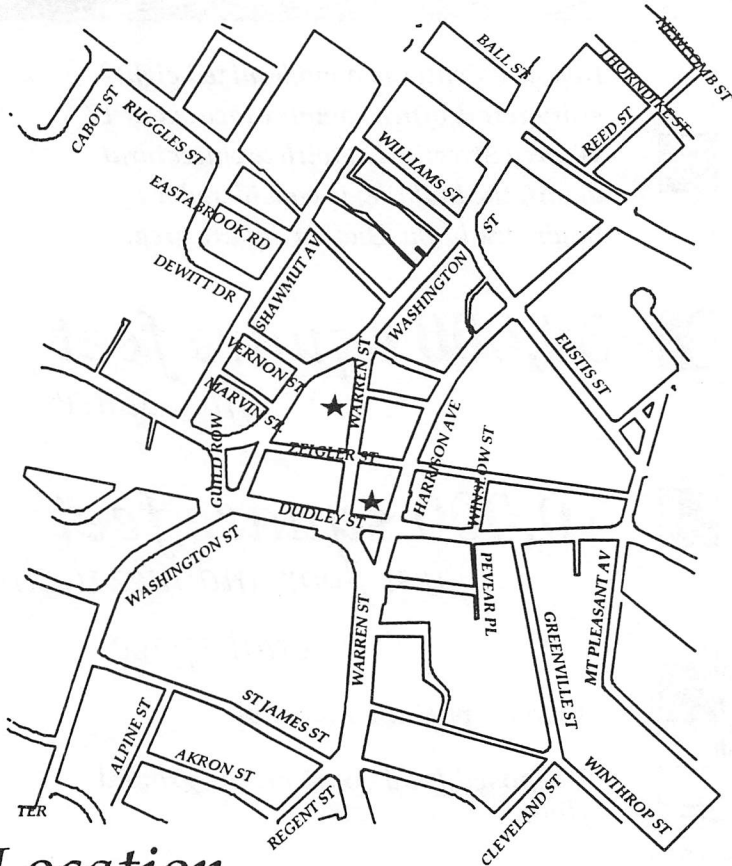
Gap Financing for commercial real estate development projects

City of Boston Technical Assistance Program

Small business technical assistance services from private sector experts.

City of Boston/SBA Microloan Fund

Microloans of up to \$25,000 for small and start-up businesses.



Location

A/GD

ARROWSTREET GRAPHIC DESIGN, SOMERVILLE MA 02144, 617.623.5555

Enhanced Enterprise Community

Dudley Square is located within Boston's Enhanced Enterprise Community, meaning additional private and public resources are available:

Section 108 Loans

Primarily real estate, fixed asset loans guaranteed by the city at market rates

Economic Development Initiative Fund

Used for loan reserves, interest rate subsidy, gap financing with section 108 loans.

Boston Local Development Corp.

Small business loans up to \$150,000

Financial Institutions Enterprise Lending Pool

Flexible underwritten bank loans for small businesses located in the EEC.

Financial Institutions Technical Assistance Pool

Expert technical assistance provided by private contractors to assist businesses in qualifying for and managing bank loans.

Massachusetts Development Finance Agency

Below market interest rates for real estate development projects in Boston's Enterprise Community.



Boston Main Streets

Thomas M. Menino Mayor of Boston
Public Facilities Department

Retail/Office

Boston's
Dudley Square

Opportunity

For Lease

10,000 square feet

Roxbury Center

For Lease

15,000 square feet

Palladio Hall

Boston Main Streets

Thomas M. Menino Mayor of Boston



Dudley Square Main Streets & th

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DISTRICT ADVANTAGES

Main Street designation
More than 140 businesses in operation
Access to Enhanced Enterprise Community resources
Proximity to the Crosstown Industrial Area

2

PARKING

Palladio Hall parking lot	20 spaces
On-Street Parking at site	8 spaces
2 Municipal parking lots	150 spaces

3

TRADE AREA POPULATION

57,000 residents in 20,280 households

4

TRADE AREA SPENDING POWER

\$27,256 average income
Estimated purchasing power of residents in the trade area: \$150 million annually

5

TRAFFIC COUNT (VEHICLES DAILY)

Dudley St. & Washington St. 20,000

6

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Dudley Station; the MBTA's busiest bus terminal in Boston with an estimated 30,000 passengers daily

7

RETAIL ANCHORS

Tropical Foods Market
3 full-service Banks
Woolworth

8

PUBLIC SAFETY

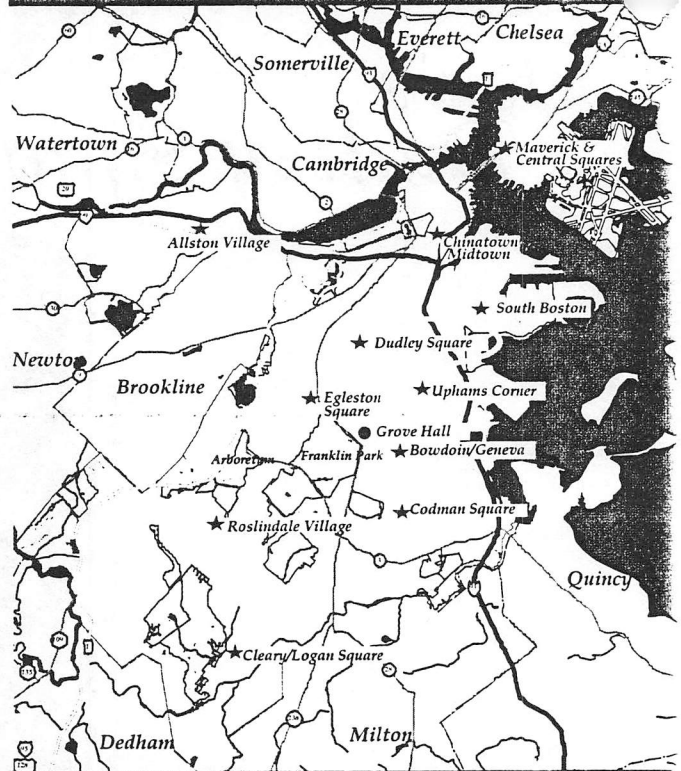
Dudley Area-B police station
Crime Watch organization in place

9

LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Roxbury District Courthouse
Registry of Motor Vehicles
Reggie Lewis Athletic Facility
U.S. Post Office Regional Facility
Roxbury Children's Services
Orchard Park Community Center

Location



Palladio Hall

Palladio Hall is a three-story, 15,000 sf Italian Renaissance style office/retail building located in Roxbury's Dudley Square business district. Located at the corner of Dudley and Warren Streets, Palladio Hall is highly visible. Nearby are two municipal parking lots, the Roxbury Courthouse, a new Post Office facility, and a Boston Public Library branch. Approximately \$1.6 million in improvements to Palladio Hall are currently underway. The developer, Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation is now leasing up to 5,000 sf of first floor space for retail use. Five local organizations have already expressed interest in occupying the available second- and third-floor office space.

MAIN STREETS SEEN AS AVENUE TO REBIRTH: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP WILL LEND SUPPORT TO 4 BOSTON NEIGHBORHOODS

From: *The Boston Globe*

Author: By Mary Hurley, Globe Correspondent

Date: 09/12/1999

Page: 1 Section: City Weekly

CITY WEEKLY

These four areas were once thriving neighborhood business districts where residents could walk to shops that sold everything from shoes to school supplies.

Three of the districts, Fields Corner, Four Corners, St. Mark's area, are in Dorchester; the fourth, Grove Hall, straddles the Dorchester/Roxbury line. For several years, activists in these local shopping districts have been hoping for a comeback. Now, they think they can see it. In an effort to revitalize these centers, each applied for -- and won -- designation from the city as a Main Streets district.

A public-private venture launched by the city in 1995, the Boston Main Streets program now consists of 19 such districts throughout Boston. Each neighborhood gets a full-time Main Streets program manager, a position viewed by Main Streets advocates in all four areas as critical to their success. The city pays up to 70 percent of the program manager's first-year salary, but only about 25 percent by the fourth year. Merchants can also apply to receive technical and financial assistance, such as matching grants for storefront improvement. Districts get promotional and technical assistance as well.

In this round, Main Streets focused on Dorchester's "main streets." For the first time, Dorchester Avenue, one of the city's major thoroughfares, is represented. On Washington Street, the Codman Square Main Street district will be joined by Four Corners. A stretch of Blue Hill Avenue is to be included in the Grove Hall district.

With the exception of the St. Mark's area, the new districts had all applied before. A bookstore and a coffee shop were high on everybody's wish list. So was the need to spruce up storefronts, create more parking, and help merchants market themselves not only to outsiders, but to local residents as well.

"Particularly in Dorchester, people are more likely to walk to the local convenience store," said Area C-11 Police Captain Robert Dunford, who would like to see all of Dorchester Avenue fixed up through Main Streets. "These small economic zones are important to stabilizing these neighborhoods."

The following are mini-profiles of the city's newest Main Street districts.

Four Corners

Standing at Washington and Erie streets in the Four Corners section of Dorchester, Marvin Martin points to a boarded up storefront in the dilapidated commercial block. The sign says Gray Fuel Company and, for a long time, Martin had erroneously assumed it was closed for business.

The storefronts here are that pitiful," said Martin, executive director of the Four Corners Action Coalition, a community organization that took a lead role in seeking a Main Streets designation here.

The fuel provider, however, is open. The owner of the building, Charles Thaice, who also owns Shorty's Variety there, said he can't afford the exterior renovation work.

"I need some help bad," said Thaice, who's looking to the Main Streets program for assistance -- financial and technical -- to clean up his block and attract tenants. Five of his eight commercial spaces here are vacant.

Four Corners needs all the help it can get, merchants say. On this blighted stretch of Washington Streets between Codman Square and Grove Hall, there is a residential-retail mix. The sidewalks are littered, with not a trash can in sight.

"You mention Four Corners, nobody wants to help you," said restaurant owner and resident Levi George, referring to lending institutions. "This neighborhood is a pocket that people forget."

George opened his small, sit-down restaurant, Levi's, four months ago with his own savings.

"I believe somebody had to start something," he said. "I can't do it myself. Other people have to join me."

A locus of street gangs and drug dealers in the late 1980s and early '90s, Four Corners is a neighborhood on the way back, Martin said. One telling sign: Residents now favor proposals to develop open space. Only a few years ago, he said, the typical reaction would have been: "Are you crazy? It will be a drug haven."

The Four Corners Action Coalition, formed in 1991 in response to a violent crime wave, helped organize the Four Corners Merchants' Association in 1995. That same year it also launched a comprehensive development plan as part of a revitalization effort. Since, several small neighborhood associations have been formed.

"People are talking to each other again," Martin said.

Homeowners are beautifying their properties and new housing units are also planned, which should compel merchants to respond to consumers and increase the district's customer base, he added.

Approximately 40 businesses are in the district. One problem has been high turnover and failure rates for the small start-up businesses that predominate here.

"There have been 15 failures since I came here in 1995," Martin said. "The ones we have now do seem to be stabilized."

Merchants and residents say the area needs a variety of businesses, including a hardware store and pharmacy, a bakery, grocery, coffee shop, and clothing store. There is no bank. The old First National Bank of Boston building, like many a commercial space on this street, is now a church. There is also a lack of office space. The coalition office is located in a church basement.

"I see this street as a gateway. We hope to get a lot of foot traffic, but also automobile traffic. The first thing is to make people even want to stop here," Martin said. "In just two years, I think this neighborhood is going to look completely different."

St. Mark's area

A well-defined neighborhood shopping district, it's not. This stretch of Dorchester Avenue is an unattractive strip of retail and industrial businesses that includes bars and sub shops, convenience stores and hair salons, auto repair shops and contractors. The St. Mark's area needs more than a face lift; it needs an identity, Main Streets advocates say.

"I want to put the St. Mark's area on the map," said Barbara Bean, president of the St. Mark's Area Civic Association. "I'm tired of this area being known as the place between Fields Corner and Ashmont."

The district, which extends from Melville Avenue to Mercier Avenue, may lack name recognition, but not organization. Led by a paid community organizer of St. Mark's Parish, Main Streets supporters made phone calls and knocked on doors, getting to know the merchants and talking up the program. The sheer number of people who showed up at the official presentation meeting in July staggered the Boston Main Streets selection committee.

"They walked in with 50 people. It was huge," recalled Boston Main Streets director Emily Huber. "It was very clear there was a tremendous amount of effort and organization behind this."

St. Mark's activists hope Main Streets will bring the area better signage, more attractive storefronts, and more businesses. On a walk along Dorchester Avenue, Bean and organizer Andrea Sheppard pointed to store signs that obscure original architectural details.

Nearly 80 percent of the commercial properties here are owned by out-of-towners; in the last decade, exterior renovations have been undertaken primarily by merchants who own their buildings. Some buildings already have attractive facades that could serve as models, such as Desmond's Pub and O'Brien's Market, a restored 115-year-old brick building and historic landmark in Peabody Square.

"It's surviving; it's not thriving," said Brian Falvey, president of the St. Mark's Area Merchants' Association, of this commercial strip. Trash barrel and street planter programs have already been launched by his three-year-old group. "The foundation is there."

Main Streets advocates hope to attract businesses such as a coffeehouse and bakery, a sit-down restaurant and a hardware store along with a community center and art gallery.

Fields Corner

Fields Corner is the largest business district in Dorchester, but it was turned down twice for a Main Streets designation because the neighborhood was viewed as too fragmented to support the program.

"We're the Susan Lucci of Main Street applicants," joked Jane Matheson, executive director of the Fields Corner Community Development Corporation, referring to the television actress nominated repeatedly for an Emmy before finally winning one.

Main Streets advocates here, bitterly disappointed by the rejections, contended the city's perception was not valid. The negative image, however, reinforced by the rundown look of Fields Corner's congested and littered commercial center, is shared by outsiders and even nearby residents. To change that will be one of the primary goals of the program. Indeed, the Main Streets designation is viewed here as a unifying force, one that will strengthen businesses and ties between merchants, provide a common base for the area's multiracial and cultural residents, and clean up the area so it will no longer be perceived as unsafe.

About half the area merchants are Vietnamese; the residential neighborhood near the district boasts a mix of cultures, races, and ages. The diversity is at once propitious and challenging.

"There are so many different things you can get here. In the last 10 to 15 years, there's been a lot of positive change," Matheson said. "How many people know that Fields Corner has a great fish market? That you can get great fresh produce here?"

The language barrier is not as much of an issue as the cultural differences, said Long Nguyen, executive director of the Vietnamese American Initiative for Development, or VietAID. As one example, Vietnamese businesses tend to open late, around 10 a.m. That has caused store-owners to miss merchant association meetings traditionally held early in

the morning. It also has led people to believe the stores are permanently closed. Few Vietnamese have been active in either merchant or civic association groups, but that is slowly changing, said Nguyen.

The immigrant population and its low voter turnout has also contributed to the area's lack of political power.

Said Matheson: "The area traditionally has been underserved by city departments in areas such as snow plowing and street cleaning."

The district boasts the advantages of a neighborhood shopping center, including a strip mall with anchor stores such as a Capitol supermarket and Bradlees. Nonprofit institutions such as Dorchester House and Kit Clark Senior Services also serve as customer bases. A greater variety of businesses, however, are needed here, Nguyen said.

Fields Corner has also been perceived as unsafe. As in many Boston neighborhoods, however, crime is down here and police have instituted a walking beat officer.

Minh Vu recalled visiting Fields Corner 14 years ago and leaving unimpressed. Vu now owns Thu's Market and is active on the Main Streets committee.

"Now I feel very comfortable. I see the future of Fields Corner improving, hopefully," he said. "I think Main Streets will help. People will change their minds about it."

Grove Hall

After decades of neglect, the Grove Hall commercial district is showing signs of rejuvenation. Several new businesses have opened, including a sit-down restaurant and laundromat. A number of existing businesses have renovated their storefronts through the city's RESTORE program. New sidewalks, street lights and traffic signals have been installed as part of the city's capital improvement program for Blue Hill Avenue between Grove Hall and Dudley Street.

The work, however, is far from finished.

"Main Streets is the continuation of an effort that has been going on since 1994," said Karen Sutherland of the Neighborhood Development Corporation of Grove Hall. "What this allows us to do is to take the vision the next step."

The initial effort was to rehabilitate a 1-mile stretch of Blue Hill Avenue, which included Grove Hall. Overseen by the Blue Hill Avenue Task Force and the City of Boston, it was financed largely through public investment. As a Main Streets district, more emphasis will be placed on private sector assistance. Securing the necessary funding will be one of the major challenges, said Sister Virginia Morrison of the NDC, the lead Main Streets sponsor.

One of the benefits of the Main Streets designation will be the opportunity to focus solely on the business district, said Sutherland, director of NDC's business resource and training center. The Blue Hill Avenue initiative targeted both residential and commercial areas along the strip.

Program advocates say the main priorities will be to fill vacant spaces, recruit specific businesses and educate merchants from diverse cultures about effective business strategies and available resources. Ideas to beautify the neighborhood range from flower display contests to new bus stops.

About 80 percent of Grove Hall's business customers are local; organizers hope to attract people from outside the city to shop there.

"We would like Blue Hill Avenue to be known as an international avenue, and to build on the cultural diversity," said Morrison.

Groundbreaking for the long-delayed \$10 million Grove Hall Retail Center, a 50,000-square-foot mall to be located in the commercial district, will be held Thursday at 11 a.m. Developed by the NDC with \$7.5 million in federal empowerment zone funds, the mall will house 10 businesses, including a supermarket as anchor tenant.

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MEAN STREETS TO MAIN STREETS: NEIGHBORHOOD AID PROGRAM ATTRACTS ATTENTION

From: *The Boston Globe*

Author: By Jamal E. Watson, Globe Staff

Date: 01/27/2000

Page: B1 Section: Metro/Region

When Charlie Rose and Kathie Mainzer decided to open a pizza parlor and bowling alley near Hyde and Jackson squares in Jamaica Plain, they met their share of doubters.

"We had people telling us that if we wanted to have a restaurant in this neighborhood, we would have to put bars on our windows," said Rose, co-owner of Bella Luna restaurant on Centre Street. "That was six years ago, and things were that bad... Today, things are much different."

Drugs, homicides, and thefts that once nearly devastated this working-class neighborhood have been replaced by boutiques and Salvadoran restaurants that cater to a burgeoning immigrant population.

The Hyde Square/Jackson Square district is one of 18 historic neighborhoods that are part of Boston's Main Streets program. City officials have been showcasing the regions for the past several years to mayors in US cities struggling to stave off decay and reduce crime in older neighborhoods.

Last week, Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer arrived with a delegation of advisers and business leaders to find out how Boston has turned troubled neighborhoods into booming economic districts. Archer's visit followed those of officials from Los Angeles, New Orleans, Baltimore, Chicago, and San Diego.

"We are facing some major challenges in Detroit," said Archer, who has held the post since 1994. "We're trying to reduce crime and build our neighborhoods, and we're here because we want to know what magic Mayor Menino is doing."

Archer and his staff spent much of last Thursday on a bus touring the city with representatives from the Main Streets program. The private-public initiative, based on a national model, was established in Boston by Mayor Thomas M. Menino in 1995 to help neighborhoods become economically viable.

The program operates on the premise that if communities have retail and commercial stores that cater to residents' needs, then residents are more likely to support local businesses instead of shopping at suburban malls. They are also more likely to take pride in ownership within their communities, which in turn creates lower tolerance for criminal and antisocial activity.

The result is often more jobs, new stores, and lower crime rates. For example, the Roslindale Village Main Streets program began in 1995 with a storefront vacancy rate of 20.7 percent. Today that rate is 3.5 percent, and there are 44 new businesses and 196 new jobs.

In South Boston, the storefront vacancy rate was 10.5 percent in 1995. Under the Main Streets program, the vacancy rate is less than 1 percent. Twenty businesses in South Boston's program have received façade improvements or building renovations, while 39 businesses and 278 jobs have been created.

Apart from being a national model, Boston's program has attracted interest from Japanese officials.

"Every place is different," said R. McDuffie Nichols, senior program manager for the National Main Street Center in Washington. "We recommend to other cities that they go to Boston and see what's going on there and use it as a model to develop their own programs. We think that Boston has one of the best programs out there."

Last November, Baltimore's newly elected mayor, Martin O'Malley, visited Boston to discuss crime and the development of the inner city with Menino. O'Malley, who leads a city of 645,000, faces a major challenge: bringing the city's number of annual homicides below 300. His spokesman said the mayor and his staff met earlier this week to discuss setting up a Baltimore Main Streets program, based on Boston's success.

Like O'Malley, Archer and his team said they are impressed by what's happening in Boston. "There's a lot going on here and we're taking notes and learning," Archer said.

During a stop in the Roslindale district, residents passed Archer en route to the Village Market, a grocery store owned by Jim McInnis, a former Star Market employee.

"There were people who told me that I would never be able to sell organic food in this store," McInnis said. "But we're doing very well."

It doesn't take much to get Menino buzzing about the program. "I always say that Boston has become a model for economic restructuring and public safety," he said, during a pizza lunch with Archer and his delegation at Bella Luna. "I'm glad that we can share what we've been doing here with our friends from Detroit."

There are several phases to the Main Streets project, said Katharine L. Kottaridis, director of the city's office of business development, which oversees the program.

Kottaridis said the goal of the project is to form partnerships between a broad range of groups, organizations, and constituents to work on grass-roots revitalization.

"The Main Streets project is about bringing the community in from the front end, instead of the back end," she said. "It's about getting everyone involved in making their community a better place."

Another phase of the program includes using city money to improve the appearance of the commercial districts, including buildings, streets, sidewalks, window displays, and parking signs.

"We're molding the way city services are delivered," said John Dalzell, chief architect for the project, "and we're getting rid of the vacant and blighted areas in some of our neighborhoods."

The result, Dalzell said, is a renewed sense of pride in community. "There's ownership with this program," he said. "If there are graffiti writers who come out and start writing on the walls in Dudley Square, residents come out and chase them away and that graffiti is gone."

Archer and others hope the same spirit generated in Dudley Square can be transmitted to places such as downtown Detroit.

"We're going to develop a plan and do something like this in Detroit," said Jay Jurgunson, a consultant working with Archer's office. "It'll just take us some time to put all the pieces in place."

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PLANS PRESENTED FOR DUDLEY SQ. SITE

From: *The Boston Globe*

Compiled by Mary Hurley

Date: 05/28/2000

Page: 8 Section: City Weekly

CITY WEEKLY / BOSTON NOTES ROXBURY

Two developers in the running to renovate the Modern Electroplating site on Washington Street in Dudley Square into an office/retail/parking garage complex presented their proposals for the first time to residents at a community meeting last week.

In general, residents said they support the concept. Major questions concerned process: Residents cited a need for more neighborhood representation on a city-appointed project selection committee.

The committee has two residents and six representatives from city departments, including the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Department of Neighborhood Development, and the Transportation Department. City officials said they planned to meet with local elected officials late last week to discuss adding more residents to the committee, which will review the two proposals and make a recommendation to the city's Public Facilities Commission.

The 3-acre parcel has been designated a brownfield, or contaminated, site. The former Modern Electroplating and Enameling Co. released dangerous chemicals into the ground and shut down six years ago. The city now owns the site and issued a request for proposals earlier this year. Two development teams met the criteria: Brownfields Recovery Company, whose principal is David Mugar, partnered with the Rockland-based Hastings Company, and a joint venture between the Roxbury-based Cruz Development Corp. headed by John and Dan Cruz, and the New Boston Fund, headed by Jerome Rappaport Jr. Both are seeking to build a four-story building with ground-floor retail and upper-floor office space, and a parking garage, as requested by the city.

The total cost of the project is estimated at \$20 million, with the developer to assume clean-up costs estimated in excess of \$4 million. The city has received a \$1.75 million federal grant to clean up the site, and will set aside \$5.5 million in construction loan guarantees, said Tom Ahern, the redevelopment authority's senior project manager for brownfields.

Residents had questions ranging from traffic circulation patterns to the type of businesses and services needed in the square, including, they said, a copy shop and a jazz club.

"It's removing a blight, but it's also an opportunity to improve the retail mix in Dudley Square and have the kind of footprint for a larger kind of use," said Joyce Stanley, executive director of the Dudley Square Main Street program.

Community gets say in visitor center plans

NORTH END - With the former Michelangelo School under redevelopment as an elderly housing complex, residents are being asked for their input on a new North End/Freedom Trail Visitors Center to be located there. The small center would be in the school "annex" on Hull Street and would occupy the size of a large classroom, with about 1,000 square feet available for interpretive displays, according to the Rev. Steve Ayres, Vicar of Old North Church. Officials at the church, along with those at the Paul Revere House, are helping kick off the neighborhood planning process.

"It's really up to the community," Ayres said last week.

Some neighbors originally proposed a larger immigrant museum for the old public school building, citing its location in one of the country's most historic neighborhoods, a port of entry for generations of ethnic groups. The city, however, designated the building for affordable senior citizen housing, funded by the federal Housing and Urban Development Department and developed by the East Boston Community Development Corporation and the North End Health Center.

The complex is to include more than 60 units of housing and a health-care facility. Space was also set aside for a small center located half a story below street level with a display area, staffed information desk and public restrooms. The latter is needed in the North End; it's not uncommon for desperate tourists to ask firefighters at the Hanover Street station to use their facilities.

The center is to be neighborhood-oriented, Ayres said. One idea is to have residents, such as those who live in the elderly housing, staff the information desk, possibly dispensing stories along with directions. Resident input is also sought on the displays and the center's organization.

"That's one of the open questions, 'Who will run it?'" Ayres said. Fund-raising will also be launched; the estimated cost to operate the center during the tourist season, April-October, is \$60,000. About \$40,000 has been identified so far, he said. The center is expected to open next year.

A public meeting to discuss the center is scheduled June 7, at 6:30 p.m., at Old North Church on Salem Street. Call 523-6676.

Converting an alley into a spot of green

ROSLINDALE - It is now an unsightly alley of dumpsters behind Birch and South streets in the center of the business district.

It is soon to be transformed, however, into a "shoppers' retreat and green space" to be known as the Courtyard at Roslindale Village.

On May 18, students from the Radcliffe Graduate Landscape Design Seminar Program presented their designs for the area.

Janice Williams, executive director of Roslindale Village Main Street, said a design that emphasized trees "gained the most favorable remarks."

Plans call for a park-like space with sitting areas, some type of "water feature," such as a fountain, landscaping, and access to the back of a new restaurant proposed for Birch Street.

Organizers, who are seeking to raise \$30,000, hope to hire an architect by Aug. 1, with construction slated to start next March.

A "Change for Change" fund raising effort was launched recently; jars for pennies and coins have been set up in various merchant locations in Roslindale. Information about the courtyard proposal, including design photographs, can be found on the Web at www.roslindale.net.

Program combines arts, job-training

Tents are to be set up on City Hall Plaza this summer to house a pilot job-training program in the arts for young people age 14-19. Professional artists affiliated with local cultural organizations plan to work with the youths on art projects while providing job-training.

"There will be quite extensive training," said Esther Kaplan, special assistant to the mayor for cultural affairs.

Those selected to be part of the "Mayor's Youth ArtsCorps" will be paid \$6 per hour to attend five-hour sessions Monday-Friday, July 17-Aug. 18. The program can accommodate 80-100 youths, Kaplan said, depending on the number of cultural groups that participate.

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BUILDING ON COMMERCE: EXISTING RETAIL SEEN AS FOUNDATION FOR NEW HOUSING

From: *The Boston Globe*

Author: By Richard Kindleberger, Globe Staff

Date: 07/23/2000

Page: H1 Section: Real Estate

Putting residents and businesses together again is the basis for an idea that is gaining support as a promising approach to attacking Boston's housing crisis.

The basic notion is simple: encourage the development of several floors of apartments above low-scale retail buildings in neighborhood commercial centers. The residents would be served by the businesses below them, and the increase in foot traffic would bring vitality to the area and dollars to stores that are often sleepy for lack of business.

The housing committee of the Boston Society of Architects has won plaudits for such a proposal from widely divergent interests since they began showing it around late last year. The Rental Housing Association, a trade group that speaks for landlords and developers, applauds it. So does the Citizens Housing and Planning Association, which advocates for subsidized housing.

However attractive it may be, the proposal faces a steep hurdle. Development generally is viewed with suspicion these days because of concerns about traffic and parking. Proponents will have to persuade affected communities that the benefits will outweigh the drawbacks.

Alfred Wojciechowski, chairman of the BSA's housing panel, thinks there's a strong case to be made. In the urgent push to add to the city's housing stock, he said, "much of the discussion that goes 'round and 'round is where do we put it. Well, there's plenty of places."

There aren't many large tracts of vacant land. But there are smaller sites, underutilized if not unbuilt, where a little regulatory flexibility and imaginative planning could lead the way to sorely needed new residences, his group believes.

Take Washington Street in the Forest Hills section of Jamaica Plain, which the housing panel picked for a test study. The area has a large MBTA lot, strips of empty land between the train tracks and the street, private vacant lots, and one- and two-story retail buildings that could have housing built above.

Wojciechowski and other volunteers argue the commercial area could be improved at the same time that housing is created if apartment buildings of four to seven stories, with stores at the base, were added to such areas.

The Forest Hills exercise showed that 7,000 residential units theoretically could be built in that one commercial district alone, according to architect William R. Hammer, a committee member. Although no one would want to add that many, he said, several hundred units probably could be built reasonably.

Hammer estimated that thousands of units could be built citywide if the approach advocated by his committee were adopted. "There's so much underutilized land," he said.

The idea would not work everywhere. The BSA group proposes trying it in business areas well served by public transportation. That would permit limiting the off-street parking required of the apartment building and would mean more foot traffic in the area to help sustain the retail businesses.

The group also is tailoring its approach to market-rate rather than affordable units in an apparent bid to avoid the additional controversy that sometimes faces subsidized housing. Members argue that increasing the supply by adding units at any level will help restrain rent increases.

The paucity of new market-rate apartments being produced in the city even as the economy booms is a source of increasing concern. Median rents advertised for a two-bedroom apartment advertised rose to \$1,400 last year in Boston, a level unaffordable to households with less than \$62,000 annual income, according to a recent report.

Meanwhile, cutbacks in state and federal housing programs have reduced the supply of subsidized housing. The situation has become so serious that housing production has risen to the top of Mayor Thomas M. Menino's priority list. It prompted the Rental Housing Association, a Greater Boston Real Estate Board division, to recommend last December that the city ease zoning rules and streamline permitting to spur housing production.

Its report, entitled "No Time to Lose," endorsed the BSA's proposal as a promising tool among a variety of recommended approaches. The report saw "enormous potential in the use of old 'Main Street' areas" for building housing above stores.

The BSA has chosen to advance the idea through the Boston Main Streets program, a private-public partnership that works to revitalize commercial districts. So far the results have been mixed. Of five individual Main Street programs to whom the proposal was explained, two have responded positively, according to Main Street staffers.

Those two are the Dorchester neighborhoods of Grove Hall and Four Corners. The neighborhoods that declined, for one reason or another, were Brighton, Mission Hill, and Bowdoin-Geneva.

Brighton in particular cited some residents' concerns about increased density, according to John Dalzell, a city architect who works with Main Streets.

The density issue is "the tricky part," according to the BSA's Hammer. "How do you persuade a neighborhood that it is in its interest to have denser development," he asked.

Planning advocates can point out that the Back Bay, while considerably denser, also is seen as more desirable and more valuable than underdeveloped commercial strips in more outlying neighborhoods. They also can argue that public transportation and proper planning can mitigate the ill effects of density.

Shirley Kressel, president of the Alliance of Boston Neighborhoods, likes the BSA housing idea. But she said it's up to the city to demonstrate that it can improve an area rather than overburden it.

"The city has to provide the infrastructure web to support that housing," she said. "I think that would go a long way to allaying community fears."

The BSA group suggests easing zoning regulations to make housing a permitted use in targeted commercial areas. The group, contrary to the assertions of some city officials, argues the city imposed more restrictive zoning in the 1980s that will need to be loosened to allow housing at the necessary heights.

Members said needed zoning changes probably would be undertaken neighborhood by neighborhood rather than citywide. And any project still would be subjected to community review and go through the city's permitting process, they said.

The BSA would not go as far as the RHA, which calls for allowing multifamily housing in every zoning district except single-family. But even the more modest BSA proposal appears to face skepticism among city officials.

Linda Haar, the Boston Redevelopment Authority's director of planning and development, disputed the notion there was a general down-zoning in the 1980s. She said that in rezoning the city, the BRA took steps to incorporate what she called "vertical zoning" and said it is not a new idea.

She applauded the BSA for doing designs to show what a given density would look like for a given neighborhood. But she suggested that the group may encourage denser development than her agency favors in some situations.

Rather than believing the city's zoning rules or the permitting process have retarded housing production, Haar blamed the market.

Robert Marr, chairman of the Zoning Commission, said he opposed wholesale changes in zoning to permit more housing, arguing instead for making changes on a case-by-case basis. He said permitting housing in commercial and industrial zones could undermine the intent of keeping incompatible uses separate.

But Jerold Kayden, an attorney and planning specialist at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, argued that mixing commercial and residential uses often makes sense. It can shorten commutes, reduce urban sprawl, and revive urban neighborhoods.

"There is nothing inherently wrong about mixing commercial with residential, and in fact, there's a lot right about it," Kayden said.

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