

Welcome to

Rebuilding Neighborhoods Advisory Group

Rebuilding Neighborhoods Summary

Co-convened by:



Asian Community
Development Corporation
亞美社區發展協會



THE **ALLIANCE**
FOR BUSINESS
LEADERSHIP

Sponsored by: Toast and The Boston Foundation

Facilitation by FMRA



ABOUT REBUILDING NEIGHBORHOODS

OVERVIEW

The Rebuilding Neighborhoods Initiative is a multi-neighborhood effort to think through the issues of affordable housing and gentrification in the Greater Boston area. It was started by the **Asian Community Development Corporation** (ACDC), who invited the **Alliance for Business Leadership** (ABL) to co-convene the initiative and **FMRA** to design and facilitate the sessions. Through generous funding from **Toast and The Boston Foundation**, it brought together multiethnic, multi-disciplinary leaders from the innovation sector, public sector, and local communities to form an advisory group with the goal of developing a strategic plan to address affordable housing and gentrification issues in Greater Boston.

While the innovation sector has helped create jobs and drive the economic boom in Greater Boston, it has also contributed to rising housing costs, creating some tensions between community groups and tech companies. In Seattle and San Francisco, this ultimately led to a large confrontation over the displacement of longtime community members and rising cost of living. These issues also impacted tech companies who found it difficult to attract and retain a workforce able to live in the area. **To ensure that Greater Boston remains economically healthy and accessible for all, we must work together to make sure that this region continues to accommodate diverse populations.**

GOALS

The Advisory Group set out to accomplish the following goals over 6 sessions in 6 months:

Articulate a vision for equitable housing in each neighborhood and across the Greater Boston area.

Develop a set of recommendations that drive an equitable system of housing.

Commit to a set of outcomes/metrics to measure progress towards our goal.

PROCESS

ABL and ACDC convened six 2-hour Zoom meetings on the first Thursday of the month. The series of workshops often included presentations by notable speakers working in the civic realm, followed by co-design activities facilitated and designed by FMRA.

Session 1 (1.7.21): Understand the needs and opportunities in each community

Speaker: *Karilyn Crockett*, Chief of Equity, City of Boston - spoke of the 1960s highway protests to connect the three neighborhoods through a legacy of activism and resistance

Deliverable: NOISE (Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths, Exceptions) analysis of neighborhood

Session 2 (2.4.21): Create shared values for each community and for the greater Boston area as it pertains to housing and economic development

Deliverable: Final Neighborhood Values

Session 3 (3.4.21): Establish a vision for what equitable housing will look like for your community

Speaker: *Michael Monestime and Nina Berg*, Central Sq BID - introduced the BID as a potential model for community development, shared Central Sq BID's recent work to support Central Square businesses and residents during the COVID-19 pandemic

Deliverable: Final Neighborhood Vision

Session 4 (4.1.21): Ideate some recommendations for how to realize some part of that vision

Deliverable: Final Recommendations

Session 5 (5.6.21): Brainstorm a project that moves us towards one of our recommendations, and our overall vision, in a tangible way

Speaker: *Bridgette Wallace*, Founder and Executive Director, G|Code - spoke about neighborhood-focused community building and supporting young people in her work at G|Code, a co-living co-learning space

Deliverable: Actionable Project Idea

Session 6 (6.3.21): Continue defining the project in more detail and think about execution and next steps for each neighborhood group

Deliverable: Final Project Plan

ADVISORY GROUPS

We invited participants to represent three key demographics in these neighborhoods: small businesses, businesses in the tech and innovation sector, and community representatives/residents.

* co-convener
~ funder
+ honorary chair

Co-Conveners

Angie Liou, Asian CDC

Jen Benson, Alliance for Business Leadership

Facilitators

April Gao, FMRA

Jason Lee, FMRA

Jeena Hah, Asian CDC

Kata Rolf, FMRA

Chinatown

Angela Soo Hoo, Jook Sing

Angie Liou, Asian CDC *

Brian Moy, Shojo, China Pearl, Ruckus, BLR

Daniel Vidana, Innovation Studio

Karen Chen, Chinese Progressive Association (sub: Mark Liu)

Mike Cole, TUGG

Shin Poon, TeaDo Contemporary Tea House

Fenway

Beth Choulas, Toast ~

Carl Sciortino, Fenway Health

Chris Comparato, Toast ~+

Kris Anderson, Fenway CDC

Jim Hoben, El Pelón

John Rosenthal, Meredith Management

Sonya Bhabhalia, Fenway CDC/Red Sox

Union Square

Ann Camara, Union Square Neighborhood Council

Jen Benson, Alliance for Business Leadership *

Michèle Hansen, Union Square Neighborhood Council

Saladin Islam, Groundwork Somerville/Union United

Winki Chan, Welcome Project

Zach Baum, Bow Market/USq Main St



CHINATOWN

- Angela Soo Hoo** Jook Sing
- Angie Liou** Asian CDC (co-convener)
- Brian Moy** Shojo, China Pearl, Ruckus, BLR
- Daniel Vidaña** Innovation Studio
- Karen Chen** Chinese Progressive Association
 - Mark Liu, Chinese Progressive Association (sub)
- Mike Cole** TUGG
- Shin Poon** TeaDo Contemporary Tea House

The Chinatown Advisory Group proposes a **public education program and community action campaign** to help community members understand the issue of **underutilized buildings, gentrification, and climate change in Chinatown.**

Because there is currently no incentive or pressure for landlords to renovate vacant buildings and create more housing, the group brainstormed a campaign to educate the public and engage key politicians on the detriment of these vacant properties and position them as a solution to the lack of affordable housing. The goal of this education effort is to build grassroots support around the issue, pressure policymakers to address the issue through policy change, and ultimately force landlords to renovate vacant buildings into housing for local residents.

Preliminary research and planning would take place before the public education program launches. First, a core team would assess Chinatown's current situation by conducting an audit of underutilized buildings and a land use survey. To supplement these assessments, the team would also create a list of potential use ideas for vacant buildings and a narrative about the effects of climate change on Chinatown. Then, they would host a series of meetings with stakeholders to share their findings and guide the design of the final campaign.

The 2021 Boston mayoral race is an opportunity identified by the group to help build momentum around this issue of equity through a forum with mayoral candidates. The team will find corporate partners and other sources to fund the campaign.

BUILDING SUPPORT

Core Team:



COMMUNITY ORGANIZER

either independent or funded positions within ACDC and CPA



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Building Homes. Empowering Families. Strengthening Communities.

MAJOR SUPPORTING PARTNERS

Outreach to corporate leadership about funding this kind of program; see below for other potential partners

Potential Partners:

- An owner liaison to share the goals of the project with and understand their needs and concerns (Depending on direction of community awareness campaign)
- Largest employers in the area. (Ex. TUFTS university and medical center)
- One landlord who wants to leave a positive legacy for Chinatown by getting on board with a pilot project
- 2021 Boston mayoral candidate(s)

FUNDING

The team identified multiple potential sources of funding:

ReStore Grants

City of Boston provides grants for upgrading storefronts (up to \$75k from 2013)

Corporate partners interested in DEI and community engagement

Corporations are beginning to recognize that DEI issues don't just happen in their organization. There is a growing awareness of the need to take care of the neighborhood where their organizations live. The team can conduct outreach to corporate leadership about funding this kind of program

Grants from foundations in the Greater Boston area interested in affordable housing

1 Assemble Core Team

The team will consist of people from the Asian Community Development Corporation, Chinese Progressive Association, a community organizer (either independent or funded positions within ACDC and CPA), and representation from major supporting partners.

3 Audit Resources

The team will find and apply for various sources of funding, including grants from Greater Boston area foundations and the City of Boston. The team will also contact potential corporate partners and build relationships with them.

5 Organize, Plan, and Publicize the Public Campaign

The campaign will be designed using feedback from the community and research materials. Though the exact format of the campaign isn't known yet, **two ideas** that came from the Chinatown Advisory Group are:

1. POLICY level discussion where we brainstorm use case scenarios for vacant properties - ex. 25 vacant bldgs = 200 units of housing. Share this with politicians and then get policy change to force/encourage development.
2. BLDG level project - ID a specific bldg and partner with the landlord to rehab the bldg to serve community needs and climate resiliency. Ex. Lease a floor and create a food court (and sublease to individual vendors). Explore if we can do the same process with housing.

2 Preliminary Research

Interns or grad students will create some materials to help plan and design the rest of the engagement:

- **Climate change narrative***
- **Building audit of Chinatown***
- **Land use survey of Chinatown***
- **Ideas about vacant building use***

4 Community Dialogue / Stakeholder Mtgs*

The community organizer will set up multiple meetings with community members to share the results of the audits, learn their needs, and synthesize the results to make design recommendations.

6 Execute the Campaign*

Align the campaign with the 2021 Boston mayoral race in Fall 2021.

RESOURCES

NOISE ANALYSIS

In **Session 1**, we sought to understand the context of each community by doing a NOISE (Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths, Exceptions) Analysis as a group activity.

Chinatown is...

- An ethnic and cultural enclave of Asian residents and immigrants
- Well-known as a tourist attraction and as a destination for food lovers
- Within proximity to countless Boston-area colleges and universities
- A proud community of small business owners

Chinatown has been dealing with...

- Lack of space, and therefore lack of ability to provide amenities to its residents, such as a community center or park space.
- Pressure from developers
- A desire to preserve its history and cultural heritage, but it continually faces pressure for redevelopment
- Isn't thought of as a residential area
- **Pandemic: A need for vaccination for their essential workers

Notes:

- Tufts is a major force in the neighborhood but has not been included in the conversation. How much of a risk does their exclusion present to the success of this initiative? More conversations with the team required.

ACCESS

- Public transportation
- Colleges and universities
- Walkability

STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- Residents come together for common goals

UNIQUE NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

- Ethnic & cultural enclave and hub for Asian residents & immigrants
- Chinese language school, cultural enrichment programs

DIVERSE POPULATION

- Student population
- Immigrants
- Tourists

BUSINESS DIVERSITY

- Large companies and institutions (Medicine, tech, education)
- Strong small business presence and community
- Chinese language school

STRENGTHS

ECONOMIC INCLUSION + OPPORTUNITY

- Housing too expensive for small business workers
- Pandemic specific: many of the workers in Chinatown should be considered essential workers - vaccine?

CREATING/MAINTAINING COMMUNITY

- Community spaces: Rec, cultural center/ space, and public library
- Chinatown lacks space & land unlike other neighborhoods
- Mixed use bldg - rec center, commercial, affordable housing, parking

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Housing too expensive for small business workers
- Lack of housing security makes it difficult for people to focus on other things; maybe guaranteed housing?

NEEDS

EXCEPTIONS

OPPORTUNITIES

NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- Pandemic as impetus to push business orgs to improve & open to new ideas?
- Landlords? Are there landlords who would be willing to work with small businesses?
- Universities & institutions like hospitals - possible partnerships with community?
- Vacant/underutilized buildings in the neighborhood

INCOME POLICY

- UBI (Universal Basic Income) approach - support from gov't to strengthen communities and small business

TRANSPORTATION

- With proximity to MBTA, move towards making it the first/last stop for any walking visitors using the train for transportation

IMPROVEMENTS

Preserving/Celebrating NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

- Passion - Chinatown carries its own distinct flavor of local pride and there should be a flashpoint for both to come together
- Identity- Chinatown is many things to different people. Cultural tourist attraction, where they work, cheap eats, late night eats, good food, bubble tea, hot pot but not many visitors identify Chinatown as a residential area. Outside people do not view Chinatown as a safe place to raise their family.
- Preserving Chinatown's Cultural and Historical identities.

RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE in neighborhood conversation

- Bad reputation: Chinatown has long since held a bad reputation to outsiders as dirty, smelly, dangerous, drug activity, prostitution, homelessness. I would say that 95% of crime that happens in Chinatown is caused by non Asian, non residents.

VALUES

In **Session 2**, we used the results from the NOISE analysis to create shared values for each community as it pertains to housing and economic development. Top values were chosen through ranked voting.

Preservation

Chinatown's rich history is rooted in the migration of peoples from China to Boston. It has created a microcosm of culture and community that pays homage to these roots that is unlike any other part of the Boston area. We are committed to preserving the businesses, residences, and community gathering places that have become integral parts of Chinatown's identity. Preservation happens on a physical level by preserving affordable housing, community and open spaces, a capital level by preserving investments, and most importantly, a cultural level by preserving the communities of residents and small businesses who call Chinatown home thus ensuring that people who need Chinatown the most can continue to thrive here.

Community-Driven Problem Solving

Belonging to a community requires participation, time, and effort. We believe that people who are invested in Chinatown's present and future existence must be involved in resolving issues the community faces. Through community participation, we can ensure those who are most impacted by problems in the community have an avenue to make change.

Economic Accessibility

We are committed to making Chinatown accessible in every sense of the word and this is rooted in economic opportunity for the least privileged. The barriers that prevent people from remaining in Chinatown include issues of common languages, physical accommodations, workforce development, transportation, and entrepreneurial support.

Sustainable Growth

Growth and change are inevitable in any community, and Chinatown is no exception. We are committed to finding ways to sustainably grow Chinatown's available housing, business space, resources, and investments in a way that prioritizes the needs of its current and future residents.

VISION EXERCISE

Before **Session 3**, we asked everyone to submit a vision for their neighborhood. In session, we worked together to combine everyone's responses into a cohesive vision that reflected the neighborhood values.

"Chinatown is the connection to my roots, childhood and grandparents. It is important to keep the working class character, multi-generational families and all the beautiful small businesses, community spaces & institutions."

"Preserving Asian culture to empower future generations and their identity as Asian-American."

"I fully acknowledge coming from a place of privilege on this, but there was such a sense of neighborhood when I moved to Brooklyn (broke!) that I feel like Chinatown has yet to discover."

"I also know that I have a lot to learn and listen to with respect to those that are part of the group that have more history and roots in the neighborhood."

VISION

Before **Session 3**, we asked everyone to submit a vision for their neighborhood. In session, we worked together to combine everyone's responses into a cohesive vision that reflected the neighborhood values.

Chinatown is a storied cultural district that envisions community-driven sustainable growth and preservation, especially of the community that lives there, in its future. We believe growth in Chinatown means that the least privileged members of the community can secure safe and affordable housing and enjoy welcoming public spaces, while multi-generational small businesses thrive under the patronage of visitors and residents alike. We will gather with our neighbors at the community center, bring our families to the library, and take full advantage of the public institutions designed with us in mind. No matter our age, ethnicity, occupation, or other identity traits, we know that we have a stake in the continued well being of this diverse community and have avenues to participate in an equitable, culturally responsive way.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Before **Session 4**, we crowdsourced a list of recommendations to support affordable housing from all AG members. In session, we asked individuals to rank all recommendations, and any additional ideas, on a scale of 1-5 across three criteria: Economic Impact, Community Impact, and Feasibility/Viability. These are the top four recommendations.

- 1 Rent control / Rent stabilization** - added by group
- 2 Tenant option to purchase** - added by group
- 3 Increase percentage of affordable housing for developers**
- 4 Clean up and reinvest in existing neighborhood**

Notes:

- So many factions in Chinatown, hard to get consensus on what's best for community
- Unpopular recommendation: Neighborhood Council - we have one and it does not represent the community
- Least favorite is short-term rooming housing and studios. Want Chinatown to be a family oriented neighborhood with long term residents
- Elderly residents aren't as involved; younger generation needs to take over
- TUFTS has its own set of challenges and challenging relationship with Chinatown. TUFTS has not really engaged with the community they are situated in and not supported Chinatown resident needs.



FENWAY

Beth Choulas Toast
Carl Sciortino Fenway Health
Chris Comparato Toast
Kris Anderson Fenway CDC
John Rosenthal Meredith Management
Jim Hoben El Pelón Taqueria
Sonya Bhabhalia Fenway CDC/Red Sox

The Fenway Advisory Group proposes to **organize a conversation** between important community stakeholders in Kenmore-Fenway to **share perspectives on establishing some sort of community group, council, or forum.**

Working towards a goal as large as affordable housing will require neighborhood cohesion and collaboration. Kenmore-Fenway is a community composed of many different voices: businesses of all sizes (from large institutions to locally-owned restaurants and shops), many existing community organizations that each work in different sectors of the neighborhood, and residents, who currently lack a collective voice on neighborhood issues. Because these groups tend to work in silos and have few chances to communicate with each other, they miss opportunities to build relationships, strategize, and collaborate to solve important community issues.

A cross-stakeholder conversation, hosted by a neutral party in the neighborhood, can gather these neighborhood players to discuss a standing meeting for collaboration. Inspired by the community buy-in that models like the Business Improvement District bring, the aim of this event is to find common ground between groups, build trust, listen to each group's needs, and begin thinking collectively about what a regular venue for cross-stakeholder conversations could look like. An effective neighborhood group can then be designed after getting ideas and feedback from the entire community.

BUILDING SUPPORT

Though this event is to build community support in and of itself for creating a neighborhood group, it is important to be thoughtful about who to invite to the conversation. The conversation should also be convened by a neutral party (ex: Fenway Health, City Councilor). One representative from each organization/group/business will be invited to limit the size of the gathering. **The important demographics to represent are:**

- RESIDENTS** Build a diverse resident group to represent across race, gender, age, and other identities. Can tap into resident groups (ex: Boston Tenants Coalition, Audubon Circle Neighborhood Association, Kenmore Residents, FenwayCDC), Boston’s Spark council, and special living arrangements such as the Peterborough Senior Center.
- SMALL BUSINESSES**
- COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS** (ex: Fenway CDC, Charlesgate Alliance)
- BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS** (ex: Fenway Civic, Kenmore Business)
- LARGE BUSINESSES** (ex: Toast, Whoop, Life Sciences + Medical, Alexandria, Samuels) Ideally a civic engagement or public affairs representative.
- ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS** (ex: Longwood Medical, Red Sox, BU) Ideally a civic engagement or public affairs representative.

FUNDING

A potential source of funding could be **Beth Israel’s Community Impact Initiative fund, given to Fenway Health and several local partners.** The grant requires a “project” defined after a community engagement period and executed over 2 years. Other funding possibilities include grants from **foundations in the Greater Boston area** interested in affordable housing.

Expenses include:

- Snacks
- Space (potentially donated)
- Labor for planning, organizing, facilitating
- ASL interpretation, foreign language translation and other accessibility features

1 Assemble Core Team

This team will organize the the conversation, including doing outreach to partners and funders and planning the event itself.

3 Community and Funder Outreach

The Core Team will connect with key community members, share information about the event, and invite them to participate. The Team will also secure appropriate funding for the event, and possibly more to sponsor next steps that come out of this initial conversation.

5 Send Notes and Next Steps

The Team will collect the outcomes from the meeting and send them out to all participants. Depending on how the conversation goes, the Team can begin to prepare for next steps. (If tapping into the Beth Israel grant, start defining the “project” to work on for next 2 years.)

2 Plan the Event

The Core Team will plan details and structure of the conversation, finalize a representative invite list, and set the agenda for the meeting. They will also determine what expenses are needed to run the event. Community input will be incorporated into the planning as needed.

4 Host the **Event***

The event will be hosted by a neutral party in the Kenmore-Fenway area. The Core Team will record the conversation in some capacity.

The event will yield: **agreement between stakeholders*** on the importance of having conversations with one another, **clear ideas about what a future community group/council/ forum would look like and what purpose it would serve.***

SUCCESS MEANS...

- 1. We are convening a representative cross-section of the Kenmore-Fenway community.** Key to the success of this initiative is getting everyone's voice at the table.
- 2. We have a structured, productive conversation** for everyone to **listen** to one another.
- 3. We have a better idea of next steps** after the conversation.

RESOURCES

NOISE ANALYSIS

In **Session 1**, we sought to understand the context of each community by doing a NOISE (Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths, Exceptions) Analysis as a group activity.

Fenway is...

- An urban mix of entertainment, culture, and hospitality.
- Boasts an iconic stadium that attracts sports fans from around the world.
- An academic hub situated between top-tier universities (BU, Northeastern, Berkeley, MIT)

Fenway has been dealing with...

- Poor connectivity with the rest of the city due to poor planning and insufficient parking.
- How to support low and middle income families in the area. In order to do so, Fenway will need appropriately-sized affordable housing, schools, and daycare along with other family-oriented amenities.
- Bringing to attention the need for investments in social and community services and that Fenway is indeed a [priority neighborhood](#) with families and senior residents, despite its public image as a stable area.
- How to foster a diverse business community.
- How to foster a strong sense of community, between residents, between organizations of the area.

Notes:

- Which voices are not included in this initiative but should be involved at a later date?

ACCESS

- Public transportation
- Colleges and universities
- Medical facilities
- Green space and parks

UNIQUE NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

- Urban; cultural and academic hub
- Mix of old and new

BUSINESS DIVERSITY

- Large companies and institutions (Medicine, tech, education)
- Mix of restaurants, entertainment, hospitality, retail, with green space
- Faith based institutions

DIVERSE POPULATION

- Student population
- Young professionals - tend to be liberal and civic minded

OTHER

- Most people rent
- Generally healthier and safer than other communities in Boston (public health metrics)
- Elected representation offers diversity of experiences and expertise

STRENGTHS

OPPORTUNITIES

NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- Diversity in business community

CHILDCARE + EDUCATION

- Daycare/accommodations for children
- After school programs

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Change the narrative that the Fenway is a priority neighborhood (families/seniors live in the Fenway)
- Institutional connections - business community, health centers, nonprofit

TRANSPORTATION

- Transportation/ expedited connection points from major hubs

COMMUNITY AMENITIES

- Farmer's market
- Community activities, stalls, craft fairs, food trucks etc

EXCEPTIONS

GREAT EXISTING LOCAL GROUPS WORKING ON THESE ISSUES

- Community Organizing/Engagement has made significant strides in the Fenway, we just had a big win in the Statehouse ,both the IDP Linkage Bill and the Economic Development Bond Bill with TOPA were passed and enacted on the Governor's desk for signature. This is the product of amazing teamwork by numerous coalitions.

TRANSIT + ACCESSIBILITY

- Continued enhancements to transportation
- Parking; if limited, make sure there's reliable transport
- Connections to other communities in the city; ex: enter city via North/South Station, how do you get to Fenway?

NEEDS

IMPROVEMENTS

CREATING/MAINTAINING COMMUNITY

- Community/Training Center on the East Fens
- Amenities for families
 - No schools, daycare centers, resources/services for families
 - Provide more family centered activities/ programs
- More varied housing options, home ownership, co-op etc

ECONOMIC INCLUSION + OPPORTUNITY

- Food Bank East Fens
- Availability of family-sized units

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Affordability of housing

RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE in neighborhood conversation

- It's a critical time to discuss race ,racism and racial justice in our country and in our work (affordable housing) to help our residents and neighborhoods build an equitable future
- Engage our cultural institution on visioning and realizing racial justice in their institutions
- Continue to develop and foster better relationships around best practices between Fenway organizations

ARTS

- Public Art and architecture

In **Session 2**, we used the results from the NOISE analysis to create shared values for each community as it pertains to housing and economic development. Top values were chosen through ranked voting.

Diversity and Equitable Access to Opportunities in Fenway

We believe access to economic opportunities, to participation in decision-making, and to residency for folks from a variety of identities are rights that every community member should enjoy.

Balance and Vibrancy through Diversity

We believe the defining quality of our neighborhood, and a key to our success, is the diversity of our community. Students, professionals, long time residents, sport fans, of all races and nationalities contribute to making Fenway a vibrant and balanced community connected to downtown Boston and other adjacent communities. Preserving this diversity and supporting projects and activities that promote the livability and accessibility of our neighborhood is critical to our continued and future success.

Building Community through Housing Advocacy

The pursuit of equitable housing is an opportunity to foster belonging and participation in the community. We will collaborate across different organizations, cultures, and perspectives to create a shared vision of equitable affordable housing in Fenway.

Healthy Communities through Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability impacts us at all different scales, from as small as the individual to as large as the planet. We will invest in green space and other sustainability initiatives that improve the wellbeing of our residents, while also building and operating in ways that are mindful of Earth's longevity.

VISION EXERCISE

Before **Session 3**, we asked everyone to submit a vision for their neighborhood. In session, we worked together to combine everyone's responses into a cohesive vision that reflected the neighborhood values.

"I feel somewhat disconnected from the neighborhood to be honest. It feels like a collection of little neighborhoods that fall under the "Fenway" umbrella that I don't think it's a neighborhood with as much neighborhood identity in the way other neighborhoods might... It makes me realize how few long-term residents I actually know, which is a missed opportunity."

"I hope I am able to stay long-term. There are exciting changes afoot, but I also hope for an increasingly diverse residential population with more home ownership opportunities that don't require a two-income household."

"I see a better future for my neighborhood by becoming an agent of change and doing the work necessary by designing systems, tools, processes to enable people to succeed."

"Though I don't live in Fenway, we feel a connection through our presence and these connections with customers and employees / residents."

VISION

Before **Session 3**, we asked everyone to submit a vision for their neighborhood. In session, we worked together to combine everyone's responses into a cohesive vision that reflected the neighborhood values.

The Fenway will be a neighborhood where community members, regardless of their identity, are able to live, participate in, and benefit from the opportunities associated with Fenway's history and growth. We envision a community where residents of all incomes can afford housing and enjoy the balance of a culturally rich and diverse community, and where neighbors and community members can gather to celebrate one another's culture, history, growth and belonging. We will provide equitable access to resources that enable people to gather, live, raise a family, and age in their homes, which includes green spaces and other sustainability initiatives that support both public and planetary health.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Before **Session 4**, we crowdsourced a list of recommendations to support affordable housing from all AG members. In session, we asked individuals to rank all recommendations, and any additional ideas, on a scale of 1-5 across three criteria: Economic Impact, Community Impact, and Feasibility/Viability. These are the top four recommendations.

1 Direct financial investments to affordable housing and supporting causes

2a Form a Neighborhood Council

2b Preserving, maintaining, improving, expanding green space - added by group

2c Increase percentage of affordable housing for developers

Notes:

- There is a tension between residents and property owners in terms of who gets a say on issues; Neighborhood Council is an opportunity to give residents a voice



Ann Camara Union Square Neighborhood Council
Jen Benson Alliance for Business Leadership (co-convener)
Michèle Hansen Union Square Neighborhood Council
Saladin Islam Groundwork Somerville/Union United
Winki Chan Welcome Project
Zach Baum Bow Market/USq Main St

UNION SQUARE

The Union Square Advisory Group proposes to organize **Printing Day(s)**, hosted by a local bank, to **spread awareness of affordable housing and assistance opportunities** and to ensure that folks applying for regional affordable housing and assistance have the **materials, resources and knowledge they need.**

The Union Square group proposed this idea to provide education about residential rights and opportunities for the residents in Somerville. Housing costs in Somerville are displacing families from multigenerational homes and making it difficult to create a life for folks with household incomes less than \$100k. Due to increasingly unaffordable rent, diversity is waning and more people are choosing to move to the suburbs. The group ultimately seeks to increase enrollment in affordable housing in the Union Square neighborhood by elucidating the affordable housing process for families and creating partnerships between people and the institutions that hold knowledge of the process.

To spread the word about the Printing Day(s), a core team will build community support and awareness through partnership outreach, community outreach, and a neighborhood street fair complete with food and entertainment. Flyers would be distributed and individual contact information would be collected at the street fair. For the Printing Day itself, a partner bank would provide printers, paper, and everything needed to apply for affordable housing and other forms of assistance (food stamps, housing loans, and more). The final component would be a series of emails after Printing Day, to give folks resources for continued education.

BUILDING SUPPORT

A **core team** will be determined after a preliminary meeting with Union Square Neighborhood Council, SCC, CAAS, Office of Housing Stability on the feasibility of this project. Anticipating that the project moves forward, the group brainstormed these **important potential partners** in the execution of the project:

BANK Rockland Trust, Eastern Bank, East Boston Savings Bank, Citizens Bank, East Cambridge Savings Bank, fka Portuguese Credit Union

AFFORDABLE HOUSING EXPERTS SCC (experts in application process), Office of Housing Stability in Somerville, CAAS, MAMAS, Mass Senior Action, Union Square Main Street, Union Square Neighborhood Council, Larger developers, Inclusionary Housing Team in Somerville

UNION SQUARE RESTAURANTS Bow Market and others for food at the event

ARTISTS

CLIMATE COALITION

EXPERTS IN OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE food stamps, fuel assistance, and more

FUNDING

There are two potential types of funding that the team identified:

1. Sponsorship

- Banks
- Larger developers
- Verizon
- Puma
- Partners Health
- City of Somerville

2. Grants

- The Boston Foundation
- Eastern Bank Foundation
- Another Greater Boston area foundation interested in affordable housing

Expenses include:

- Materials (Stage, food, paper, toner, ink, etc)
- Labor (Interpretation, translation, grant manager, event organizer, police detail, musicians)
- Permit for event

BUILDING SUPPORT



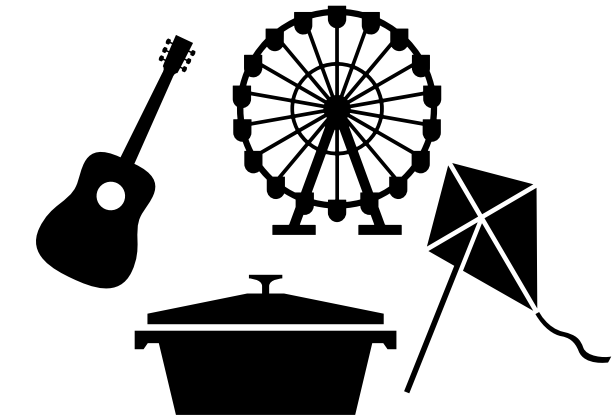
Partner Outreach

Start with existing partnerships to generate interest, build from there



Community Outreach

Door knocking, handing out flyers, posting information on the housing portal



Street Fair

Host a street fair, complete with local food and entertainment, to spread the word

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

BANK Rockland Trust, Eastern Bank, East Boston Savings Bank, Citizens Bank, East Cambridge Savings Bank, fka Portuguese Credit Union

AFFORDABLE HOUSING EXPERTS SCC (experts in application process), Office of Housing Stability in Somerville, CAAS, MAMAS, Mass Senior Action, Union Square Main Street, Union Square Neighborhood Council, Larger developers, Inclusionary Housing Team in Somerville

UNION SQUARE RESTAURANTS Bow Market and others for food at the event

ARTISTS

CLIMATE COALITION

EXPERTS IN OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE food stamps, fuel assistance, and more



SUCCESS METRICS

1. Higher application rates and/or higher acceptance rates

How do we know what these are due to the events that we hosted?

2. Track # of applications filled out at the event

3. Higher diversity of applicant pool

4. Collect feedback

Send surveys to those who attend the printing and application day, or do surveys at the event

5. Follow-up through email

Notes:

- Potential challenges include: COVID - city restrictions on in-person gatherings, influence attendance depending on perceived safety of gathering; Not having staff to manage all of this; Not having enough funding, or inability to align funding timeline and event schedule; might not get the grant in time or miss deadlines for grants; Inclement weather; Lack of a bank partnership
- Rolling Applications: there is no specific timeframe or target date for housing applications besides whenever units become available. Difficult to determine the best time to have the events.

RESOURCES

NOISE ANALYSIS

In **Session 1**, we sought to understand the context of each community by doing a NOISE (Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths, Exceptions) Analysis as a group activity.

Union Square is...

- A bustling area with a great food scene and farmers' market.
- An intimate community of residents and business owners.
- Has a robust collection of nonprofits that focus on providing services to Union Square.

Union Square has been dealing with...

- The complex issues of economic development with the Green Line extension.
- How growth affects the tight-knit neighborhood identity.
- A lack of community spaces, both outdoor and indoor, to come together for meetings and leisure.

Notes:

- Which voices are not included in this initiative but should be involved at a later date?

UNIQUE NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

- Fun, lively place to gather
- Events and programming (pre-COVID)

BUSINESS DIVERSITY

- Strong small business presence and community
- Strong community of non-profits
- Positive impact on community particularly around housing
- Non-profits are from and of Union Square, services focused on neighborhood
- Food: Great farmer's market, global restaurants

STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- Really feels like a neighborhood, not overly commercialized. Feel like a community
- Very few franchise/chain businesses
- Very integrated between residences and businesses - neighborhood feel intensified by close relationship

DIVERSE POPULATION

- Immigrants

ECONOMIC INCLUSION + OPPORTUNITY

- Cost of housing has caused people to leave
- Green line development:
 - Green line extension has increased housing costs; benefit of green line extension may not even reach into Union Square
 - concern about green line bringing big development

CREATING/MAINTAINING COMMUNITY

- Community spaces: Community space for community meetings, now reliant on churches, schools, police station.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- It's hard to find affordable housing

PUB TRANS + ACCESSIBILITY

- Union Square described as highway. Too much road and traffic through center
- Better public transportation - buses are unreliable
- Hard to walk + poor safety in crossing the street

EXCEPTIONS

GREAT EXISTING LOCAL GROUPS WORKING ON THESE ISSUES

- Lots of good local groups working on these issues but need to spread the word
- Affordable housing assistance

BIKE ACCESSIBILITY

- Although walking around in Union Square is difficult, they have made strides towards being more bike accessible throughout the years
- Added many additional dedicated bike lanes

STRENGTHS

NEEDS

OPPORTUNITIES

IMPROVEMENTS

NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

- Planned redev of union square plaza as destinations

COMMUNITY DEV

- Lots of immigrants living and working in the area as well as students, etc. Opportunity to bridging these communities
- Expand what Union Square is - Market Basket part of Union Square? Bigger footprint? Davis Square as an example of neighborhood that sprawls past center

COMMUNITY AMENITIES

- Difficult to navigate the area - outdoor/open gathering place for public. Bow Market as example - courtyard provides public meeting space. St. Francis Church parking lot also used for programming.

PUBLIC SPACE + TRANS

- Bus network improvement
- Widening central "square" plaza
- Reclaiming street areas for pedestrian or business uses

HOUSING ACCESS. (physical + process)

- Integrating affordable housing into community rather than segregated into large developments/concentrated in outskirts.
- Accessing affordable housing - simplify process and make sure people are educated on resources available

SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT

- Mitigation/program support from developers as part of approval process?
- Ways we can support local small businesses? Sustainability - additional support, CPA help, business development

ARTS

- Artist housing program - subsidized housing
- Arts center: music, art, culinary arts

RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE in neighborhood conversation

- Thinking about how job training and workforce development programs, housing costs are symptoms of other economic inequity

VALUES

In **Session 2**, we used the results from the NOISE analysis to create shared values for each community as it pertains to housing and economic development. Top values were chosen through ranked voting.

Economic Empowerment

We believe the ability to live close to where you work is important for general well being and happiness. Access to this choice is rooted in economic empowerment. We believe everyone should enjoy this choice and to have access to career options that provide a livable wage for our neighborhood.

Environmental Sustainability for All

Environmental sustainability is a public health issue that requires thinking about the generational impact of development. Increasing the density of housing, especially affordable properties, leaves more room for green spaces and gardens for public enjoyment and fosters a safe and equitable environment for all. Other creative public space interventions, such as on rooftops and in alleys, supplement the main parks. Union Square has the potential to model a vision of environmentally sustainable growth for other cities.

Targeted Universalism / Diverse & Equitable Participation

We believe that every community member, regardless of identity trait or socio-economic status, should have the opportunity to participate in defining the future of our neighborhood. This means not only making sure that everyone has a seat at the table, but that we prioritize the needs of the most marginalized and underrepresented members of our community.

Transparent, Collaborative Decision-Making

Clear, accessible communication is foundational to a collaborative decision-making process. We are committed to accommodating the needs of each stakeholder so they can be an informed voice at the table. We use precise and understandable language to most effectively convey our intent to the community.

VISION EXERCISE

Before **Session 3**, we asked everyone to submit a vision for their neighborhood. In session, we worked together to combine everyone's responses into a cohesive vision that reflected the neighborhood values.

"Knowing that Union Square/Somerville is an area where a lot of immigrants live and work in, I envision a future where immigrants, regardless of their immigration status, feel safe and comfortable calling this neighbourhood their home. I want them to feel a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood and feel that amenities and resources are built with them in mind."

"Living and working close to my family is so important to me. I want to make sure I can stay in Union for the long term and would love to provide more opportunity for others to both live and work here."

"I hope that we don't categorize things so heavily in the future. People should be free to learn and explore who they are. There's no way anyone can be defined by a single identity be it gender, race, religion, etc."

VISION

Before **Session 3**, we asked everyone to submit a vision for their neighborhood. In session, we worked together to combine everyone's responses into a cohesive vision that reflected the neighborhood values.

Union Square is a diverse neighborhood that strives to better welcome residents of all incomes, ages, and backgrounds to live and work in the area. We imagine that the square will prioritize people, bikes and public transportation and that public space will be safe, full of nature, and bustling with human interactions of all languages. Most businesses will be locally owned and operated by residents, and a community center will host regular neighborhood meetings for us to come together, share ideas and opinions, and make decisions. Through these inclusive processes for community input, Union Square can demonstrate how to preserve the unique values of our city and become a model for future development initiatives.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Before **Session 4**, we crowdsourced a list of recommendations to support affordable housing from all AG members. In session, we asked individuals to rank all recommendations, and any additional ideas, on a scale of 1-5 across three criteria: Economic Impact, Community Impact, and Feasibility/Viability. These are the top four recommendations.

- 1 Increased opportunities for home ownership and education about residential rights and opportunities for residents in Somerville** -
Subtask: Create or improve online housing portal - added by group
- 2a Rent control for properties in Somerville** - added by group
- 2b Provide appropriate housing options for people of all income levels, household sizes, and stages of life**
- 2c Introduce more public architecture and seating**

Notes:

- Our group started to have a robust conversation about how a city/state might avoid some of the negative externalities of rent control, especially issues like poorly maintained homes that can arise from absentee landlords. Plans like that presented by, now Mayor of Providence, Jorge Elorza (<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/216742763.pdf>) treat local and absentee landlords differently with respect to rent increase ceilings. It recognizes how differently absentee landlords and local landlords act.

NEXT STEPS

Unfortunately, ACDC and ABL do not have the capacity, bandwidth or funding to continue working on the Rebuilding Neighborhoods Initiative. However, given the great progress that all neighborhoods made over the course of six sessions, Advisory Group members are encouraged to continue this work in their own neighborhood groups. ACDC and FMRA can help make introductions to potential funders in Boston that are interested in funding projects related to affordable housing.

We thank you for your hard work and participation!

Co-conveners:



Sponsors:



ABOUT

CO-CONVENERS



The **Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)** works in underserved and immigrant Asian American communities in the Greater Boston region to create and preserve affordable, sustainable, and healthy neighborhoods. We achieve this by building affordable homes and vibrant spaces, empowering families with asset-building tools, and strengthening communities through resident and youth leadership.



The **Alliance for Business Leadership** is a non-partisan coalition of CEOs, entrepreneurs, investors, and business leaders at all levels who have one thing in common: we believe that social responsibility and the sustainable growth of the Massachusetts economy go hand in hand. Through education, programs, partnerships, advocacy, and thought leadership, ABL focuses on four policy areas that we believe most directly impact economic inequality including transportation, climate and energy, housing, and workplace opportunities.

FACILITATOR



FMRA (pronounced “ephemera”) partners with clients to design for equity in the civic realm. We believe the future of our society will be the product of all our voices - from the least to the most enfranchised citizens of our community. It will be more resilient because it will celebrate polyvocality, mutual respect, and equity. We use the tools and tactics of design thinking, human centered design, architecture, and urban design to help our clients realize their part of this vision. Our goal is to empower client teams to build their own internal capacity.

THANK YOU! SEE YOU IN A MONTH!

Rebuilding Neighborhoods Advisory Group

Neighborhood Summary



Asian Community
Development Corporation
亞美社區發展協會



THE ALLIANCE
FOR BUSINESS
LEADERSHIP