

ROXBURY

DEVELOPMENT

The word "DEVELOPMENT" is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. Overlaid on the word are red handwritten annotations: a checkmark is drawn over the letter 'V', a circle is drawn around the letter 'O', and another checkmark is drawn over the letter 'E' in the second row of the word.



"A country, or a village, or a community cannot be developed. It can only develop itself. For real development means the development, the growth, of people."

Julius Nyerere
1st President of Tanzania



WORDS TO KNOW 1/2

GENTRIFICATION: When higher-income (and most of the time, white) people relocate to low-income urban neighborhoods. Their economic power reshapes the neighborhood in a colonial fashion -- leading to rent increases, evictions, increased surveillance by police, and displacement of traditional residents.

DISPLACEMENT: When people are forced from their homes/neighborhoods against their will. Can come in the form of eviction, rent hikes, price of goods in the neighborhood rising, being excluded from a changing neighborhood

WORDS TO KNOW 2/2

AREA MEDIAN INCOME (AMI): The city uses this statistic to come up with its definitions of low-income and affordability, using a huge area that includes Quincy and Cambridge. For a family of 4 in 2017, Boston AMI is \$103,400/year. The median earning of Roxbury residents is \$22,370/year.

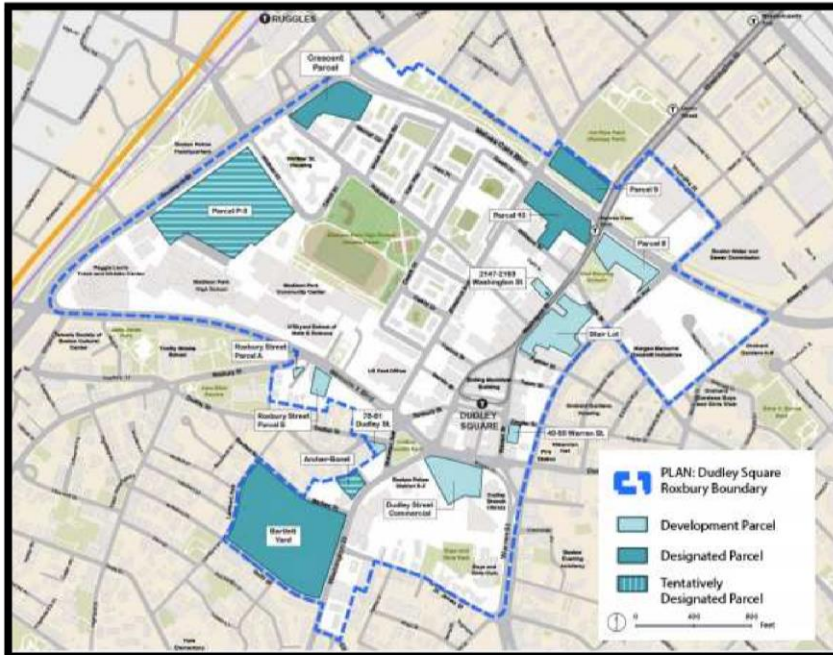
AFFORDABLE HOUSING: The city technically defines affordable as anything below AMI (\$103,400). However, they often use 70% AMI -- meaning a salary of \$72,380/year for a family of 4 would be required to afford rent!

MARKET RATE HOUSING: Market rate housing is anything at or above AMI, unregulated and unsubsidized by the city. It often goes much higher than the AMI.

LOW-INCOME: Low-income is generally defined as 30% of AMI. In 2017 Boston, for a family of 4 that means \$31,000/year. Yet half of Roxbury households make less than \$25,000/year.

PLAN: DUDLEY

*PLAN: Dudley has a plan for Roxbury,
PLAN: Dudley has a plan for you. PLAN:
Dudley is coming, whatcha gonna do?*



Plan: Dudley is the city's plan for how to develop the vacant land around Dudley Square, a process that was unveiled in early 2016, that aims to begin taking applications for development proposals later this year. BPDA's plan for Dudley is the vanguard effort for developing all of Roxbury. Most of the land is being planned to turn into expensive market rate housing, and the rest is new commercial developments catered to wealthier & whiter gentrifiers.



Hold up – why is all this happening now? What's with all the construction?



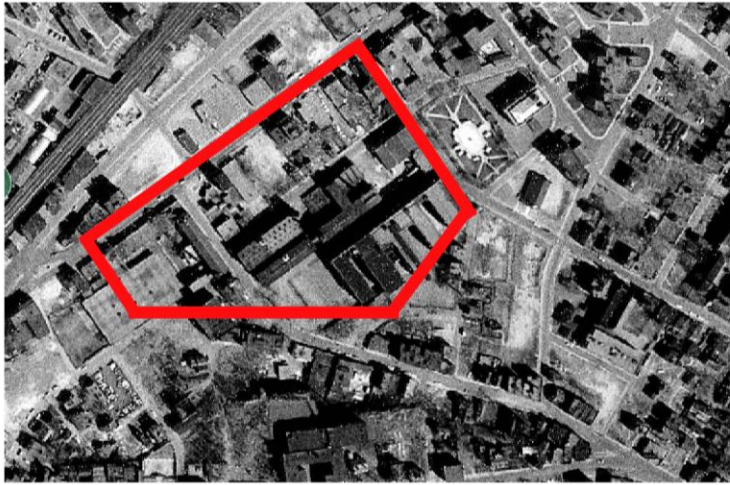
Boston's construction boom can be traced back to its population recovery (up around 10% since 2010). The city is still far below its peak of around 800,000 residents in 1950, which means it has the space to accommodate thousands of new residents; new housing just might need to be built. At the same time, the economy has turned around, and Boston elected a pro-development mayor. Mayor Walsh is using the population increase to justify building as much as possible, as quickly as possible. Building quickly is more important to him than building sustainably, or for current residents.



But we didn't build anything, how can we be mad when the city wants to?



We didn't build on this land because the city disinvested in this area. We didn't build because the city owns the land, and rejected our proposals. We didn't build because 50 years ago we already did, then the city evicted thousands of families using racist rhetoric, destroying our houses and businesses to build a highway that never came, and left the land vacant. And the city got the nerve to blame us for it.



Above is the block on the corner of Tremont St. and Whittier St. in 1969, full of houses and businesses.



By 1977 it was all gone. The city evicted everyone, even after acknowledging, "the families displaced... cannot find new housing accommodations in this area at rents they can afford." New housing is being built on this block soon, and it will be wildly unaffordable to the average Roxbury resident. There are histories like this all over the neighborhood.



But I want a movie theater, I want new stores. How is building new stuff bad?



First off, it's important to remember (and make the city remember) the historical theft of this land. We have the right to it, so any outside developers working on it are violating that right. Building fancy movie theaters and rock climbing gyms and luxury housing is how displacement begins. It is the reshaping of the neighborhood around new economic interests (in the case of PLAN: Dudley, Northeastern students). The price of goods will rise, police presence will increase, other housing pressures will go up.

It's not that new developments are inherently bad, it's that they're being done in a short-sighted way, without us in mind. Is the biggest problem in Roxbury the lack of a rock climbing gym, or not enough apartments that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars? **NO.** But that's what the city is most concerned with here, instead of investing more money in our education or healthcare or transportation. If the city really felt like it was doing us a service, they would let us be involved in the development process. Instead, they're actively trying to exclude us from decision-making.



How do we stop this displacement from happening?



There's no easy answer, but some key specific policies we need are:

- **RSMPOC Reform**, the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee is supposed to set guidelines for development in the area, but it's badly broken and out of date, meaning we don't have the voice we should.
- **Roxbury Master Plan Update**, for community-made standards and regulation on local developments.
- **Rent Control**, limiting how much landlords can raise rent each year.

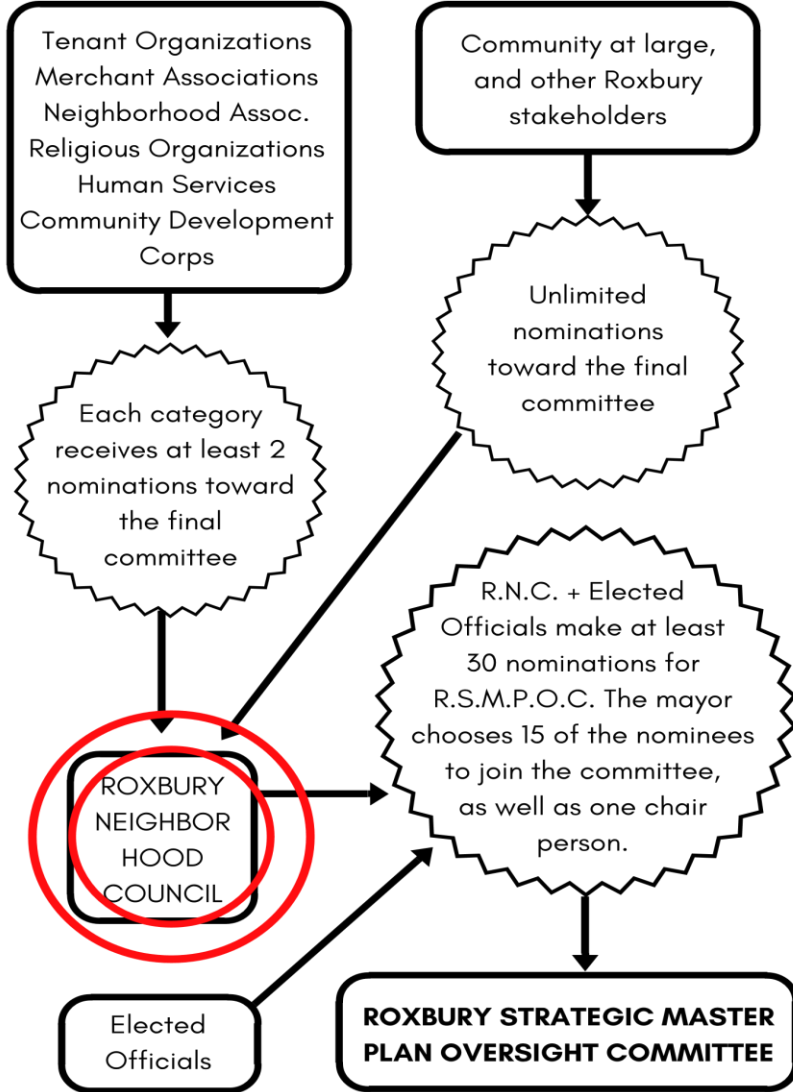


Isn't it too late? Aren't they about to build on these parcels in the fall?



The 5 parcels that have already been designated will be hard to change. However, many of them haven't had their final housing plans approved yet, and there is still time to add more affordable housing. The vast majority of the developments are on public land, meaning they're city-owned, meaning the community has the opportunity to stop them, if we get organized.

How R.S.M.P.O.C. is formed:





Sooo... why is there a big red circle over the Roxbury Neighborhood Council?



The Roxbury Neighborhood Council (RNC) has been defunct for years. The RNC traditionally is one of Roxbury's strongest voices in development, and it helps to choose members RSMPOC -- the group that has the legal power to push back against unwanted developments. Since the RNC is defunct, the RSMPOC is completely up to the mayor, not the community or our elected officials. Basically, the BPDA and mayor get to decide what the rules to development are without consulting us.

Also, the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan (the document that guides RSMPOC & local development) is badly out of date, and without the RNC functioning, we have no way to fix it.





OK, say we fix RSMPOC and the city asks us what we want built. Won't we still need expensive stuff like market rate housing to subsidize affordable housing?



Using market rate units to subsidize low income units is a recent invention. Historically the city has built lots of fully low-income housing. Now they've decided to re-prioritize the budget, and take away money from public housing. None of the proposed developments in Dudley have over 13% affordable housing, and that affordable housing can require as much as a salary of \$80k/year to afford. In the city's plans, market rate is not subsidizing low-income, it's replacing it.



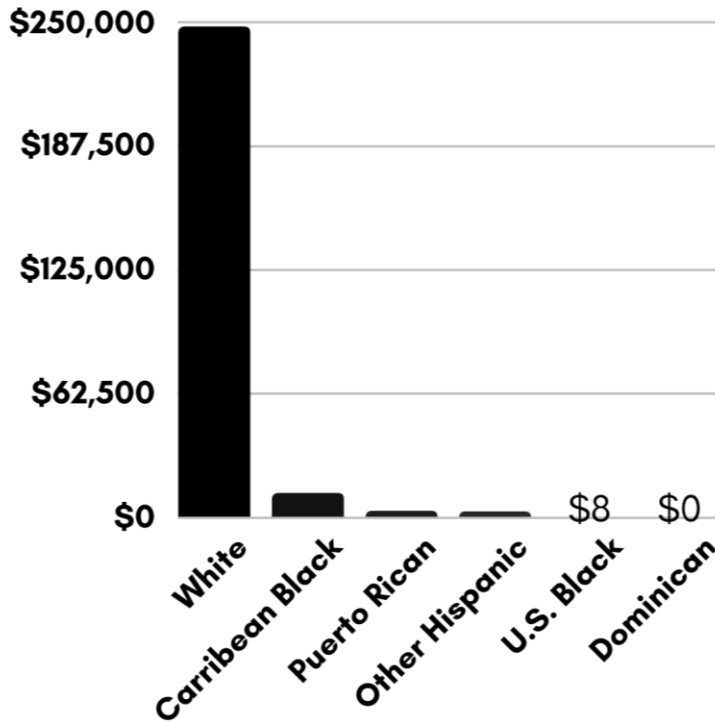
Do we even need more affordable housing? Doesn't Roxbury have the highest concentration of subsidized units?



Correct, about 50% of housing in Roxbury is tied to some sort of subsidy. But 12.5% of Roxbury's affordable housing will be converted to market rate by 2018, and Roxbury residents *already* spend the highest percent of our income on housing in Boston. Wait-lists for affordable housing are massive and there is a huge demand for more. Plus, homeless families can't afford any that currently exists. We need pro-active solutions to this housing crisis.

BOSTON NET WEALTH

Median of each group (assets like bank savings, home, etc. minus debts)



Housing costs are the #1 driver of inequality. When they take up a huge chunk of your paycheck, you can't save money. Because Roxbury's housing stock *does not* match what we are able to afford, we suffer compared to other communities. Providing affordable housing is one solution, though we also need more paths to affordable home ownership, land trusts and cooperatives. Bottom line -- we need to be the ones in control of decisions around land in our neighborhood, especially when it comes to housing.



Hold up, did you say that affordable housing isn't necessarily affordable?



Yup. To the BPDA, anything under market rate is technically affordable. A common number they use is 70% AMI, which means for "affordable" 4-person housing, you need to make near \$72,000/year. Nearly all of the affordable housing in PLAN: Dudley is between 60-80% AMI. In addition to more affordable housing, we need to redefine affordability to our neighborhood.



If we build more low income housing what about the cliff (where families make just enough to no longer qualify for the city's definition of affordable housing)?



The cliff has been statistically disproven. While an extremely small group might be vulnerable to losing some benefits, many, many more are lifted out of homelessness and poverty & given the chance to save money.

Building low-income housing in low-income neighborhoods also provides a number of benefits the government cannot otherwise offer. For example, it has been proven to lower crime rates in the surrounding area.

HISTORICAL STRATEGIES

If you've read closely, you're probably ready to fight. There are great places to plug in -- ACE, Reclaim Roxbury, Right to the City and others are leading the way. In the fight ahead, there will be protests and forums, but there's other ways Roxbury has organized in the past. Here's a few to keep in mind:

Trash fires, dumps

Madison Park used to be completely filled with trash, and the city wouldn't clean it. To draw attention, activists led a trash bonfire, and rented a garbage truck to dump trash on the steps of city hall. Both actions were front page news.

"Tent City"

To call attention to the need for affordable housing, activists built plywood shacks and tents within days demolition was halted in the South End and plans were made for housing for 900 low-income families in the area.

"Greater Roxbury Incorporation Project"

(G.R.I.P.)

The historic struggle in the 80's to incorporate 'Greater Roxbury' (Dorchester, South End, Fenway, Mattapan, etc.) into its own municipality called Mandela, Mass; that broke ground for the DSNI land trust, the Greater Roxbury Neighborhood Association, and much more.



"Tent City" protest in Copley Square, 1968.



"The new Boston is *not* just built by a few city fathers, all of them white, most of them well off, sitting around a board room table in a bank or city hall making decisions about how the city was going to be reborn in the 1950s, 60s, 70s, etc.

The new Boston was built by a lot of people in the neighborhoods - a lot of them women, a lot of them people of color - and they did their building by opposing some of those plans, by improving some other plans, and by coming up with plans of their own."

Jim Vrabel
Author, "A People's History
of the New Boston"