

Randolph: Boston's Gateway Suburb

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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Abstract

In the last two decades, certain American suburbs have begun to struggle with issues traditionally thought of as urban problems and dealt with in city settings, such as failing schools, fragmented community, affordable housing, immigrant incorporation, poverty, crime, and others. These places have historically functioned as a first step into the suburbs for people arriving from the city or from abroad. In the Boston metropolitan area, Randolph is the prime example of this sort of place, a “gateway suburb.” Gateway suburbs have limited capacity to manage so-called urban issues because of their suburban size, structure, resources and location. In 2007, Randolph suffered a crisis year when the state officially declared Randolph’s schools underperforming, its library lost accreditation, the community suffered three brazen murders, a fatal fire took the lives of several young immigrants, and a local politician made anti-semitic remarks to the superintendent of schools. A turnaround has been in the works for the last two years, but Randolph is beginning to lose population and many of the issues underlying the 2007 crises are longstanding and unresolved.

This paper will explore in depth the case of Randolph, MA to examine how such a community responds to the distress evident in the problems of 2007. It aims to develop strategies for gateway suburbs to remain communities of choice - places where families with economic means to make a choice will choose to live. Through interviews with current and former residents, this study also seeks to understand how they understand the town, and how their interpretations influenced decisions to attempt to improve Randolph, to disengage, or to leave. This in depth case study will contribute to the formation of strategies to maintain gateway suburbs as thriving communities of choice.

Thesis Supervisor: Tunney Lee
Title: Professor of Architecture and Urban Studies and Planning, Emeritus

Thesis Reader: Langley Keyes
Title: Emeritus Professor

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Introduction

In the last two decades, certain American suburbs have begun to struggle with issues traditionally thought of as urban problems and dealt with in city settings. These places have limited capacity to manage these issues because of their small size, structure, resources and location. These places historically functioned as a first step into the suburbs for people arriving from the city or from abroad.

In the Boston metropolitan area, Randolph is the prime example of this sort of place, a “gateway suburb.” Over the last sixty years, a move to Randolph represented a first step into the suburbs for thousands upon thousands of families. Randolph has been an accessible gateway to the suburbs for all of the ethnic groups who have passed through Boston’s neighborhoods.

Today, Randolph is Boston’s most diverse suburban community. One quarter of Randolph’s 30,000 people are foreign born; no racial group holds a majority; roughly 40 languages are spoken there; and residents reported over 80 ancestries in the 2000 census.

In 2007, Randolph suffered a crisis year when the state officially declared Randolph’s schools underperforming, its library lost accreditation, the community suffered three brazen murders, a fatal fire took the lives of several young immigrants, and a local politician made anti-semitic remarks to the superintendent of schools. A turnaround has been in the works for the last two years, but Randolph is beginning to lose population and many of the issues underlying the 2007 crises are longstanding and unresolved.

This paper will explore in depth the case of Randolph, MA to answer two questions. Firstly, what is this place? The answer is an attempt to define the gateway suburb. Secondly, how can this place remain a healthy community of choice? Interviews with current and former residents, study of the issues facing the town, and an exercise in scenario planning form the basis for answering this second question. Unless noted otherwise, all quotations of community members and town officials are from my interviews completed in January 2010.

The study begins by describing the classification of gateway suburb and showing how the concept relates to other recently developed categorizations of suburban places. It follows with a history of Randolph focused on its urban development and the peoples who have lived there. The following two chapters explore the reasons residents have chosen to move to Randolph, stay in Randolph, or leave Randolph. Chapter six includes detailed exploration of the issues with which Randolph struggles and which culminated in the crisis year of 2007. Particular attention is paid to the public school system because schools are a top factor in people’s residential choice and because schools are at the forefront of demographic change so changes are felt first and most acutely there. The chapter also analyzes issues in public safety, housing, racial/ethnic integration, and municipal finance and government. Chapter seven projects four possible futures for Randolph in 2030 based on projected trends and the looming questions of exactly how Randolph’s demographics will change and whether Randolph can provide good quality community services. Chapter eight provides recommendations for Randolph based on the three chapters on residential choice, the issues facing Randolph, and potential futures.

Author's Narrative

I grew up in Randolph, Massachusetts. I left at the age of eighteen, but I have never been able to call anywhere else home. The place had a profound effect on me, and the story of my life is largely a story of the social forces that shaped Randolph.

My paternal grandmother grew up in Randolph when it was still a small town, before the highways and suburbanization. My impressions of life in Randolph back then come through her insistent mention of the one-quarter of Welsh blood that offset her Irish heritage and her bragging about her father having some farmland. My paternal grandfather came later from Boston, an Irish-American cop who got a job in the town. My red-haired, Dot Brat, Irish-American mother came to Randolph only as a teenager in 1974, when her mother and step-father had put together the resources to move their children away from the turmoil that gripped the Boston schools during that first year of busing. She told me about the difficulty she had adjusting to suburban living and how often she used to hop on the 240 bus back to Dorchester – the exact same story told by countless of teenagers from other racial and ethnic backgrounds every decade since.

My mother raised my brother and me in a small apartment in one of the complexes built in the early 1980s. I began the first grade at the Young School in South Randolph. In second grade I went to the JFK School after it had been converted from a junior high to accommodate the burgeoning population of young children. My classmates from the single-family homes a stone's throw away remained at the Young, but everyone from my neighborhood of apartment buildings was sent across town. We noticed.

You can imagine my childhood if you combine typical suburban reminiscences with typical urban memoirs – little league, sledding, occasional violence, school band, interesting characters in my apartment building, walking my grandmother's dog, playing in shopping carts in the apartment parking lot, and that one time the three ATF agents rushed out of the elevator with guns drawn (we decided to take the stairs).

My cohort of students spent six years at Randolph High from the 7th to the 12th grade. As a student, I often felt treated like a prisoner. Every year brought new security crackdowns as we were increasingly perceived as an "urban" school and Columbine and other (suburban) incidents put everyone on edge. We weren't educated like prep school kids, but we could learn if we wanted to and the music department couldn't be beat. What we lacked in nice equipment we made up for in talent and passion. During my time at Randolph High, one could hear 40 different languages spoken in the halls. I chose French classes over Spanish because the majority language in my apartment building was Haitian Kreyol. Violence within and between groups of young people was once common, but we organized against it successfully with the Student Alliance Against Racism and Violence. By my senior year of high school one could see young people from all different backgrounds sitting together at cafeteria tables, and inter-racial couples were common at the senior prom. Like most good things it seemed that our peaceful integration came from our own initiative while the actions of officials had only gotten in the way.

I left Randolph for college in 2002. I had been told to expect no better than to attend a state

university because I came from such a “bad” school, but I ended up with my choice of tier one colleges. I chose Swarthmore College and went to Philadelphia prepared to be behind my new peers. Instead, it was not long before I realized just how valuable an experience Randolph had been for me. My family never had the resources to travel, but by the time I left Randolph for college I had friends from all over the world and a cultural understanding that served me tremendously in college and all of my travels since.

Talking about my background, however, always proved a challenge. I grew up in a suburb of Boston, but my experiences were more akin to those of my classmates from New York City and other urban places. Just about everyone I talk to from Randolph had the same experience as they entered the larger world, whether still in Massachusetts, around the US, or beyond. Randolph always bore explaining. The language to make that explanation was usually lacking.

Now, I am trying to formalize the explanation. My hope for this paper is that it contributes to understanding how we can maintain strong and diverse neighborhoods in American suburbs, which are the latest frontiers of racial and ethnic integration. Beyond that, this paper is plainly a personal quest. I seek to understand the unique place where I grew up and the community that raised me.

Part of the methodology for exploring this place is to interview current and former residents on their understandings of Randolph. Their personal narratives shed light on what the place is, why it is that way, and what it may become. Turning that method on myself, if I were to write my own history of Randolph - based on my experiences, family history, and decades of anecdotes from other members of the community, but leaving aside all the research I have done – it would be the following.

For the past sixty years or so Randolph has been a gateway to suburban living for many different ethnic groups as they venture out from Dorchester, Mattapan, and other areas. The Irish were among the first to come, and they may not have been entirely welcome in the rural New England town at first. The Irish were followed by the Jews who left Boston. These migrations were followed by a large diversity of other ethnic groups of every race, African-Americans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Nigerians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Indians, Cape Verdeans, Brazilians, Italians, Polish, Ukrainians, and many, many more.

My Randolph has a chip on its shoulder. In the late 1990s, it seemed like we were constantly denigrated in the press. Our regional newspaper The Patriot Ledger often wrote damaging articles regarding Randolph’s schools and demographics. The Boston Globe mostly ignored Randolph’s story until a trio of murders in 2007, more often choosing to write glowing articles about diversity in the considerably less diverse towns of Milton and Waltham. Even within the town, we were disparaged. The school superintendent in 1998 blamed low Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System test scores on high percentages of immigrants and kids from single parent families, despite the fact that many of the top scorers were children of immigrants and/or single parents. People from rougher areas of Boston gave us the nickname “Scramdolph” while people from other South Shore suburbs gave us an opposite nickname, “Mattapandolph.”

In recent years, Randolph has been plagued with problems including low performing schools, crime, broken municipal finances, and a dearth of civic engagement. My personal belief is that the source of these problems actually has little to do with Randolph's diverse population but that these problems do pose a lethal threat to Randolph's diversity.

I am undertaking this study to shed light on the meaning of community change in Randolph. I hope that the diverse, global community that helped to raise me so well can be preserved and replicated throughout Massachusetts and the nation.

Glossary

Many terms used throughout this paper lack a precise common definition in our society and are sometimes controversial. Some are also local jargon. These definitions represent the specific meanings given to these words in my writing.

Race – a socially invented categorization of people based roughly on physical features, defined herein approximately along the US Census groupings of (non-hispanic) white, black, Asian, Native American, and Latino (Hispanic)

Ethnicity – a characterization of people based on a group's descent or culture, closely related to but not necessarily defined by ancestry, nationality, or a religion, for example: Irish, Jewish, Haitian, African-American, Arab

Ethnic white – a person of the white race who claims an ethnic identity

Nationality – the status of belonging to a specific nation by origin, birth, or naturalization, for example American, Israeli or Taiwanese

Ancestry – a characterization of people based upon the land where their ancestors lived, used as a category in the US Census

Culture – the way people do things in daily life, in attitude and beliefs, and in ritual

City – a municipality with a large population, dense housing, and a city form of government

Suburb – a small to medium sized municipality, located outside of the metropolitan center

Urban – having to do with characteristics commonly thought to be typical of cities

Proposition 2 ½ - a Massachusetts law created by voter referendum in 1980 that limits municipal property taxes. Municipalities are forbidden from collecting revenue greater than 2.5% of the assessed value of all taxable property and are also forbidden from increasing property taxes by greater than 2.5% in any year. Because inflation is almost always greater than 2.5%, this law results in real annual decreases in municipal revenues. An override referendum allows for greater increases.

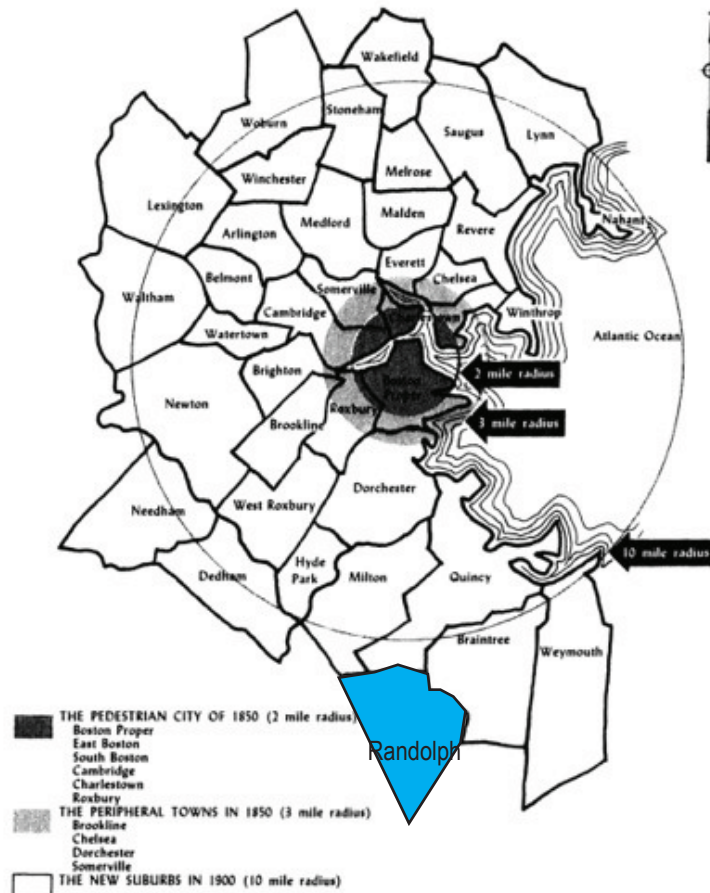
Town Meeting – the traditional form of New England town government, wherein a periodic meeting comprised of either all eligible voters or a large body of elected representatives vote on issues before the town

Board of Selectmen – the executive branch of a New England town government

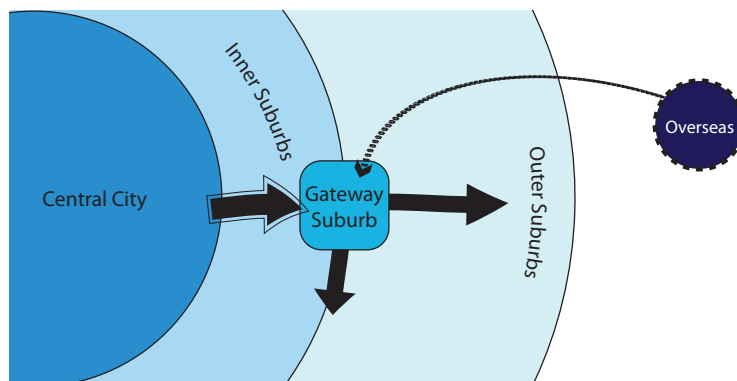
Community of choice - a place where people with the economic power to choose among neighborhoods will choose to live

The Gateway Suburb Defined

Randolph represents an emerging class of places that I will refer to as “gateway suburbs.” Randolph is somewhat unique in the Boston metropolitan area, but part of a growing and not uncommon group of suburbs in other metro areas. They are the suburbs accessible to people first leaving the central city or first arriving in America. This gateway function has left these places with a special set of characteristics and issues. These towns pose a definitional problem for the language commonly used to describe places. I attempt to create a language to define these places here so that their special issues can be addressed.



Firstly, these places are definitively suburban in location, form, and government. They are auto-centric suburbs, outside of the ring of places that has come to be known as “streetcar suburbs” or “inner suburbs” surrounding older central cities. Yet, they are often close enough to the city to have some public transit options. In the familiar (to planners) pedestrian city map of Boston, gateway suburbs lie around the edge of the 10-mile radius featured in the map. If the map is thought of as diagramming the generational movement of neighborhood succession, the gateway suburbs are the next step outward for the families whose history has already moved from the old walking city to the peripheral towns to the streetcar suburbs. The gateway suburb is a gateway to suburban living both for people from the central city and old urbanized streetcar suburbs and for immigrants coming from abroad.



Gateway suburbs’ largest period of growth occurred during the mid-century American suburbanization. They often have a diversity of housing stock. They are municipalities with independent town government. They have

populations in the range of 20,000 – 50,000, more commonly identified as towns than cities.

These places have demographic characteristics more commonly thought of as urban in America. They have a significant degree of racial and ethnic diversity. As Randolph native Sarah Yoffe said, “Multiculturalism is the first thing I think about when I describe my hometown. But then I have to tell people, ‘No, it’s a town. It’s not a city.’” Many residents are immigrants, and increasingly they are relatively recent migrants. Immigrants in gateway suburbs are less likely to be self-segregating by language or nationality than those in more traditional ethnic enclaves. Gateway suburbs are multiethnic communities. They are also socio-economically diverse with lower-, working-, and middle-class residents.

Gateway suburbs tend to house members of diasporas. Because many of their residents are not long removed from the old neighborhood or the home country, gateway suburbs have many people who identify just as strongly with the place they came from as they do with the gateway suburb in which they currently live. At the same time, gateway suburbs are “the old neighborhood” for the generations that have already decamped for farther out suburbs. One woman who left for a town where she could have a bigger house, more land, and higher quality schools said, “Until recently my husband had his office in Randolph and we occasionally go back to our old church so we still have a small connection there. We enjoy showing our kids some of the places we lived and hung out when we were younger.”

Gateway suburbs are places that have changed greatly in recent decades. Their “urban” social characteristics became apparent sometime after the 1970s or 1980s. Gateway suburbs experienced changes as groups of residents left for more distant and affluent suburbs and were replaced by yet more new suburbanites arriving from the city. Often, these towns struggle with population changes and may have troubled school systems, municipal services, infrastructure, and finances. Adaptation to change is always slow, and leaves gateway suburbs as hybridized communities. Randolph native Max Gladstone described Randolph as, “a place with old town views and a new town society.”

I have chosen to call these places gateway suburbs because of their function within the metropolitan area. The term’s parallel to the “gateway city,” typified in Massachusetts by small cities like Brockton, Lowell, and Holyoke, is also intentional. Gateway suburbs like gateway cities are struggling to satisfy their infrastructure needs, to fulfill their education and social service commitments, and to repair their tarnished reputations. The gateway suburbs and gateway cities share many common struggles, although there is a difference in degree. The gateway cities’ problems are usually more severe and more deeply entrenched from decades of disinvestment following an industrial collapse. The gateway suburbs were never big industrial towns but suburbs of a central city.

The gateway suburbs concept is also similar to but distinct from the metropolitan areas dubbed “21st century gateways” by the Brookings Institution. These places were entirely native born as recently as 1970 but emerged in the last decade as major immigrant gateways. Gateway suburbs and 21st century gateways have this demographic change in common. The distinction between the two lies in the gateway suburb’s relation to a central city. Many of the 21st century gateways

defined by Brookings are metropolitan areas that are not truly cities so much as large, loosely bounded, lower-density, sprawling, areas. The gateway suburb concept does not apply in those areas so much as it does in older metropolitan areas defined by a central urbanized area.

Foreign immigration is a characteristic of gateway suburbs, but it is not the defining characteristic. Gateway suburbs’ broad diversity is primarily the result of residents arriving from the central city. Therefore, the gateway suburb concept differs from Price and Singer’s “edge gateways,” which are suburban and exurban areas with significant immigrant populations drawn there by job growth. Gateway suburbs function not only as a gateway to America for immigrants but as a gateway to the suburbs for more established Americans leaving the city.

The gateway suburbs concept is most closely related to the Brookings Institution’s “first suburbs”. Brookings defines a first suburb as a county that developed after its central city but before major suburban expansion and that contains or is adjacent to one of the top 100 cities in 1950. The first suburbs tend to face challenges from aging infrastructure, fragmented municipal governance, income inequality and an aging population. The Brookings study on first suburbs notes but fails to disaggregate the stark differences among different communities within its county level unit of analysis. Gateway suburbs then may be thought of as a sub-category of the Brookings defined first suburbs. In fact, Brookings defined Norfolk County, in which Randolph is located, as a first suburb. The Brookings analysis of first suburbs also states that from the perspective of attempting to build a public policy campaign, “first suburbs as a whole may be hampered by their heterogeneity.” This seems to necessitate even finer grained definitions such as the gateway suburb.

Examples of other gateway suburbs are detailed in the table below. Few of these gateway suburbs are currently in Massachusetts, but several Massachusetts towns are posed to become gateway suburbs in the future. Framingham and Waltham already match many of the characteristics of a gateway suburb. The same groups that initially moved from Mattapan and Dorchester to make Randolph a gateway suburb have now moved on to other further out suburbs. Do Easton, Bridgewater, or Canton – each of which house many former Randolph residents – hold the potential to be tomorrow’s gateway?

Examples of Gateway Suburbs

	Suburb of:	Most housing built	Single Family Detached Housing	3+ Unit Housing	Median Household Income	Foreign Born	White	Black	Asian	Latino
Randolph MA	Boston	1950 - 1989	64.90%	22.40%	\$68,522	27.2%	47.4%	32.1%	11.8%	6.5%
Upper Darby PA	Philadelphia	1930 - 1959	25.00%	23.50%	\$52,900	16.5%	62.1%	22.9%	10.9%	2.8%
Greenbelt MD	Washington, DC	1960 - 1989	9.00%	62.30%	\$76,042	23.7%	32.2%	46.9%	9.7%	7.0%
Silver Spring MD	Washington DC	1940 - 1969	42.10%	51.90%	\$70,970	35.2%	38.7%	24.5%	7.0%	26.6%
Oak Park MI	Detroit	1950 - 1969	73.70%	17.40%	\$50,800	11.5%	41.6%	51.8%	2.4%	1.2%
Pennsauken NJ	Philadelphia	1950 - 1979	73.50%	11.50%	\$58,864	11.7%	43.6%	25.8%	6.9%	21.3%
Bloomfield CT	Hartford	1950 - 1989	64.95%	24.09%	\$68,846	22.6%	33.2%	57.6%	0.6%	4.0%

History and Today's Randolph

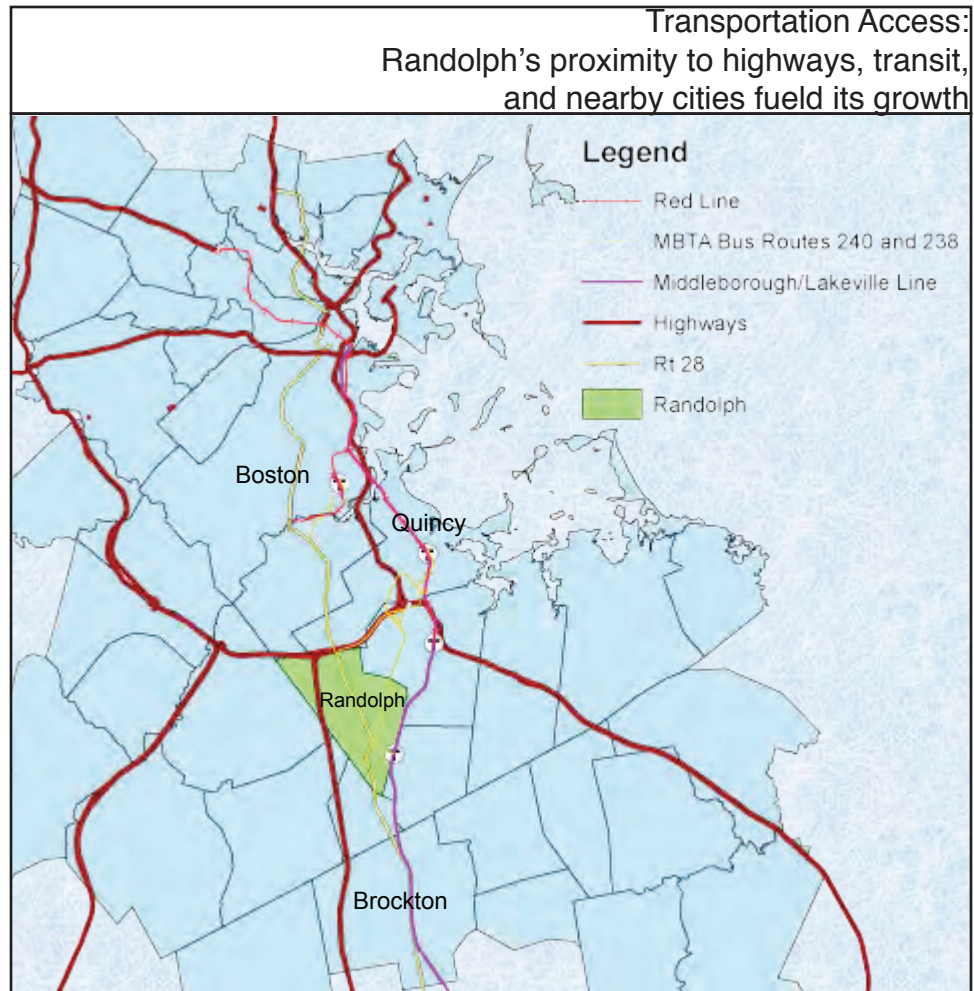
Understanding the history of growth in Randolph is key to understanding its function as a gateway suburb and the resulting diversity of today. For most of its history, Randolph had been a fairly typical small New England town. During colonial times, the land just south of the Blue Hills that would become Randolph was a part of Braintree. Randolph incorporated as a town in 1793 at the same time that Holbrook and Quincy broke away from Braintree to form independent towns. Residents in the farming village supplemented their incomes with shoe cobbling because the soil was too poor for successful farming. In the early 1800s, bootmaking factories opened in Randolph. The population quadrupled in the first half of the century with industrialization, but Randolph's small bootmaking industry was quickly overshadowed by the larger bootmakers in the city of Brockton to the south. Population was stagnant, hovering around 4,000 people until highway construction transformed Randolph forever.

Route 128, Boston's circumferential highway, opened on Randolph's northern border in 1927. This first highway transformed Randolph into a true suburb. After 70 years of stagnation, the population grew 38% to 6,553 persons between the 1920 and 1930 censuses. Randolph, like most American suburbs, then experienced a population explosion in the post-war era. Programs for returning veterans, FHA loans, and subsidized construction programs encouraged suburban growth. Additional highways also made the town even more attractive for suburbanization. Route 24 opened in 1951, running through Randolph's western border on its trip between Fall River, Brockton and Route 128. In 1957, the Southeast Expressway created a much faster connection to downtown Boston.

Randolph's close proximity to Dorchester and Mattapan made it especially attractive to the suburbanizing Irish and Jewish communities from those neighborhoods. Randolph was a place where people leaving those Boston neighborhoods could buy a single-family home, commute



Census	Population	% Decennial Change	Event
1800	1,021		
1850	4,741	73%	Bootmaking
1880	4,027	-5%	
1890	3,946	-2%	
1900	3,993	1%	
1920	4,756	10%	
1930	6,553	38%	Rt 128
1940	7,634	17%	
1950	9,982	31%	Post-War Growth
1960	18,900	89%	Rt 24; I-93; Jews leave Mattapan
1970	27,035	43%	Jews Leave Mattapan
1980	28,218	4%	Busing in Boston
1990	30,093	7%	
2000	30,963	3%	
2006-08	29,223 (+/- 1210)	-6% (+/-4%)	



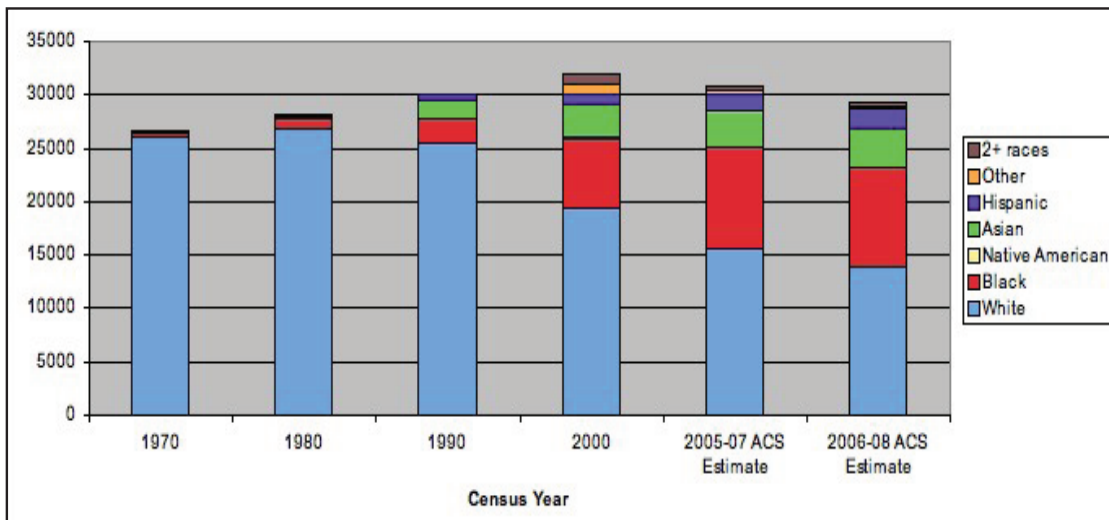
easily to employment downtown or along Route 128, and remain close enough to the old neighborhood to maintain their social ties. By 1970, the town had grown to 27,000 persons and population growth began to stabilize.

The arrival of the Jewish population marked the first time Randolph's demographics differed from the typical suburban Boston community. Randolph's Jewish community developed after Mattapan's Jewish community began to suburbanize. As late as 1950, no more than twenty Jewish families lived in the town. The middle class Jews who began to leave Mattapan in the 1950s mostly settled in Sharon if they had the means to. Randolph was the only suburb accessible to working class and middle class Jews. As a result, Randolph's Jewish community emerged in the late 1950s and 1960s when the exodus from the city entered its final stages. For several decades, Randolph replaced Mattapan as the Jewish hub south of Boston. Jews in Randolph organized Conservative, Orthodox, and Reform temples and built a Jewish cemetery. The Conservative Temple Beth-Am dominates a major intersection on North Main Street with its 50 foot stone tablets of the Ten Commandments in Hebrew. By the middle 1980s, Randolph's Jewish population began to decline in number as families developed the means to move to even higher class suburbs. But, the Jewish community remains a significant and prominent part of the town of Randolph.

During Randolph’s growth, housing construction predictably lagged behind population growth. The largest boom in building, especially in the building of more affordable multi-family apartment complexes came during the 1970s and 1980s. By the end of the 1980s, Randolph could boast a diverse housing stock including large lot single-family homes, duplexes, small lot single- and multi-family houses, and larger three- and four-story apartment complexes.

Randolph’s population grew modestly after 1970, but significant changes began to take place in the population through the 1980s and 1990s. Randolph continued to be a gateway to suburban living for former residents of Dorchester, Mattapan, and other Boston neighborhoods. But, new groups started to join the suburbanizing ethnic whites. Randolph’s Black, Asian, and Latino populations began to grow during this period including African-Americans, Caribbean peoples, Cape Verdeans, Chinese, Vietnamese, Puerto Ricans and many others. Randolph became the most open destination for this diverse group of people to seek out suburban living. According to my interviews, these people moved to Randolph for the same reasons that ethnic whites had in the previous couple decades – better schools, better housing, some green space, and easy access to the communities they left in Boston’s neighborhoods as well as the job centers downtown and along Route 128.

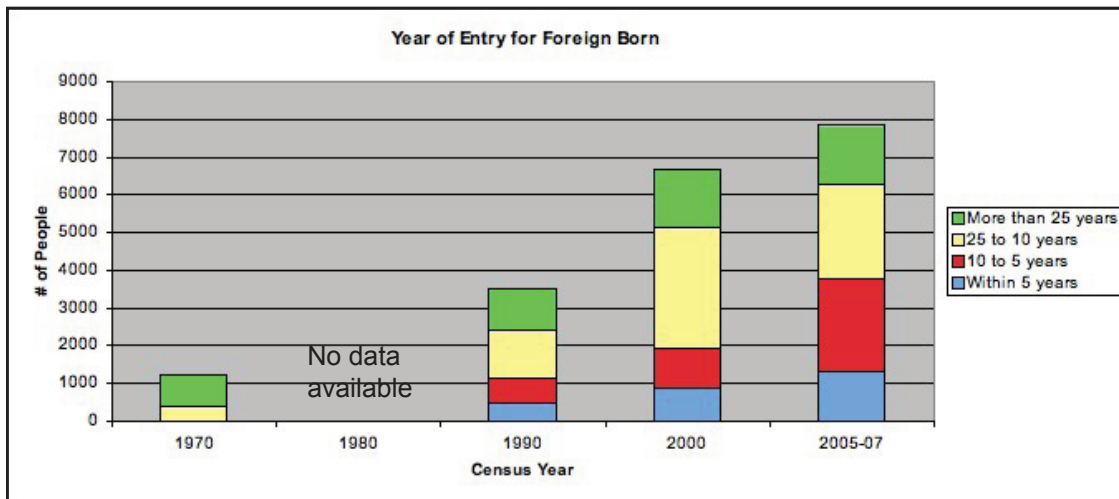
By the mid to late 1990s, Randolph had become Boston’s most diverse suburb. In the 2000 census, Randolph was 63% White, 21% Black, 10% Asian, 3% Latino, and 3% other. Tipping point theory suggests that once communities become roughly 5-15% non-white, an exodus of white residents follows until the community is composed almost entirely of a disadvantaged racial group. In fact, Randolph’s population was 5% people of color in the 1980 census, and the number of white residents has consistently fallen since. However, the change has occurred slowly. After more than three decades, Randolph remains 47% white. Change will continue to occur, but the destructive shifts suggested by tipping point theory do not necessarily apply.



Notably, the many different groups who call Randolph home live throughout the town rather than clustering in small neighborhoods. For this reason, the Boston Globe recognized Randolph as “the most integrated municipality in the Commonwealth.” Sandra Pimentel, who worked in the Norfolk County District Attorney’s office during the 1990s, attributed successful real estate discrimination prosecutions with preventing segregated neighborhoods from forming in Randolph. She also highlighted the importance of the Student Alliance Against Racism and Violence and other groups in the community towards Randolph’s relatively peaceful integration.

This mixing stands in stark contrast to the surrounding communities south of Boston. Whites dominate most of the nearby suburbs, while there are strong concentrations of blacks and Latinos in urban Dorchester, Mattapan, and Brockton, and Asians in Quincy. The maps on the next page illustrate the difference.

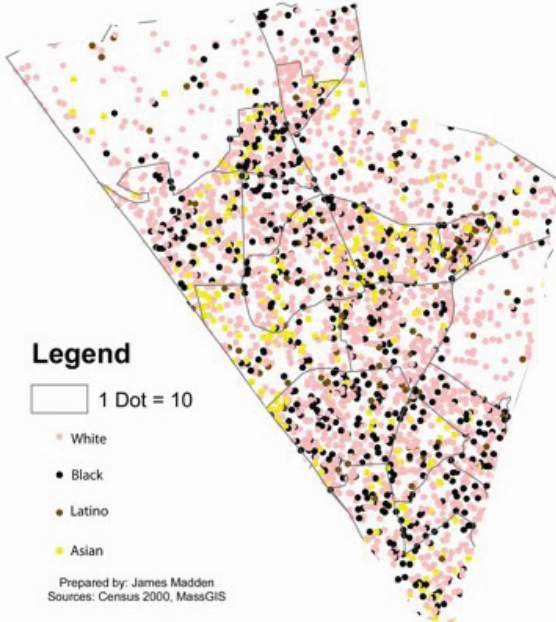
A new phenomenon of migration to Randolph began in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Randolph has long been a second step move for immigrants who first settled in the city. But, by the 1990s enough potential immigration sponsors had made the move to Randolph that their families joined them in the suburb, bypassing the city altogether. Jen Harrison’s family chose Randolph when they left Hong Kong to avoid its return to the People’s Republic of China. They chose Randolph because, “My dad’s sister had a house to rent out to us in Randolph. They also sponsored us to the U.S.” The growing trend can also be seen in this chart of census data showing an increase in the number of immigrants in Randolph who are more recent arrivals in the United States.



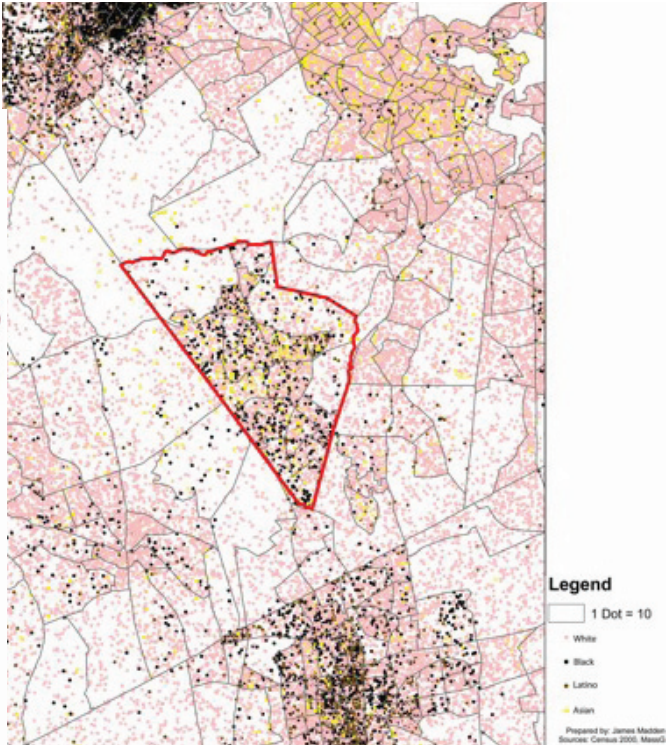
Randolph in recent decades stands out from other Massachusetts communities not just in the racial diversity it houses but also in the tremendous ethnic diversity within and among racial groups. While race is as powerful a force in Randolph as it is in the rest of American society, ethnicity mattered even more than race to those of us who grew up there. For many decades, no single ethnic group has dominated the town’s population or even the population of any racial group. The charts on page 24 depict the ethnic diversity within the town and each racial group.

Mapping Race in Randolph, Surrounding Communities, and Massachusetts

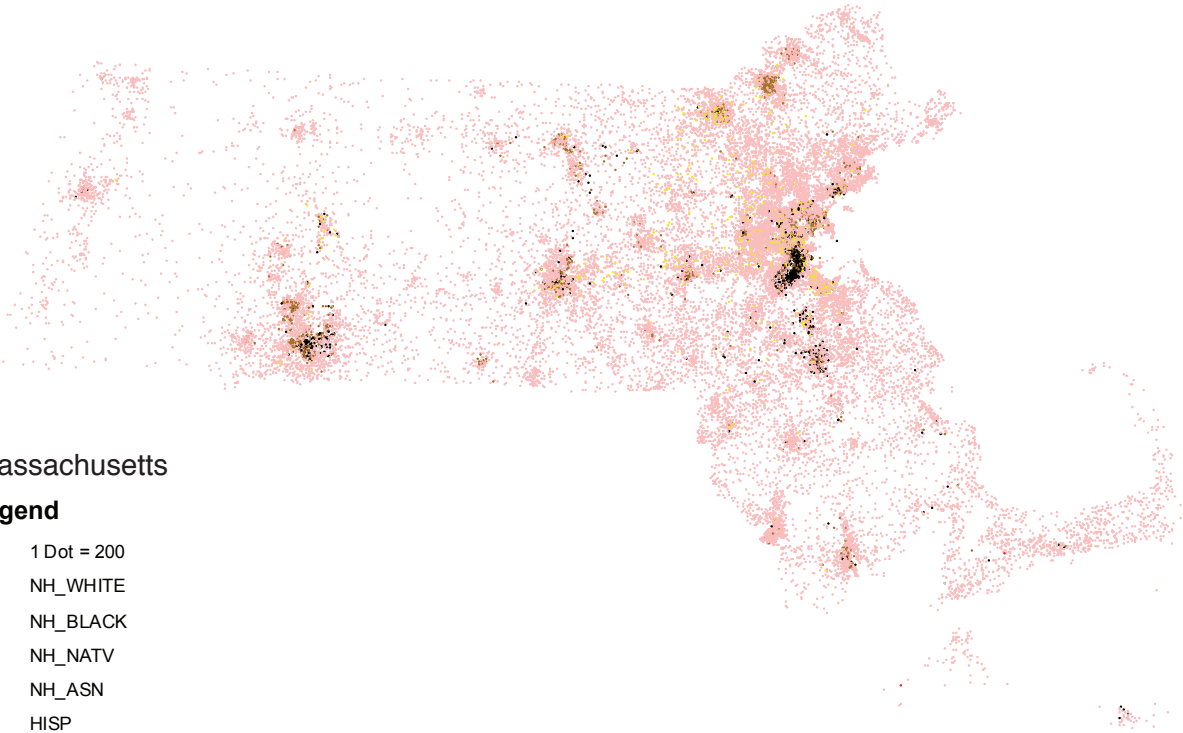
As noted on the previous page, Randolph's neighborhoods are racially integrated while the surrounding areas are visibly segregated in these maps showing the concentration of people of different races within 2000 Census blockgroups



Randolph



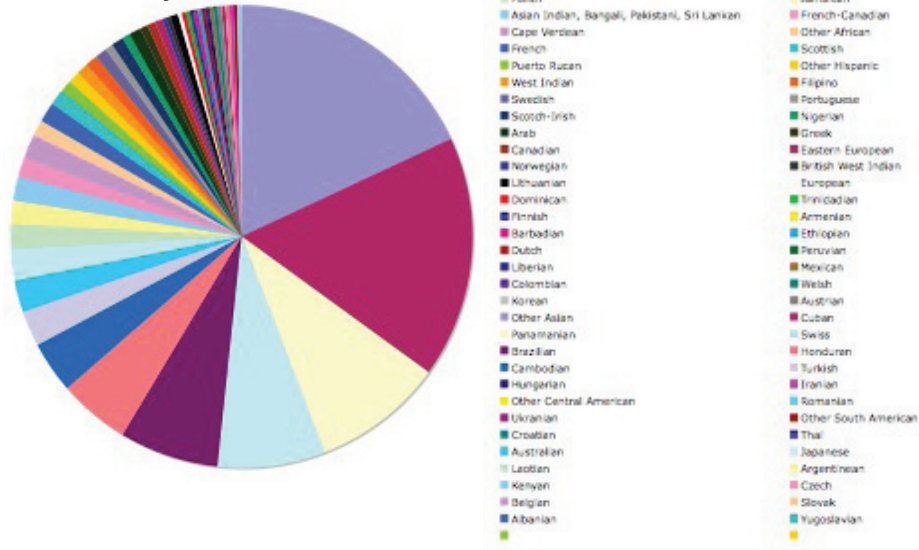
Surrounding Communities



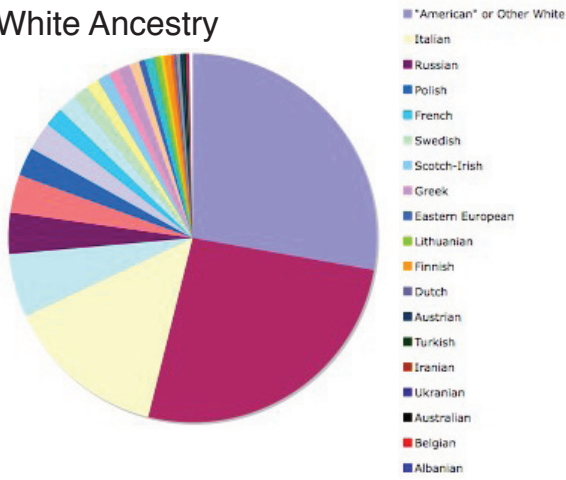
Massachusetts

Randolph's Ethnic Diversity by Census 2000 Figures

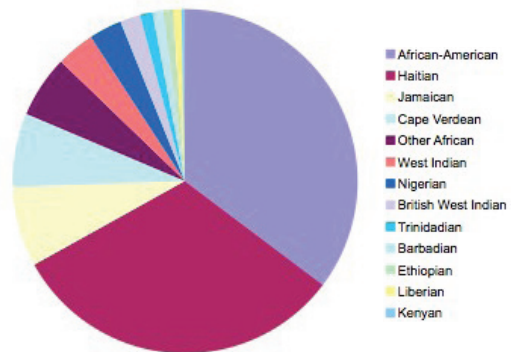
All Ancestry



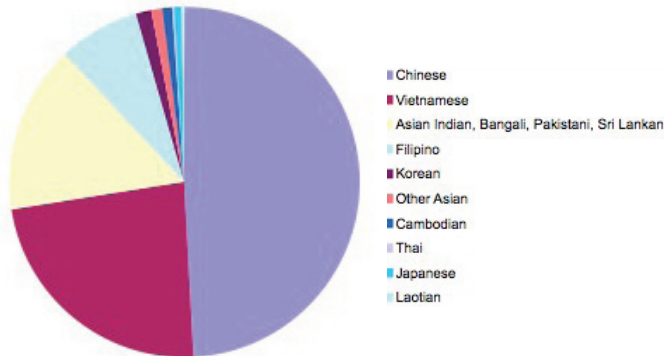
White Ancestry



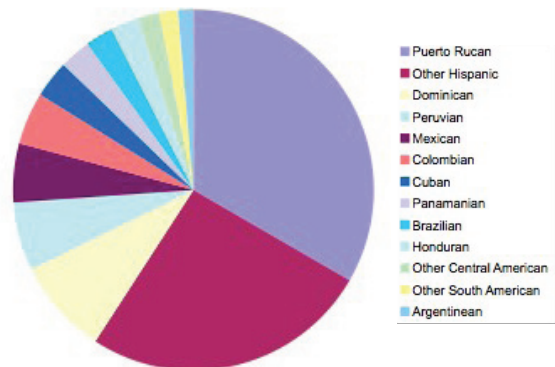
Black Ancestry



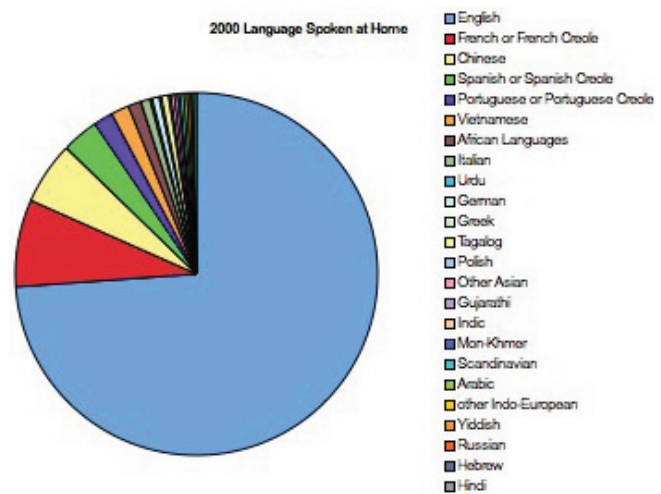
Asian Ancestry



Latino Ancestry



Another way to perceive Randolph's diversity is in the wide range of languages spoken there. During my 2002 high school commencement, the principal boasted that more than 40 languages could be heard in the halls of Randolph High. The number of different languages spoken and the lack of a single dominant foreign language also sets Randolph apart from many other immigrant communities. This chart shows the languages reported spoken at home by Randolph residents in the 2000 Census. The vast diversity of non-English languages poses a challenge for providing services to all of Randolph's communities.



Randolph's diversity is reflected in the town's institutions and businesses. Religious congregations serve a broad number of faiths in several languages. Some lead the way for their groups to settle in the town, such as the Jewish temples. Others reached out to growing populations, like when St. Bernadette's Catholic Church welcomed the first Vietnamese pastor in the archdiocese. International Assembly of God, with services initially aimed towards Nigerians, had to adapt when it also became popular among Caribbean peoples and Cambodians. Some of Randolph's religious institutions are even integrated. Theresa Couture, a Randolph resident of French-Canadian descent is proud of her parish, "St Mary's now has a very progressive pastor and a very diverse congregation."

Like in most other main street areas, Randolph's small business retail is buttressed by ethnic and immigrant owned businesses. Along the main street areas and in strip malls, Randolph's small businesses provide groceries, restaurants, hair care, imports, clothing, and other services to Vietnamese, Haitians, Jamaicans, Italians, Greeks, Chinese, African-Americans, and other ethnic groups. They also include food, services, and consumer goods directed at the general population but potentially owned by members of any ethnic group.

After seven decades of rather constant population change, Randolph continued to transform in the first decade of this century. This study is being written barely a year ahead of Census 2010 data becoming available, but data from the Census' American Community Surveys and school enrollment numbers as well as the impressions of residents indicate that in the naughties, Randolph's Haitian and Vietnamese populations grew significantly while the Jewish, other white, and South Asian populations shifted towards other suburbs.

Randolph's Religious Institutions

Trinity Episcopal Church
 First Congregational Church
 Temple Beth Am (conservative)
 Young Israel-Kehillath Jacob (orthodox)
 Lindwood Jewish Memorial Park Cemetery
 St. Mary's Catholic Church and Cemetery
 St Bernadette's Catholic Church
 (holds Vietnamese mass)

International Assembly of God
 Tabernacle of Praise
 First Baptist Church Randolph
 Western Africa District AME
 Church of Abundant Love
 Holy Tabernacle Church
 Church of Christ
 Grace Church



A Selection of Randolph's Ethnic Businesses



Choosing Randolph

The central question for Randolph – and perhaps for any residential community – is how to remain a community of choice. A community of choice is one where people with the economic means to have a free choice about where to live will choose to live. A community of choice is competitive for new residents. Randolph has been a community of choice at various times for various peoples. Today, many people view it not as a community of choice but a place to be avoided, to leave, or to stay in as nothing more than a necessary stepping stone to somewhere else.

This chapter lays out the reasons families in my interviews have chosen to move to and to stay in Randolph over the last sixty years. These reasons include Randolph's:

- Suburban Character
- Housing Market
- Location
- Diversity

The following chapter will deal with why people choose to leave Randolph. Together, these discussions highlight which qualities have the potential to make Randolph competitive and remain a community of choice.

Suburban Character

Slightly more than half of the families included in my interviews cited the desire to move to the suburbs as their primary reason for initially moving to Randolph. They expressed this desire in several ways. Some said that their families wanted to be able to live in a house with a yard. Some wanted a safe environment. Some said better schools. Some said trees or quiet. Families looking at Randolph from Mattapan, Dorchester, Brockton, and other places viewed Randolph as a place that could provide all of these archetypical suburban qualities. Until recently, Randolph's schools outperformed both nearby cities and the state average, and Randolph's crime rates were below those of nearby urban and some nearby suburban areas. Remarkably Randolph's attractiveness as a place for suburban living has been persistent over time. The interviewees who cited suburbanization as the prime motive for moving to Randolph include families who arrived in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. The suburbanizing motive was also consistent across racial and ethnic groups. The interviewees citing suburbanization motives included Jewish, Bengali, Irish, French-Canadian, German, Polish, Eritrean, English, Vietnamese, African-American, Chinese, and Haitian families. As each generation of Americans rose in economic status and left the city neighborhoods, they found Randolph to be an accessible, welcoming, and desirable place to move.

Jennifer Harrison reminisced about growing up in the town. "I think I had the best of both worlds growing up in Randolph. We were close enough to the city to go every weekend, but also far enough to have an enclosed small town feel. I remember running around my neighborhood, chasing the ice cream truck while the sun began to set, and knowing every kid in the surrounding

three blocks. I remember sneaking into the Presidential Acres [apartment complex] pool on hot summer days. I remember walking to Friendly's for breakfast. I remember my first job at Zeppy's Bagel Bakery. I remember sledding down the icy slopes at the school for the deaf."

Guerline Menard described Randolph in the 1990s as "very community oriented with events like the [4th of July] parade. People knew each other; it was a great place to live. It had a sense of community that I didn't feel in other places."

Housing Market

The second most common motive for choosing Randolph among my interview sample was homeownership. Roughly a quarter of interviewees said their families chose to live in Randolph because it provided the best homeownership value. One definition for value is the quality obtained for the price paid. Randolph's housing stock includes homes that are affordable to first-time homebuyers while also being of decent size and condition with large enough lots and access to community facilities. Guerline Menard's family first moved to the suburbs by renting an apartment in Waltham even though they had family in Randolph. But in 1994 when it came time for the family to become homeowners, they moved to Randolph because they could buy "a better house for the price in Randolph." Homeownership was also commonly mentioned in my interviews as a reason why people chose to remain in Randolph.

Less common in my interviews, but plain from data on Randolph's housing stock and my own personal experience is that Randolph is also an accessible place for families needing affordable rental homes and apartments. Families looking for subsidized housing have much less choice than homebuyers about where to live. They spend long times on multiple waiting lists for subsidized units. However, Randolph's subsidized units are a better alternative for many families than the older, poorer quality, less safe public housing units available in nearby cities.

The types of housing available in Randolph also make the community attractive to a variety of families. Longtime Patriot Ledger reporter Fred Hanson recalls the growth and diversification of Randolph's housing stock. "In the '80s, there was another real estate boom in Massachusetts, and then they were building lots of duplexes. And the Chinese community loved duplexes, because you could have your extended family. You could have grandparents on one side of the house and parents and their kids on the other side of the house, you know, close enough to interact with each other, but enough of a wall between them so that you could have some privacy." This housing style is attractive to large extended families who want to balance the benefits of suburban single-family housing with the benefits of sharing housing with family. It is also attractive to people who wish to use the rental income from one half of the home to help pay the mortgage on the entire building. Filmmaker Tze Chun prominently featured Randolph's duplexes in two films, *Windowbreaker* and *Children of Invention*. In a conversation with Chun, who himself grew up in a duplex in Randolph, the filmmaker described the aesthetic image of the blocks of duplexes as something uniquely Randolph that he wished to capture on film.

Housing Styles of Randolph

Randolph has a very diverse housing stock. The photographs below show some typical forms including large garden apartment complexes, suburban colonials, single family ranches, ranch duplexes, and bungalows.



Location

Randolph's location is another feature that makes the town competitive and is a common reason for residents' choice to live there. The town lies along Routes 128 and 24 and is close to Route 3. These highways provide quick and easy access to the employment centers in Boston, Quincy, and the Route 128 suburbs as well as to the cities, towns, and beaches of southeastern Massachusetts. Randolph's main street is Route 28, which provides easy access to Dorchester and Brockton. The 240 bus runs through Randolph along Route 28 to the Ashmont red line terminal. The 238 bus also runs through Randolph, providing access to the Quincy Center and Quincy Adams red line stops, the South Shore Plaza, and the Holbrook/Randolph commuter rail stop. This access to employment, shopping, and recreation is an attractive feature for a suburban community. Additionally, the easy access to the urban neighborhoods from which many first generation suburbanites come is a reason Randolph functions well as a gateway suburb.

Diversity

Diversity is another feature that leads people to move to Randolph. It is also a reason cited by some to explain why they stay in Randolph, and for others why they left. Diversity is a rare feature among Boston suburbs, so it could have a strong impact on Randolph's competitiveness as a community of choice. Whether it is an advantage or a detriment depends upon the target market's interpretation of diversity as well as the manner in which it is presented to them.

Several of my interviewees initially chose to move to Randolph specifically for its racial and ethnic diversity. In the late 1950s to the early 1970s, Jewish families chose Randolph because of its openness to them and its position at the time as an up and coming Jewish community. Later on people of color, especially blacks, found Randolph was more accepting and open to their families than were other Boston suburbs. Micah Christian's family moved to Randolph from an outer suburb, West Bridgewater, when he was in the fourth grade in 1994 because they wanted Randolph's diversity. Four communities account for more than half of total home mortgage lending to blacks in Massachusetts, Boston, Brockton, Springfield, and Randolph. Randolph is the only one of these that is a suburb. Bic Nguyen highlighted Randolph's uniqueness in this respect by saying that Randolph is "smaller than other diverse places, but more diverse than other small places."

Randolph's diversity transforms its residents. A larger and more diverse group of interviewees cited diversity as a reason they enjoy living in Randolph and plan to stay than did those who say they initially moved to Randolph because of its diversity. Nearly all interviewees who graduated from Randolph High School talked at length about the positive impact that Randolph's diversity had upon them and the advantages they discovered upon entering higher education and the working world. Sarah Yoffe, who rode her Randolph public school education to Wellesley College, said that Randolph's diversity makes it "the type of place I want to raise my children." Angela Williams said, "People might move there for it. You can get the city without the city."

Diversity is a delicate balance for a community to maintain. To remain diverse, Randolph must continue to attract the middle class White and Asian populations more likely to move to other suburbs while at the same time remaining welcoming and attractive to Blacks and Latinos as well as working class and lower income people of all ethnic groups. Diversity is endangered in other areas, such as Jamaica Plain and Somerville, because the economic forces of gentrification are making those places less accessible to working and lower class people. Randolph's diverse housing stock, its transportation access, and its distance from Boston's universities make gentrification unlikely. Conversely, struggling cities like Lawrence become less diverse as they become dominated by one or two ethnic groups. Randolph's diversity may come to an end in a similar way if Randolph is no longer a community of choice.

Leaving Randolph

The previous chapter explained why my interviewees initially chose to move to Randolph and why some of them chose to stay. Of the twenty-four families represented in my interviews, one-third had already left Randolph and another sixth reported that they planned to leave in the future. This chapter explores the reasons these families chose to move elsewhere, including:

- Suburbanization
- Public schools
- Retirement
- Property value fears
- Race

This chapter and the previous complete a discussion on the factors affecting residential choice based on interview data from current and former residents (unfortunately, the voices of potential future residents are not a part of this study). The next chapter will include in-depth studies of several issues affecting Randolph's functioning as a community based on quantitative data, newspaper accounts, and interviews. Together, these three chapters form the basis for making recommendations as to how Randolph and other gateway suburbs can maintain themselves as vibrant communities of choice.

Suburbanization

Suburbanization – a move for a larger house, yard, safety, and quiet – was one of the main reasons most families moved to Randolph in the first place. It has also become one of the main reasons people have left or plan to leave Randolph. The popular definition of suburb is relative. In the mid-twentieth century days of suburbanization, Randolph's homes and amenities matched what the emerging market of suburbanites desired. Today however the suburbanite market desires larger homes, larger lots, and larger stores than Randolph can provide. A family from Boston may regard a move to Randolph as a move to the suburbs. But, a family from Randolph might regard a move to Bridgewater or Easton as a move to the suburbs. Anirban Paul, a former Randolph resident, explained how most of the Indians he knew from Randolph moved to Sharon, Canton, or Stoughton, "Randolph was a good stepping stone because of affordability and decent schools, a good place for immigrants to start." The more distant suburbs people leave Randolph for provide larger lot sizes and lighter densities than Randolph. They also have higher ranked schools, more municipal resources, and lower crime rates.

Schools

School quality is often cited as the most important determinant of a residential area's competitiveness. Randolph's schools experienced a decade of decline before bottoming out in 2007. In that year, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges put Randolph High School on probation after its accreditation review. The failure to achieve accreditation

for the high school was quickly followed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) declaration of the Randolph Public School system as “underperforming.” This official declaration was the result of several years of sub-standard scores on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests and an in depth analysis of the schools by DESE staff. The designation brings greater state involvement into the school system and provided an opportunity for a state takeover of the schools, which the state Board of Education declined to do. While these high profile failures made headlines, parents and students in Randolph suffered from a continuous decline in school services. Sports and extracurricular activities were cut back and eliminated. Arts and music in the schools were nearly extinct. Bus service was cut. The teaching staff declined and with it course offerings shrank. People also began to regard the schools as unsafe environments. Randolph’s MCAS scores were ranked among the lowest of all districts in Massachusetts. All of this was heavily reported, and the Patriot Ledger created a special website “Randolph Schools in Crisis.” Today the school system suffers from a tremendously bad reputation despite the many improvements made since the rock bottom year of 2007.

Retirement

Several interviewees cited retirement as a reason they have left or plan to leave Randolph. The town lacks amenities desired by retirees. There are no high quality age-restricted communities or condominiums attractive to empty-nesters. Traffic and a semi-urban hustle and bustle are far more common than golf courses. Shops are usually cut off from residences by parking and streets that are hard to navigate on foot. New England winters are harsh, although little can be done about that. For these reasons, longtime residents and homeowners otherwise happy with Randolph are decamping to more comfortable environs for their golden years.

Property Value Fears

Interviewees cited fears over declining property values as another reason for leaving. In fact, median home sale prices increased every year from 1997 until a peak in 2005 and a subsequent decline. This trend mirrors the Boston metro area housing market as a whole. The decline in Randolph takes on a special social significance however.

Many of the families in Randolph moved there from Mattapan, Dorchester, and other neighborhoods during the era of white flight. Redlining and block busting in those neighborhoods paired an influx of residents of color with rapidly declining property values and a concurrent increase in crime. The Randolph residents who experienced that or who have heard about it time and again from their parents may look at Randolph’s property value decline, demographic change, and a spike in crime and interpret these phenomena as a recurrence of the earlier experience. They fear the sudden loss of value that their families experienced four decades ago. Fred Hanson articulated their point of view, “and some of the people got forced out into Randolph, especially the Jewish community. I know a lot of people were forced out in Mission Hill, and that memory burned in some people. So there was a concern that all of a sudden there would be block-busting in Randolph in spite of the Fair Housing Laws. So that was

the tension that simmered behind the scenes, because you see it now, how people think it's going to affect the value of their home.”

It should be noted that Randolph’s demographic shift has proceeded at a much slower pace than did the changes in Mattapan. The growth of Randolph’s populations of color occurred over several decades while Mattapan changed in the space of just several years. When people move rapidly, there is a real decline in property values because people rush to leave and accept sales prices below what they would if there were not a panic. Randolph has not had the kind of panic that Mattapan had. Moreover, the policies and tactics that caused white flight and property value losses there – including redlining, blockbusting, and the practices of the infamous Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (B-BURG) – are absent from Randolph.

Studies on neighborhood change also refute the idea that racial change has a significant impact on housing values. For example, Card et al.’s econometric analysis of racial change and tipping point theory showed that home price changes around the tipping point were not significantly different from zero.

Yet, the memories of the Mattapan and Dorchester experiences are powerful influences on many residents choosing to leave Randolph. When interviewees were asked to articulate what they fear Randolph could become the phrases “another Mattapan” or “another Dorchester” were common responses.

Randolph has struggled with foreclosures, school quality, crime, and other issues. But, there is no data showing that Randolph’s struggles caused the property value decline. Randolph’s values fell along with the Boston area market as a whole. It cannot be said definitively whether they fell further or faster because of Randolph’s issues.

Race

Few people in my interviews would openly cite Randolph’s racial and ethnic diversity as a reason for leaving the town. However, the fear of others and especially those others considered more dangerous or lower class is a constant undercurrent in conversations in and around Randolph. As one former resident said to me during an all-white social gathering in Randolph when asked why her family moved away, “It was getting a bit too dark here.” White flight - and I would add middle class flight of all races - is an issue for Randolph.

But, the idea of white flight does not really capture what is happening in Randolph. Worries about Randolph’s changing racial and ethnic demographics do not fall into the conventional black/white dichotomy. Across all racial groups, my interviewees revealed a fear that emerging demographic trends might leave Randolph less diverse than it is now. The worry is that Randolph could come to be dominated by one or two ethnic groups, such as the Haitians or Vietnamese who are currently thought to be the fastest growing groups in Randolph. The fear of Randolph becoming “another Dorchester/Mattapan” is apparent here because this image of a less diverse Randolph is a Randolph closer to the current demographics of those areas.

Randolph 2007: Responding to Crisis

The year 2007 can be seen as a crisis year in Randolph. Many long simmering problems boiled over in dramatic fashion. Other random tragedies shook the community. From start to finish, 2007 seemed to bring one piece of bad news after another for Randolph. Many community members felt that the incidents were made worse by the way in which they were covered by the local media. Patriot Ledger reporter Fred Hanson certainly heard from them. “I took grief from people because ‘we’re always printing bad news about Randolph, and there’s a grand conspiracy to print bad news about Randolph,’ but it was a year when the news was just bad, and it really hit the psyche of the people in the town.” Media effects aside, these are the incidents that shook the town in 2007.

2007 Timeline

- Jan. 4: Randolph’s library loses accreditation and accompanying state funding
- January: Randolph ranks 13th for most foreclosures in Massachusetts
- March 27: Proposition 2 1/2 property tax limit override fails
- April 13: Devine Elementary School closes
- May 15: Daytime teenage murder on main street
- May 17: Teenage brothers die in house fire
- June: Randolph High School’s accreditation put on probation
- July 4: Man murdered at home in retaliation for a Hyde Park killing
- Sept. 4: Schools eliminate bus service
- Sept. 10: Selectmen suspend Fire Chief for comments about fatal May blaze
- Oct. 17: Randolph teen pleads guilty in 2006 South End murder
- Oct. 25: Man shot to death in home
- Nov. 9: School Committee / Selectwoman makes anti-Semitic remarks
- Nov. 28: State Board of Education declares Randolph schools “underperforming”

These incidents have their roots in a set of conditions characteristic of gateway suburbs, including a consistently changing population, limited municipal resources in management and finance, and a lack of recognition and appropriate services from regional and statewide entities. The series of incidents in 2007 put to a test Randolph’s ability to adequately carry out the core functions of a community. These functions, each an issue area with which gateway suburbs struggle, include:

- Education
- Public safety
- Housing
- Racial/ethnic integration
- Government and finance

This chapter will detail the issues that came to a head in 2007, explain their histories, and trace developments made in the years since 2007. These issues represent the core areas at which a community must succeed in order to remain a vibrant community of choice. Together, the in-depth exploration of these issues form a case study of the difficulties faced by gateway suburbs.

Understanding the state of these issues in Randolph will help guide recommendations for moving Randolph forward. Additionally, lessons from Randolph's problems and successes may provide useful lessons to other communities.

Education

Schools are perhaps the most important factor for families choosing where to live. Interviewees whose families moved to Randolph in the 1970s and 1980s often cited the quality of Randolph's public schools as a reason they chose the town. The academic quality was decent. Arts, music and sports programs were strong. Recently built schools featured amenities envied by nearby towns, such as the high school swimming pool. Randolph was never one of the top public school districts in the state, but it was consistently above average. Until 2006, Randolph High School graduates attended four-year private and public colleges at rates above the state average. During these same years, the percentage of RHS grads eschewing higher education for work was consistently below the state average.

School quality in Randolph declined through the dawn of the 21st century. After its 2004 review of the Randolph Public Schools, the Massachusetts Department of Education found Randolph to be among the "Moderate" performing school systems in the Commonwealth. Its achievement on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) exams was below average. MCAS results in Randolph for most student subgroups were also below the state average, and MCAS scores were essentially stagnant from 2000-2003. The lone bright spots in MCAS scores showed that Randolph did a slightly better job with some student sub-groups than did other school districts. African-American, Asian, and low-income students in Randolph outperformed their peers statewide. Beyond test scores, the 2004 review began to highlight some of the problems that would result in an official declaration of underperforming three years later, including the lack of data-driven decision-making, leadership issues, teacher absenteeism, and disorganized curriculum and professional development. By 2007, it is fair to say the school system bottomed out.

In June 2007, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges refused to renew Randolph High's accreditation and placed the school on probation. In November, the Massachusetts Board of Education officially declared the Randolph Public Schools "underperforming." After the declaration, the school district was required to create and implement a turnaround plan that had to be approved and monitored by the state. The turnaround plan – adopted unanimously by the Randolph School Committee, Randolph Board of Selectman and the state Board of Education – enumerated five root causes for the decline of the Randolph schools.

1. Lack of local fiscal support
2. Lack of system-wide standards-based curriculum and instruction
3. A leadership focused more on political infighting than on students
4. Failure to use assessment data to guide decision-making
5. Inability to organize family and community participation in the schools

The leadership problem was perhaps the most pernicious and important cause of problems in the Randolph schools. The turnaround plan describes the situation in characteristically diplomatic language that nonetheless shows how dire the problem of leadership was.

Over many years, fractured Town and School Committee leadership did not focus on students' educational needs. Political infighting has been an impediment to development of a consensus vision for education. Concurrently, changes in the town's and schools' demographics have contributed to political conflict and disengagement. During this period, school administration was inadequately staffed and there was high turnover, including a continual turnover of middle/high school administrators and Special Education leadership. There was no Director of Curriculum, no Director of Finance and Administration nor a Director of Human Resources. Simultaneously, large numbers of retirements as well as staff departures due to the district's instability led to a loss of leadership and expertise at the classroom level.

In the absence of leadership the district operated without any district-level improvement plans. Clear and measurable goals were not in place, nor were data used to identify gaps in student or programmatic performance. There was no systematic approach to the development of meaningful strategies for improvement and administration was focused on management issues rather than instruction and the improvement of student achievement. In the absence of district planning, school improvement planning was uncoordinated; there was no long-range planning for professional development and no attention paid to curriculum review and revision. Decision-making and budget development lacked transparency, and failed to include input from staff and the public. Budgets were incremental rather than goal-driven and as a result lacked credibility in the community.

During the years of decline, the schools were lead by Superintendent Arthur Melia. Melia was a Randolph native, a high school sports star, and a former military man who spent his entire 30 year professional career in the Randolph Public Schools. In 2004, the Randolph school committee elected to undertake an expensive buyout of Melia's contract rather than to see him continue to be in charge of the Randolph schools through 2008. The \$575,000 buyout – including \$385,000 in pay to replace Melia's above average \$157,000 annual salary plus \$190,000 in unused sick and vacation days – was agreed to in a contentious 3-2 vote. The large payout did little to inspire confidence in the town's handling of taxpayer money and may have contributed to the failure of subsequent Proposition 2 ½ override attempts. But, as long-time Patriot Ledger reporter Fred Hanson put it in an interview, "they were mad about the buyout, but not mad enough to have them take it away and have [Melia] back." In the Boston Herald, Arthur Melia said of the buyout, "It was small compared to what I was looking for."

Despite the buyout, Melia continued in his role as superintendent while the school system undertook the search for his replacement. His contract was repeatedly extended for short periods of time, during which he received his buyout, payment for the extensions, and a pension. In 2007, the Boston Herald ran an article on Melia for pulling in the highest pension of any retired

K-12 educator in Massachusetts at \$145,332 in that year. He still holds the honor.

Richard Silverman said that when he arrived as the new superintendent in the summer of 2005 he often asked, “Can you tell me what Randolph's goals are? What's the vision for this community? What are the community's desires? And almost invariably there was a silence when I asked that question. And then people would say things like, ‘I'm not sure that we have any goals,’ ‘I'm not sure that there is a vision,’ and then eventually they would get to a point where they would say, ‘I'm not sure there's a community.’” This quote shows how pernicious the lack of leadership had been. It also highlights the planning needs that the new school leadership had to meet.

Changes in leadership structure showed dividends. Superintendent Richard Silverman proved to be a much more effective manager and leader. The positions highlighted as absent in the turnaround plan were successfully filled. In addition, school and town officials began to meet regularly and established a collaborative relationship. The new leadership is utilizing data to drive decision-making, where the old leadership used assessment data primarily for student assignment. The district has taken on the curriculum issues noted in the turnaround plan with improved and sustained professional development, implementation of new research and standards-based curricula, and the establishment of an instructional leadership team. Fred Hanson also credited Superintendent Silverman with helping make the case for expanding the schools system's financial resources. “It was kind of night and day between [Arthur Melia] and Dick Silverman. Arthur would complain that people didn't pay enough property taxes and do a presentation about declining revenues. When Dick came in, he tried to sell people that you really have to do this.”

The school's financial situation was dramatically improved in 2008. Many teaching positions, instructional and support services had been eliminated after five years of level funding and rising costs. Randolph voters approved a Proposition 2 ½ override that injected \$5,500,000 into the schools to restore them. According to Superintendent Silverman, “The designation as an underperforming school district, the threat that the state board might take over the school, the threat that the high school might lose its accreditation all at the same time woke the community up, and they passed the first override [in Randolph] in the history of Proposition 2 1/2, effectively the largest override in Massachusetts history.”

However, Superintendent Silverman pointed out that the one time infusion of funds is not a permanent fix. More increases are needed because of incessantly rising costs and continued level funding in the years since the override. “In terms of spending power and services to kids, we're almost back to where we were before the override passed. So unless we find another way to fund schools, another way to continue to have periodic overrides or eventual increases - because there's not going to be that much growth in Randolph - we're always going to be in this perpetual problem of how do we maintain excellence.”

During the Board of Education's meeting on the Randolph turnaround plan Massachusetts Commissioner of Education Mitchell Chester added an item to the five issues highlighted earlier.

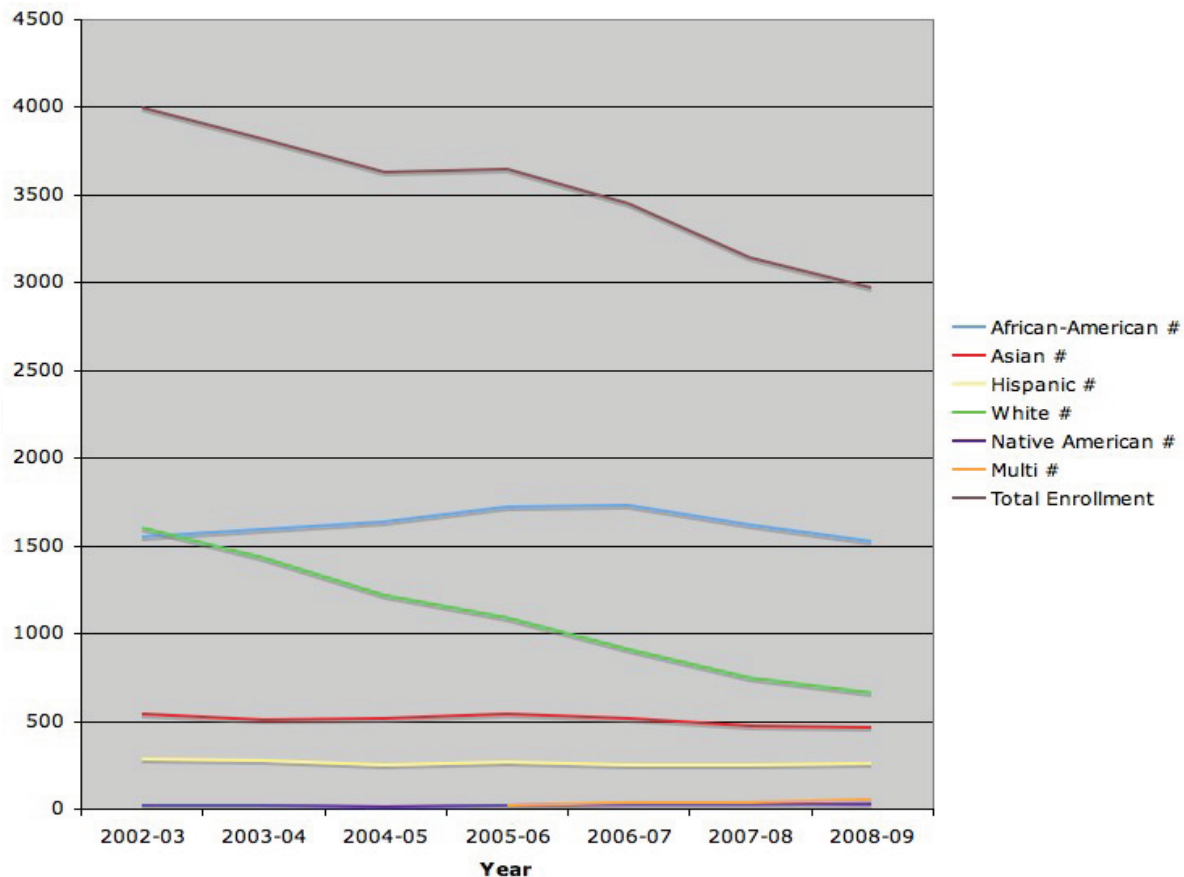
Commissioner Chester said that while not an easy topic to put on the table, one of

the pieces in the mix is the changing demographics of the student population in Randolph. He said the school-aged population has changed more rapidly than the population as a whole. The commissioner said **the degree to which leadership deals with this and views all the children in the town as “our children” will determine the future health of the community.** [emphasis added]

The changing demographics in the Randolph Public Schools have four components: total population, race/ethnicity, social class, and language.

Overall enrollment in the Randolph Public Schools declined steadily through the first decade of the century from roughly 4000 to 3000 students. The combination of declining enrollment and declining funding caused the closure of the Tower Hill and Devine schools. The decline was lead by an exodus of white students from the system while the number of students of other racial groups remained stable. However because the enrollment data is only available at the racial level, there may be even less stability than appears on the chart below. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there was an ethnic shift within the racial groups. For example, the Asian enrollment numbers remained stable but the South Asian community mostly left and the Chinese community declined in number while the number of Vietnamese increased.

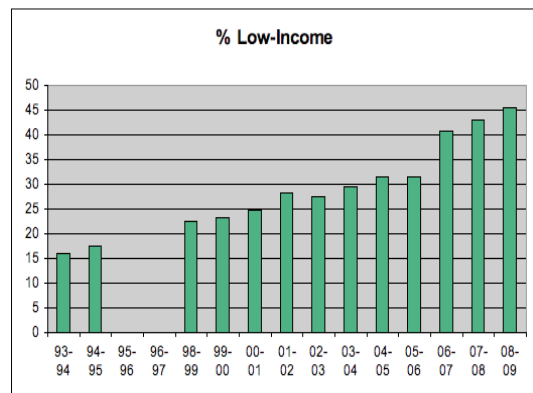
Randolph Public Schools Enrollment



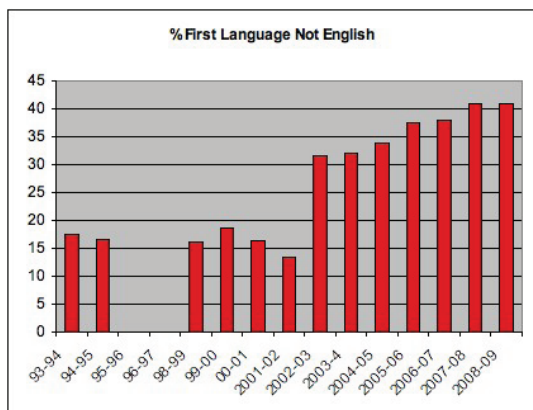
Not all of the people who left the school system left the town. Theresa Couture, a school nurse and longtime resident, said she “saw a lot of people go to parochial schools, Blue Hills, and other places outside the Randolph Public Schools.” Angela Williams said her family friends “chose to put their daughter in Blue Hills [Regional Vocational Technical High School] instead of RHS because of the accreditation problem.” Comparing the 2006-2008 Census American Community Survey (ACS) estimates of school aged children and children enrolled in school to the public school enrollment numbers from those years show that a significant number of Randolph children were indeed enrolled in school outside of the public schools.

Randolph School Aged Population vs Randolph Public Schools Enrollment					
	Randolph Public School Enrollment	Children Enrolled in School K-12	Margin of Error (+/-)	Children age 5 to 19	Margin of Error (+/-)
Source	Mass DESE	Census ACS 2006-2008 Estimates			
2005-06	3,643				
2006-07	3,450				
2007-08	3,138				
2008-09	2,966				
2006-2008 Estimate		4,265	971	4,720	1110

The percentage of students in Randolph considered low-income roughly doubled over a decade. The Randolph Public Schools had been slow to adapt to the needs of this population. For example, until at least 2001 the process for distributing free and reduced school lunch involved students waiting in line for lunch vouchers during class time. The process was both stigmatizing for the students and distracting for the school. I remember being harassed by teachers for arriving late after standing in line outside the free lunch office for all passersby to see. The process had to be replaced as the number of low-income students grew. Low-income students present challenges to public schools because they do not have access to the outside supplies and resources that the schools count on to supplement what they are able to provide.



The percentage of students whose first language is not English (FLNE) also saw tremendous growth. Some of the increase in the data may be the cause of a collection issue, as there is a strong discontinuity between the 2001-02 and 2002-03 school years. The discrepancy in the data coincides with the passage of the Unz Initiative – a state ballot initiative passed in November 2002 that outlawed bilingual education in Massachusetts. Randolph now has the ninth highest percentage of FLNE students among Massachusetts school districts. Educating these students is perhaps a greater challenge in Randolph than in some other districts because of the number of different languages spoken in the schools. While simply tailoring



services to Spanish language speakers may cover most of the FLNE population in other districts, Randolph must teach speakers of at least a half dozen other languages just to reach a portion of its FLNE students.

Communication with parents and families is a persistent problem in this very diverse school district. Parent participation in the schools is limited and uneven. Efforts to expand participation are hampered by difficulties engaging parents who work multiple jobs or who speak languages other than English. The town's linguistic diversity makes outreach even harder because it requires not just a bilingual effort but a highly multilingual effort.

While the situation was indeed dire in 2007, a great amount of progress has been made in the three years since the designation of underperforming. Improved funding, better management, and more commitment from the town and community resulted in improvements in most areas. At the management and administration level, the schools made achievements with curriculum development and alignment, professional development for teachers, and partnerships with colleges, hospitals, and other outside organizations. At the instruction level, the schools were improved by the hiring of new teachers, expansion of course offerings, full staffing of all school libraries for the first time in fifteen years, and the establishment of new programs in robotics and biotechnology. Student activities, all but eliminated by 2007, have been revived with expanded and successful sports programs, a revived and expanded music program, the resurrection of the school newspaper renamed from the Blue and White Banner to the Blue and White Phoenix, and academically-oriented clubs such as the math club, robotics club, speech club, and watershed club. The schools held their first science fair in fifty years. The school environment and respect for students improved, as shown by the meaningful inclusion of elementary students in the design of new playgrounds and the decline of student suspensions and complaints against the district. The special education program made a dramatic change by moving to full inclusion, the latest trend in special education, which involves mainstreaming special education students into regular classrooms. Engagement with the community improved with the opening of a family resource center, whose usefulness was recently on display when Haitian residents were able to utilize its computers to try to locate family members after the January earthquake.

Academic progress has been made as well, but there is still much room for improvement. In the 2007-08 school year, Randolph performed worse than the state average on both the grades 9-12 dropout rate and the graduation rate, as it had since 2003. But, between 2007 and 2010 Randolph showed the most improved MCAS scores of any district in the region.

Public perception of school quality is perhaps even more important than the actual data on school quality. It is the public's beliefs about the school that drive their decisions on whether to live in Randolph and whether to become involved in the community. Practically every interviewee noted that the Randolph schools entered a decline around the turn of the century. Interviewees more familiar with the schools noted that things have improved in recent years, although they still expressed concerns. Theresa Couture, an elementary school nurse whose children graduated from Randolph schools, said that the school environment today is "exciting. People are optimistic." All the same, she noted that class sizes in the elementary schools are still too large at 27 students, even if each classroom has both a teacher and a para-professional. As Ann put it,

“There has been a big turnaround, but the bad reputation unfortunately still dominates.”

Public safety

Most, if not all, of Randolph’s current and former residents moved to Randolph believing that it would provide a safer environment for their families than the places they left. They were probably right. Guerline Menard told me her family and their neighbors on Alice Road never locked their doors, way back in the late 1990s. Nonetheless, no town is perfectly safe, especially not a blue-collar town with so many residents whose problems follow them from the city. While Guerline’s doors were unlocked, sirens were a constant in my neighborhood of apartment complexes. Yet even in my neighborhood, violent crime was still a rarity. From 1992 until 2005, there were no non-domestic murders in Randolph. Up until 2006, both the property and violent crime rates in Randolph were lower than the state average.

During that time period, local, regional, and state resources were directed at preventing crime in Randolph as it diversified. In the 1990s, Sandra Pimentel was heavily involved in youth crime prevention work in Randolph through her position with the Norfolk County DA’s office. She said of the time, “It was amazing the amount of resources that were volunteered, and it made a difference.”

Randolph crime was often instigated by Randolph’s relation to other places. Most murders involving people from Randolph as either suspects or victims have tended to take place outside of the town. For example, in 2003 16-year old Livey Bennett, a friend and classmate of my younger brother, was shot to death breaking up a fight outside a youth dance at the First Parrish Church in Roxbury.

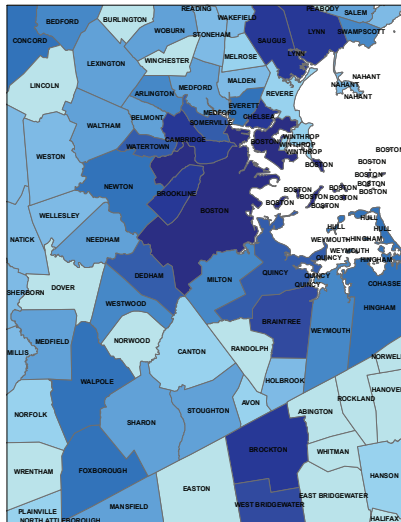
Since at least the 1970s, Randolph has been popular among people looking to be one step and only one step away from organized crime contacts in Boston. Debra Davis was one famous example. The Randolph teenager dated South Boston mobster Steven Flemmi and was murdered by Flemmi and James “Whitey” Bulger in 1982. A search of newspaper archives will show many more stories from the 1980s and 1990s involving murders by or of Randolph residents occurring in Boston.

In recent years, the city related violence began to actually occur in Randolph. In 2005, Joseph Lopes of Dorchester was shot at close range outside the Copa Grande nightclub in Randolph. The Copa Grande later changed its name to the Vault Room, where another Dorchester man was injured in a burst of 20 gunshots in February 2009. In February 2006, Adilio Rodrigues of Brockton was found in a wooded area in Randolph dead of a gunshot wound. The July 4th, 2007 murder of John Lubin inside his Randolph home was undertaken by 16 year old Jean-Marie Thebaud also of Randolph, but Jean committed the murder to secure a spot in a Hyde Park gang that wanted Lubin dead in retaliation for a 2004 Hyde Park shooting. In another case related to Boston crime, Stephen Cowans was found slain in his Randolph home in October 2007. Cowans had moved to Randolph in 2004 with his \$3.2 million wrongful conviction settlement after seven years behind bars for the shooting of a Boston police officer.

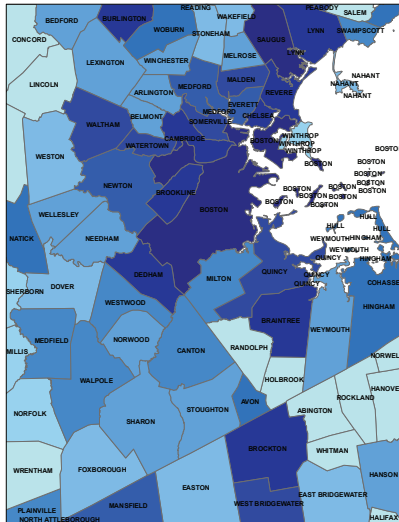
Crime Rates in the Boston Area

These maps compare crime rates in municipalities around Boston. They show each municipality's ranking on total violent and property crimes by population. The lightest color represents the first decile, the 10% of communities with the lowest rate. Darker colors indicate higher rates.

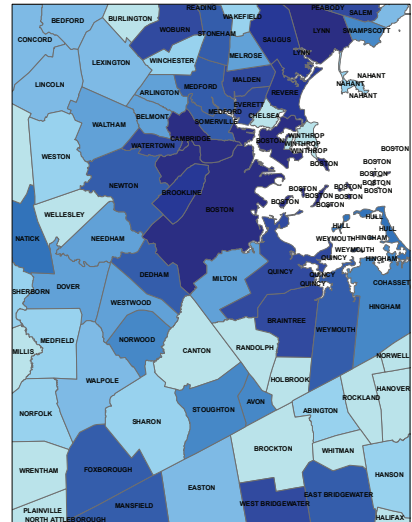
1980



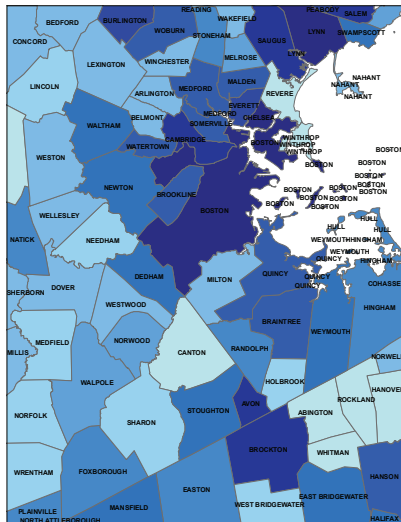
1985



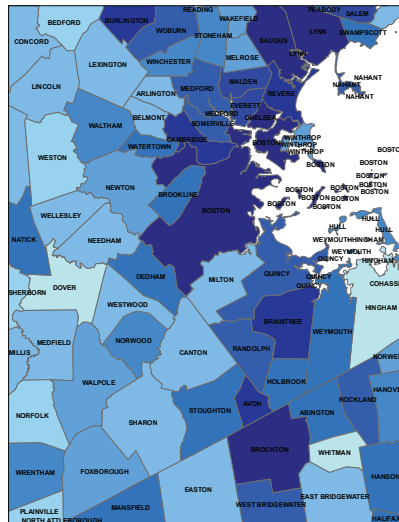
1990



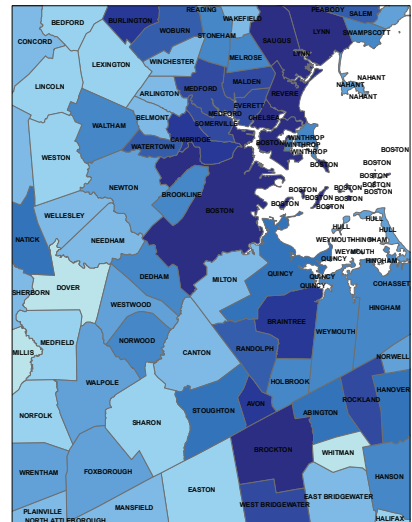
1995



2000



2003



Total Violent and Property Crime per 100,000 Population

- First Decile
- Second Decile
- Third Decile

- Fourth Decile
- Fifth Decile
- Sixth Decile

- Seventh Decile
- Eighth Decile
- Ninth Decile
- Tenth Decile

The youth crime prevention efforts that had been so successful in the 1990s and in the early part of this decade fell apart when funding dried up and people abandoned the work. Sandra Pimentel had retired by then. She said that she “felt terrible that people let it go. It was the opportunity of a lifetime.” The opportunity to which Sandra referred was the opportunity to maintain a community that was both as safe and as diverse as Randolph had been. The number of aggravated assaults averaged 19 each year from 1995 to 1999. The annual average jumped to 69 from 2000 to 2005. As the maps on the following page based on Uniform Crime Reporting data voluntarily contributed by municipalities to the Massachusetts State Police show, crime rates in Randolph gradually shifted from being lower than most surrounding communities to being among the highest in the suburbs.

In June of 2007, a murder that could not be blamed on Boston, Brockton or anywhere else shook the town. Sixteen year-old Ezekiel Cuthbert was shot by another Randolph teen during the afternoon rush hour on one of the busiest stretches of North Main Street. Cuthbert’s murder and the other two that year combined to make 2007 Randolph’s bloodiest year. The murders were widely reported along with the many other crises and controversies that year. These crimes and their coverage dealt a serious blow to Randolph’s reputation.

In the years since, there have been no more murders in Randolph, but other crimes kept Randolph in the news. In December 2008, the manager of the Randolph Burger King was shot three times in an armed robbery but survived. The same Burger King was robbed again the following March, and the employee knocked down with a gun but to the head was a good friend of mine. In 2009, there were two major drug seizures in Randolph homes. Police found more than 100 lbs of marijuana in a growing house on Grove St and 13 lbs of cocaine stashed in a McAuliffe Road home. In October of 2009, a man was arrested after shooting his neighbor in the stomach with a 9mm in a dispute over leaves. One month later, a man was shot twice in the chest in the neighborhood of apartment complexes where I grew up.

Relations between the community and the police in Randolph have not always been great. In 2004, a study by Northeastern University's Institute for Race and Justice and the Center for Criminal Justice Policy Research indicated that Randolph was one of several Massachusetts towns where people of color were disproportionately ticketed and searched by police. It used to be said among the black population that it was better to take the expressway into Randolph from Boston rather than using Rt 28, even if that lengthened the trip, because the Randolph police would pull over any blacks they thought were coming down Rt 28 from Dorchester and Mattapan. One high profile event in 2003 left Randolph police scrambling to defend themselves. After a tip that there would be a retaliation for a shooting that occurred earlier in the day, Randolph police spotted Anthony Williams, a black, off-duty Boston police officer, leaving the D’Angelo’s sub shop. They pointed guns at him, and Williams raised his arms, identified himself as a Boston police officer and said he was carrying a badge and a gun. Randolph police then hit him on the back of his head, knocked him down and placed him in handcuffs for 10 to 15 minutes. Randolph police Lt. Richard Crowley defended the Randolph officers by saying the Boston police officer had the same last name as the victim of the earlier shooting and was driving a similar car. Anthony Williams’ SUV however was a different make and model.

The crime rate has dropped in the years since 2007. The infusion of funding from the Proposition 2 ½ override in 2008 helped. Randolph High teacher Justin Joyce also credited new organized efforts to prevent youth crime. “The Youth Violence Division has been effective at immediately handling problems that would otherwise escalate.”

As with school quality, it is really the public perception of safety and crime that matters. Perception is relative however. Many people continue to move to Randolph from neighborhoods in Boston and Brockton that are less safe than Randolph. They continue to view Randolph as an improvement, if an imperfect one, over conditions in other places. Randolph’s reputation in other suburbs, however, is grim. News coverage of crime in Randolph, suburban paranoias, and the conflation of ideas of safety with influences from racist and classist thinking combine to make many others in Southeastern Massachusetts regard Randolph as a dangerous place.

Within Randolph, opinions vary. Some still view Randolph as safe. Some believe it to be dangerous. Others are content with thinking of Randolph as somewhere in between. Lauren DeFilippo, a reporter for Gatehouse Media New England, told me what she encounters when talking to Randolph residents. “People are very proud of being from Randolph, from kids, to parents, and senior citizens. Without prompt they will often say that Randolph gets an undeserved rep. Kids were upset at the bad press and started sending me positive stories of good things they organized or achieved... My job is to highlight both the good and bad.”

It is unclear to what degree the perceptions and reality of crime in Randolph have affected people’s residential choice. A 2007 Boston Globe article focused on the rise in crime in Randolph noted:

Despite the rise of violence, many residents, including those who live near areas where violence has occurred, say they are not going to be scared out of town.

"The day after that [Bayberry homicide] happened, my husband and I flipped out," said Eileen Migueles, 50, a nurse who lives on Bayberry Lane, several houses from where the latest homicide occurred. "We spent the whole day on the Internet looking for houses in Canton. But I don't think we're ready to give up. A lot of people have already moved out, but we love this town," she said.

Housing

Problems in the housing market also came to a head for Randolph in 2007. Randolph was among the hardest hit communities in Massachusetts during the national foreclosure crisis. For years, analyses of housing in Massachusetts noted conditions in Randolph that sowed the seeds for the foreclosure crisis.

Massachusetts Community and Banking Council’s annual Changing Patterns report began to chronicle the rise of subprime lending in 2002. At that time, Randolph tied Everett for the highest share of subprime loans in the region – 15.2% of mortgages in Randolph were subprime.

As subprime lending increased over the next five years, Everett, Revere, Lynn, and Chelsea took over as the hottest subprime markets in Massachusetts. But, the share of subprime loans among Randolph mortgages continued to rise to 25% in 2004 and 37.8% in 2005, the peak before the housing crash. Also by 2005, only 13.1% of mortgage loans in Randolph were made by Massachusetts banks and credit unions. All other loans were unaccountable to state or federal bank regulators.

Since the housing crisis began, Randolph has had one of the highest percentages of distressed properties in the state. In 2007, foreclosure petitions affected 2.35% of houses in Randolph. This was the 13th highest rate of foreclosure petitions among Massachusetts municipalities. Foreclosure activity dropped statewide in 2008, and the rate in Randolph dropped to 1.96%. But from 2009 to 2010, foreclosure activity inched up in Massachusetts. In that year, 328 (2.19%) of Randolph's 11,497 housing units were distressed. The number increased to 2.85% in 2010 ranking 14th in the state.

	Randolph	Massachusetts
Total Housing Units (2000 Census)	11,497	2,526,963
Percentage of Units Distressed 2007	2.35%	1.34%
Rank	13th	
Percentage of Units Distressed 2008	1.96%	1.01%
Rank	11th	
Percentage of Units Distressed 2009	2.19%	1.26%
Rank	12th	
Percentage of Units Distressed 2010	2.85%	1.57%
Rank	14th	
(all years measured at January 1)		

In 2008, Randolph took action to address problems caused by the foreclosures. Town Meeting passed a bylaw that required owners of a foreclosed property to register with the town, keep the property in a livable condition, and to post contact information visible to the public. Town Manager David Murphy attributed the \$300-a-day fine for non-registration to a real reduction in visibly abandoned property. If owners let properties deteriorate, the properties could be placed into receivership for repairs paid for by a lien on the owners under the Massachusetts Attorney General's Abandoned Housing Initiative.

Randolph, like most other places during the housing crisis, witnessed a halt in new home construction. Only nine new housing units were permitted in 2007. But in 2008, Randolph saw a large increase in new housing permits, ranking fourth in Massachusetts with 284 units. Nearly all of those units, 276 are in planned multi-family developments.

Interest in new construction in Randolph flies in the face of both the larger housing market trends and the bad reputation the town acquired in recent years. People are not only continuing to move to Randolph they are also paying a good amount to do so.

The Rosemont Square apartment complex lies at the end of Chestnut St, sandwiched between High St and a landfill, an industrial park and a single-family home subdivision. Rosemont used to be known as Presidential Acres, a complex that had become notorious as one of the most rundown areas in Randolph. Beacon Communities bought the 16 building 384 apartment

development for \$50 million and spent \$6 million on renovations. The previous owners had deferred most maintenance. There was no on-site management. Tenants were allowed to pay rent in cash, by the month or week, and off of a regular schedule. Beacon required tenants to begin paying rent by check at the first of the month and added on-site management and resident services. It also raised the rents at Rosemont from what had been the lowest priced apartments in the market at \$900 - \$1,100 for a two-bedroom into apartments renting for \$1,375 - \$1,499 a month. Even at this rent – which is comparable to what can be found for an apartment near a subway stop in Cambridge or Somerville – Beacon filled Rosemont Square. The occupancy rate now stands at 98%. Most residents are retirees or professionals, and they come from a wide diversity of ethnic backgrounds.

Not far from Rosemont on Chestnut St, a new subdivision of nine colonial homes rose on where once stood two houses, horse stables, and woods. The typical suburban colonials were advertised as starting in the \$400,000's. The construction was approaching completion when I visited the area at the end of March 2010, and nearly all of the homes had “sold” signs out front. Despite a struggling real estate market, there was enough demand for this development in Randolph to sell at a price well above the region's median of roughly \$330,000.

Racial and ethnic integration

Another high profile incident from 2007 exposed rifts in Randolph's diverse community as well as the community's willingness to come together to condemn bigotry. Randolph School Committee member and Selectwoman Maureen Kenney made anti-semitic remarks during closed door contract negotiations with Superintendent Silverman, who is Jewish. Kenney objected to Silverman's request for five days of bereavement leave by saying, "Don't you Jews plant them within 24 hours?" Kenney pressed on when Silverman objected to her remark by saying, "I don't see any side curls on your head, so what the hell do you need five days of bereavement leave for?"

A local media storm followed the release of the comments in a complaint made by Silverman and an apology by Kenney that did not contest Silverman's account of events. Kenney resigned from the School Committee but held her seat on the Board of Selectman. Community members organized a vigil to ask for her resignation, heavily covered by local media and TV news. David Harris, longtime leader of the Randolph Fair Practices Association then lead a petition drive to force a recall vote, but the effort ultimately fell short.

Open ethnic conflict is not common in Randolph. Occasional high profile incidents such as Kenney's remarks or the wrongful detention of a black Boston police officer may bring discussions of race and ethnicity to the forefront. But, lines of conflict are hard to draw because Randolph's schools and neighborhoods are fully integrated. Additionally, despite its failings Randolph has for decades been the most open place for people of color to live in Boston's southern suburbs.

Mortgage lending data provides evidence of one way that Randolph has been more open to

people of color. The Massachusetts Community and Banking Council releases an annual report on mortgage lending to minorities and low-income people in the Greater Boston area. These *Changing Patterns* reports show that from 1993-2005 lending to blacks in Randolph was disproportionately high compared both to the share of the existing black population and compared to the share of loans to low- and moderate-income borrowers. In the 1996-1999 period, Randolph joined Malden as the only two outer-ring suburbs where lending to Hispanics was more than double the existing Hispanic household share. In 2002, *Changing Patterns* began to show that mortgage lending to blacks in the entire Greater Boston region was highly concentrated among just a few communities. Boston accounted for half of all loans to blacks, and Randolph and Lynn combined to account for one third of the loans to blacks in the other 100 communities while only accounting for 5.8% of total loans. But, this openness of lending to blacks might exacerbate resentment among others. Hong Tran, a Vietnamese resident of Randolph, told me, “I heard a rumor through an aunt in Dorchester that the state offered 0% interest loans to blacks to move them to Randolph.”

Despite gain in other areas, local government remains one piece of Randolph dominated by whites who have been longtime residents. Prior to 2009’s change in government, there had only been two people of color elected selectman and both were recently defeated. Paul Fernandes, a Cape Verdean, became Randolph’s first black selectman in 2004 but lost his seat in 2007, and Dan Lam, a Chinese-born Cambodian immigrant, lost his in 2006. The School Committee was a similar story with the Jamaican-born Grace Cornish vacating her seat in 2005 and the African-American Tamara Pitts leaving in 2009. Most people in Randolph feel disconnected from town government, but the feeling is especially acute among people of color. Hong Tran described how her family felt, “disengaged after Dan Lam left. Other local officials don’t ask for our votes or make the effort to approach us.” Town government remained dominated by whites after the change in government, but there was slight improvement with 1 of 5 at-large town councilors, 1 of 4 district town councilors and 2 of 6 school committee members people of color. With 47% of the population, whites hold 73% of the town’s top elected positions.

The racial and ethnic disconnect between the people managing the town and the majority of people served by town government – families with children in schools, users of the public library and recreation facilities, etc – has been blamed as one of the causes for the decline in town services. Superintendent Silverman put the problem this way when asked about Randolph’s lack of resources compared to other communities. “[Randolph had] a large senior-citizen population that had no interest in supporting the schools that were occupied by children who looked differently or sounded differently from them. The town sees it [diversity] more as a challenge than as a gift, which is really a shame. That may be because people who work in the town don’t have the opportunity to come into close contact with the diverse communities that we do in school.”

The exposure Dr. Silverman mentioned is key. In my interviews, those people who attended Randolph High School or somehow made an effort to get to know their neighbors were much, much more likely to value Randolph’s racial and ethnic diversity as a positive attribute. Sarah Yoffe, who was the only white student in the African-American club before she graduated from Randolph High in 2002, said, “Parents didn’t understand that [the value of diversity in the

schools], and they pulled their kids from the schools.” Justin Joyce, a Randolph native who now teaches in the high school said, “There isn’t segregation in the schools. People sit together in the cafeteria. The acceptance even goes beyond race, for example you can see autistic kids sitting with cheerleaders.”

Those with less meaningful exposure to others instead found Randolph’s diversity to be a challenge. Erin Chartier has deep family roots in Randolph, but she left the town for Bridgewater at the age of 13. She described the difficulties of integration this way.

For me [Randolph’s diversity] brought cultural opportunity, though I do see that when people transplant from foreign cultures it’s difficult to let go of inhibitions and become part of their new community. People are less likely to reach out to a neighbor who doesn’t really speak English. I see that with my grandparents. They don’t know who their neighbors are anymore. Not that I think diversity is a bad thing, but people need to learn how to deal with diversity. Right now the only opportunity to become culturally integrated is in school, but that doesn’t help the adults. When the kids come home from school with ideas about culture they are met with some opposition.

Government and Finance

Poor governance has often been cited as one of Randolph’s core problems. As noted in the sections above, the root cause analysis of the school system’s problems noted that political infighting distracted from education, people of color have been heavily underrepresented in town government, and the lack of a central vision hampered planning. Randolph has suffered from a dearth in capable leadership. I asked all the current and former residents I interviewed, “Who would you say are the present leaders of the Randolph community?” With few exceptions, my interviewees responded like Guerline Menard did, “Wow... no idea. I don’t know if Randolph has any leaders...It doesn’t seem like they have leaders.” Micah Christian said, “We have politicians but no real community leaders.” Certainly leadership in a community should come from a variety of quarters, but it is important for the government and especially a government charged with turning a community around to exercise leadership.

For 216 years, Randolph was governed in the New England tradition by a 240 member representative town meeting and a five member board of selectman. An elected school committee also governed the school district. Randolph’s current Town Manager David Murphy described the old system of government. “The decision making process essentially relied on a volunteer board that served as the executive branch (Board of Selectman) and a legislative body that met either once or twice a year (Town Meeting). This system may have worked wonderfully in 1880, but in today’s fast-paced world, you need a full-time executive on the ground, in the building to run an organization. Imagine a private business with a \$75 million annual operating budget, not having a full-time CEO.”

Attempts at government reform failed several times over the last decade. Initial attempts

would have amended Randolph's charter to convert the town to a city with a mayoral form of government. Resistance to that reform may have had relation to discomfort among Randolph's voting population with the idea of Randolph being a "city." It may have also had something to do with fears that particular town personalities would control the mayoralty. In any case, it became increasingly clear that the old New England town form of government was too slow, inflexible, and amateurish to deal with Randolph's evolving issues.

Along with poor management, inadequate finances harmed town services. The proposition 2 ½ referendum passed in 1980 put a stranglehold on municipal finances across Massachusetts. Under this law, cities and towns are forbidden from collecting property tax revenue greater than 2.5% of the assessed value of all their taxable property and are also forbidden from increasing property taxes by greater than 2.5% in any year. Because inflation is almost always greater than 2.5%, this law results in real annual decreases in revenues. An override referendum allows for greater increases so that towns may catch up to inflation or increase services. Randolph voters rejected multiple attempts at proposition 2 ½ overrides, including one in March 2007.

Superintendent Silverman recalls the effect that this had on the town. "Everybody had stopped supporting the community. The schools were devastated by that. Town government had no resources to work with. The library couldn't stay open. It lost its accreditation. DPW couldn't fix the roads. It was a self-reinforcing downward spiral. And the newspapers loved it. They took advantage of that every opportunity they got."

Even residents who otherwise supported the community chose to vote against proposition 2 ½ overrides because they lacked trust in town government. Gerry Connors, a longtime resident of Randolph who moved from Dorchester as an adult to raise a family, said "What my problem was was that they didn't clarify what they were going to spend the money on. They were very general in their description of where it was going to go, but there was no specific plan. They were not very clear with us on a) where the money would be spent or b) how it would be managed. I would have supported some form of override if they had been clearer with us."

When asked how town leaders responded to Randolph's crises, journalist Lauren DeFilippo responded, "Not every time have they... they've been kneejerk and emotional. Certain times actions are just made to be a dog and pony show. They have been reactive more often than not, but they're starting to shift to a more proactive approach and not take things too personally."

During the crisis year, the town took initial steps at government reform that did not require voters to approve a change in the town charter. Randolph created an executive position and tellingly gave the job to someone from out of town. David Murphy of Quincy became Randolph's Executive Secretary in March of 2008. Mr. Murphy was a professional with experience in a changing community with both urban and suburban characteristics having served as the City of Quincy's Director of Operations from 2003-07.

Also, in 2008, the town for the first time hired a planning director, Richard McCarthy who had been working for the outer suburban town of Raynham. McCarthy's office was charged with professionalizing planning in Randolph. According to McCarthy, "It was explained to me

during the interview [for the position], that the town was going in a different direction, and now I'm trying to participate in that process going forward.” He is still accountable to the elected planning board, but the town’s economic development strategies, zoning, and development are becoming more systemic. Mr. McCarthy described the change in thinking about development in the town. “Now when somebody comes in with a development proposal, we ask whether it is really going to work. Is there a market to make it happen? Before, decisions were localized. You know, ‘I want a piece of property, I want to develop it,’ but not necessarily looking at whether it make sense for the area at large.”

In 2008, Randolph voters approved their first proposition 2 ½ override. It was the largest in Massachusetts history. It provided \$5,500,000 for the schools, and an additional \$600,000 for the police and fire departments. The override cost the typical Randolph homeowner an additional \$500 per year in property tax, bringing the total average tax paid to \$2,600, slightly below the state median.

In April of 2009, Randolph voters by large margins finally approved a change of government. Seventy-five percent of voters chose a town council form of government. Town meeting and the Board of Selectman were eliminated. A nine-member town council with four at-large seats and five district seats now governs the town. The town council selects a town manager to act as the town’s executive. After the November 2009 elections, the newly formed council chose to stick with David Murphy as the executive. When I asked about his vision for the town, he responded:

The change that I hope to bring to Randolph is an elevated expectation as to what a local government can be. I was surprised by the minimal expectations that many people in the organization had for the town. My charge has been to bring a belief that we have many positive aspects that can help Randolph be a leader in municipal government. We have stopped making excuses about why the town is in bad shape and started looking at ways at how we can be better. It just takes people believing that change is possible, combined with the right change agents that can affect that change, and some pretty significant positive changes can and will happen.

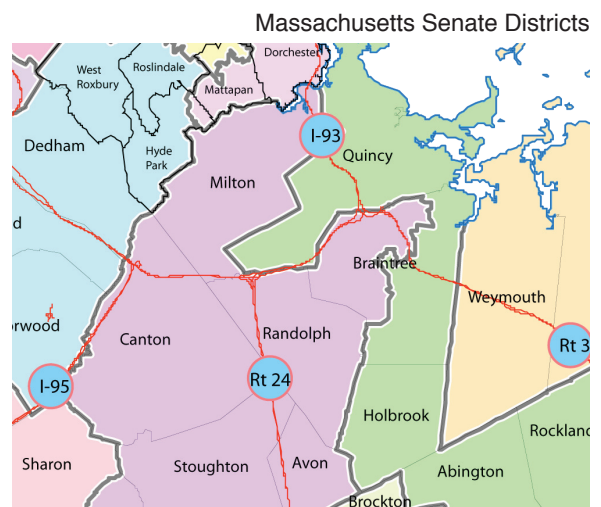
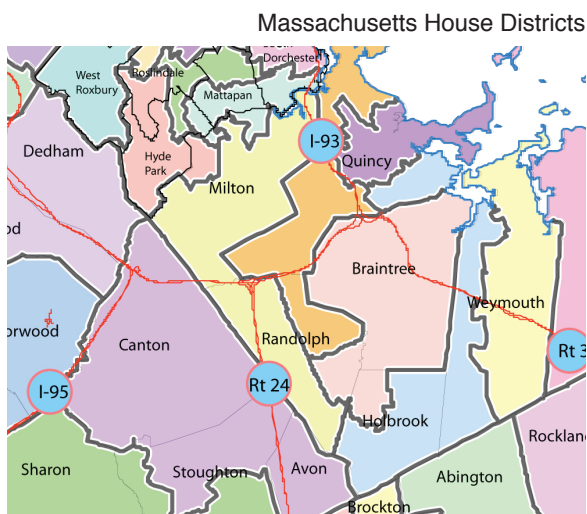
Better town management also lead to recent improvements in town finances. The town implemented financial policies and adopted a five-year capital improvement plan. Randolph successfully established a Community Preservation Act Fund from a voter-approved property tax surcharge and matching state grants. The fund paid for over half of the \$4 million restoration of the historic Stetson Hall in Randolph’s town center, with other grants and donations making up the difference. The implementation of a utility bill surcharge is allowing for the burying of utility lines for streetscape improvements in downtown Randolph. Consolidation of town departments and regionalization of some services saved the town about \$250,000. Randolph also became one of the towns to take advantage of Governor Deval Patrick’s initiative to open up the state’s health insurance system, the Group Insurance Commission. Doing so was estimated to save Randolph \$1 million in 2009 alone.

Despite significant progress, concerns about government and finance remain. The new form

of government did not form an entirely new government. Incumbent Randolph politicians dominated the November elections. All five at-large town councilors, three of the four district councilors, and three of the six school committee members elected to form the new government had been previously elected to town government. Structural improvements to the town's finances prevented some cutbacks, but without additional proposition 2 ½ overrides or innovative sources of funding town revenues will continue to fall back against inflation and the town will once again face hard decisions about which services to cut.

Strong representation at higher levels of government is necessary for towns to acquire outside sources of funding and to insure good services from state and regional entities. None of the politicians that represent Randolph are from Randolph. Notably, at the state representative level where local ties are the strongest, Randolph is divided among three state house districts. Each district is dominated by another community, and none of these communities have Randolph's diversity. Randolph's representation in the state house comes from Rep. Bruce Ayers of Quincy, Rep. Joseph Driscoll of Braintree, and Rep. Walter Timilty of Milton. These representatives bring Randolph state services, as when they recently enabled Randolph's public library to quickly regain access to state funds. But, their roots and the majority of their voters reside in these other towns, each a community with demographics and needs significantly different from Randolph's. Without a redistricting plan that does not so severely divide Randolph's vote, Randolph has very little chance of having a representative at the state house. Because the redistricting process favors incumbents, prospects for this are unlikely.

At the state senate level, Randolph is also represented by a Milton native, Sen. Brian Joyce. Senate districts, however, are much larger than house districts and the Norfolk, Bristol, and Plymouth senate district includes the whole of Randolph and several other suburbs.



Responding to Crisis

These problems that came to a head in 2007 had been issues in Randolph for many years. Yet, they were largely ignored until they started making headlines in 2007. Statewide media, state government, and state and regional service providers were slow to catch on to the problems being face by Randolph because they wrote off the small 30,000 person community as just another suburb. Many of the professionals running those institutions also had few or no ties to this blue collar suburb. These problems are endemic to the gateway suburb. They are part of why addressing “urban” issues in a suburb is challenging.

Randolph’s problems were also ignored internally as well. It is clear that for many years, a number of town officials failed to successfully engage with the problems detailed in the previous pages. Poor management, uninspired leadership, and neglect of the schools and other town services helped lead to the crises in 2007.

Residents had been similarly disengaged from the town’s problems. Many did not have the time or connections to engage in town politics or service. Others had been turned off by what they saw as poor and un-trustworthy government. Some responded to the problems by leaving. The repeated failure of proposition 2 1/2 overrides stand as a testament to this disengagement.

Yet, other residents remained involved in trying to improve the town. And, their ranks swelled after all the problems and headlines in 2007. Randolph voters approved a large 2 1/2 override and a change in government. People became more engaged in trying to improve their community.

So far, the results have been positive. Crime has dropped. School offerings and quality improved. Positive reforms improved town governance and finance. A recovery is well under way.

It is a fragile recovery, however. Three years after the property tax override, municipal finances are once again strained. Part of the strain is the unavoidable result of health care cost inflation, growing pension liabilities as the boomers age out of the workforce, increasing energy costs, and other forms of inflation. Some of the strain may also be attributable to poor spending decisions. The onus remains on town officials to convince residents to once again raise their own taxes to invest in the town, as well as to find any way possible to avoid needing for them to do so.

If residents, town officials, regional entities, and the state remain engaged in Randolph and continue to invest in its recovery, the problems detailed in this chapter will be mitigated and Randolph will be a desirable place to live. But, without sustained effort there will be more years like 2007 in the future.

Randolph 2030: Some Scenarios

The previous chapters explored why current and former residents of Randolph chose to live in Randolph, why former residents chose to leave, and what challenges the town currently faces. This chapter takes a future orientation. It makes use of projections made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), theory on demographic change, current trends, and the stated hopes and fears of interviewees to explore some scenarios for Randolph's future. These scenarios complement the previous chapters to establish a basis for developing recommendations for how Randolph can remain a health community of choice.

Assumptions

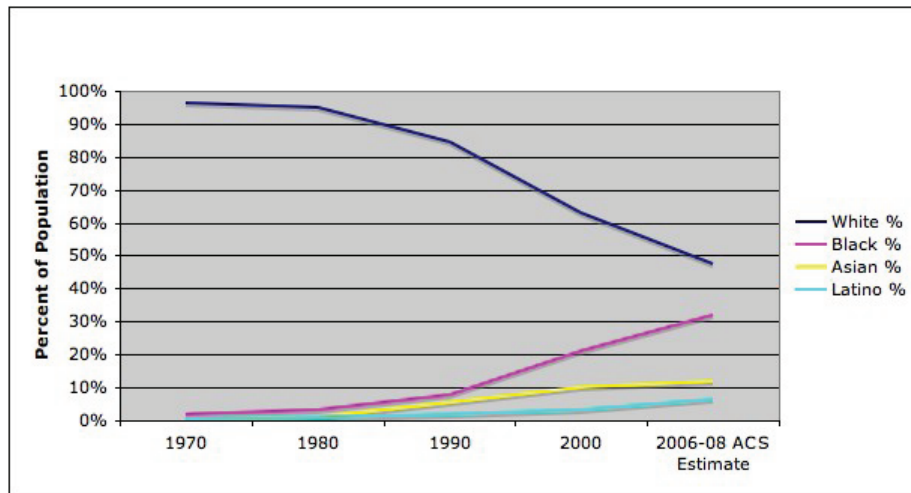
MAPC's MetroFutures project put forward several projections for Randolph's population in 2030. MAPC assumes Randolph's population will grow about 10% over the 2000 Census figure. This would increase the total population to about 34,000. This would represent stability in Randolph's population, which has hovered around 30,000 for decades. The population will be much older as the baby boom generation ages. Statewide, the over-55 population will increase 75% between 2000 and 2030. Meanwhile, the school-aged population will continue to shrink, leaving Randolph's schools with fewer students to educate. A higher percentage of those students will be English Language Learners. Massachusetts will rely on international immigration to fill a labor shortage because many native born residents will move to other states. MAPC identifies four regions that will lead the state in job growth. Two of these, the center city and the southern part of Route 128, are easily accessible from Randolph. The jobs that will be available will require a more highly educated workforce.

The MAPC projections spell trouble for municipal government and finance. Non-discretionary budget items, such as pensions, health insurance, and debt service, will eat up a larger and larger portion of municipal and state budgets. Meanwhile, municipalities will increasingly need to rely on local property taxes because of tightening budgets at the state level. In Randolph, these tight budgets will cause problems as the demand for services increases. Randolph is essentially built out and will experience only modest growth in its housing stock. The lack of growth will hinder growth in property tax revenues under proposition 2 ½ rules. MAPC projects large water shortages for Randolph by 2030, a situation for which local government will need to find a solution. Also, the decline in the number of public school students will likely be offset by a more expensive to educate student population including English language learners and other students needing extra services.

Variables

Tipping point theory states that once a place reaches a certain proportion of non-white residents, it experiences a rapid decline in its white population. Card et al's econometric analysis of the tipping point showed that tipping points vary from 5% to 20% non-white population. Once the tipping point has been tripped, the white population declines rapidly. Randolph's population

may be exhibiting tipping behavior, as seen in the below chart where rapid declines in the white population began after the 1990 Census when Randolph was about 15% non-white. If the theory holds, Randolph may lose all of its white population. If there is instead a pattern break, if past is not prologue, than Randolph may remain a racially and ethnically diverse community.



The future of Randolph’s municipal services is also in doubt. As seen in the previous chapter, Randolph recently struggled to provide the level of education, public safety, and other services that it would like to. Improvements since 2007 suggest an upward trend, but projections regarding Randolph’s future finances and service needs throw the recovery into question.

I believe that these two questions – whether Randolph experiences racial tipping and whether it can provide adequate services – are the key variables for projecting scenarios for Randolph’s future. The two-by-two table below outlines four potential futures for Randolph based on these two variables.

	Racial Tipping	Diversity
Inadequate Services	Ghetto	Perpetual Crisis
Quality Services	Black Suburb	Healthy Gateway

Scenario 1: Ghetto

This first scenario assumes both that tipping point theory holds and that Randolph is unable to provide quality services. By 2030, whites, Indians, Chinese, and most middle class people of all races will have abandoned Randolph. The town was never able to overcome revenue and tax problems, and as a result school quality and public safety suffered dramatically. Randolph became not a place where people live because they choose to but because they have no other choice. In this scenario, Randolph would become a ghetto in the suburbs.

This ghetto scenario is a manifest fear among current and former residents of Randolph. When I asked interviewees to share their fear of what the town might become, they commonly replied

that it would become “another Dorchester, another Mattapan another Brockton, or another Lawrence.” They described it as a negative place where families feel unsafe. They also expressed this scenario when they feared that Randolph’s diversity would leave. If tipping point theory holds, Randolph’s current diversity would wither from several dozen ethnicities from all racial groups to just a handful.

If this scenario were to occur, solutions for addressing poverty, education, and crime in Randolph would likely be even more difficult than in the urban areas my interviewees used as analogies. Because Randolph is a small place with a small population, it does not have access to the formula grants, political power, anchor educational or medical institutions, and attention from outsiders that these other cities do. It could face true abandonment.

Scenario 2: Black Suburb

This second scenario assumes that racial tipping occurs but that Randolph is able to provide decent quality schools, safety, and other municipal services. In this case, Randolph would be a predominantly black but slightly diverse suburb with a mix of working and middle class families. In this case, Randolph’s history as a gateway suburb following the demographics of Boston’s southern neighborhoods would continue.

In this scenario, Randolph will have become a home for the black professional class. Employment demand near Randolph will grow. Skilled immigrant workers will fill much of the demand. Yet, Randolph will be the most open suburb in the area for these skilled immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa, as well as many from Southeast Asia and Latin America. Those ethnic communities are already established there, and other nearby suburbs will continue to resist diversification of their housing stocks and populations.

Racial tipping would not equal socioeconomic tipping because Randolph’s diverse housing stock includes many larger, more expensive homes. Card et al found that tipping has no effect on home prices, only on the quantity of new housing units to be built. Randolph is nearly built out and would experience very little housing growth in any case. As long as Randolph provides a safe community for workers in nearby employment centers to raise children, there will be enough demand to maintain roughly the same socioeconomic mix as today.

Randolph could maintain itself as this sort of family friendly community if the town remains invested in promoting the schools and providing opportunities for youth to lead positive lives. This would require families with children to become more involved in politics than they are currently. It would require long term financial planning and a solution to the current reliance on declining property tax revenues as well as better engagement with outside resources and services.

Scenario 3: Perpetual Crisis

This third scenario assumes a pattern break in the tipping point phenomenon. Card et al found

that the tipping point actually varies from city to city based upon white people's racial attitudes. They found that the tipping point could occur when a community is as much as 95% white or as low as 80% white. The differences correlated to measures of racial attitudes. There is good reason to believe that significant enough changes are coming in racial attitudes to change the operation of the tipping point. First, younger generations on average are more racially tolerant. As the boomers age away and residential choices become made by younger generations, there may be a less strong preference for white families to locate away from people of color. Secondly, a generation of white people who were raised during the age of Randolph's diversity will come of age. If my interviews are any indication, the experience of growing up in that diversity had a strong impact on these white people's racial attitudes. They will prefer to raise their families in a diverse environment. Thirdly, racial attitudes as a whole are evolving. Other statistically proven theories of racial preference are losing their grip. For example, Keith Reeves' Voting Hopes or Fears showed robustly that white voters had a preference against black political candidates. Yet, in the years since that study was published Massachusetts voters overwhelmingly chose African-Americans for governor and president. Predominantly white Newton, MA elected an African-American mayor. A real change in racial attitudes among the whites choosing whether to live in Randolph could lead to a break from the tipping point pattern.

Yet, even if Randolph maintains its diversity it will struggle to maintain quality schools, public safety, and municipal services. The problems of proposition 2 ½ and property taxes discussed in chapter six will continue to cause budget shortfalls. If Randolph does not successfully address its structural budget problems, there will be more years like 2007. Problems will worsen until a crisis prompts renewed action and investment. But if attention and investment are not sustained, the decline will recur and prompt more crises.

This is an untenable situation. Even if Randolph maintains ethnic and racial diversity, it would be hard to believe that middle class families with the economic power to choose where to live will choose to live in a place with perennially struggling schools and crime. This scenario could simply result in a multi-ethnic ghetto.

Scenario 4: Healthy Gateway

This fourth scenario assumes the break from the tipping point discussed above as well as success in providing quality schools, services and a safe environment. It also represents the common hope for Randolph expressed by my interviewees. They told me that they want Randolph to be what it was like for them in the 1990s, diverse, tolerant, safe, enjoyable, a good place to raise a family.

This future Randolph will have successfully tackled the issues discussed in chapter six. The recent trend in school improvement will continue, and Randolph's schools will provide educational opportunity to the town's young people. The linguistic and socioeconomic mix in the town will be reflected in assessment scores placing Randolph schools in the middle of the pack statewide, but many Randolph graduates will go on to higher education and successful careers. Youth will have access to athletic, artistic, musical, and recreational activities. Youth

crime will once again be rare, as will random violent crime. Discriminatory lending practices will be curbed, and Randolph's foreclosure crisis will fade. Future development will be well planned, and Randolph will not develop into a homogenous parking lot town with overwhelmed transportation and water systems.

Because this Randolph would provide all the things that caused suburbanizing families to choose it in the 20th century – housing value, access to employment, safety, decent schools – a diverse group of working and middle class families will continue to choose to move there. It will also remain an attractive place for highly skilled immigrants arriving to meet future employment demands to first settle in the United States. Many of these new suburbanite families and their children may then have the opportunity to choose a move to a more affluent or spacious suburb. Randolph would continue its function as a healthy gateway suburb.

Policy Recommendations

If gateway suburbs are to survive, than they must ensure they continue to be communities of choice. They can no longer perform their functions as a healthy and welcoming gateway to suburbia if they become communities of last resort. Chapters four and five explored the reasons why people move to Randolph, stay in Randolph, and leave Randolph. Chapter six looked in depth at the core issues that must be addressed in Randolph or most any community. From these studies, several areas for improvement come into focus. Some of these suggestions are within Randolph's power to act on through local government action or the actions of residents. Others require involvement from state and local government as well as regional service providers. Not all of these proposals are novel, and progress towards some may already be underway.

Political power

- Improve and diversify local government
- Achieve representation at state level
- Gain attention from regional services
- Combat segregation in the metro area

Finances

- Plan for future spending and overrides
- Obtain more outside resources

Development

- Capitalize on strengths of urban characteristics
- Adapt to future changes in housing market
- Invest in historic rehabilitation and preservation

Education

- Ensure good resources and leadership
- Highlight and build on unique student body

Public Safety

- Increase investment in youth crime prevention
- Improve community-police relations
- Change reputation

Political power

Poor governance has been one of Randolph's core problems. To be effective in the future, Randolph needs a town government composed of skilled people who view the entire community as their responsibility. It needs to empower the whole of its community to form this government.

An investment in the skill base of Randolph officials should be made in the areas of facilitative leadership, communication, negotiation, and anti-racist practices. Squabbling among members

of elected bodies, inappropriate behavior, and poorly executed meetings hampered progress in the past. Moreover, Randolph stands in a special place as the most integrated and diverse suburban community in Massachusetts. Successfully addressing racial and ethnic issues should be a core part of the work of every town official.

Randolph's existing pool of leadership must also be expanded. Efforts should be made to include more residents in town politics and governance, to cultivate new leaders, and to explore the ways in which the diverse skill sets of Randolph's residents can be put to better use.

Randolph needs and deserves better representation at the state level. Current districting makes it nearly impossible for someone from Randolph to be elected to the state house of representatives. The voting strength of Randolph's diverse community is split up into three much whiter communities. Efforts should be made in the upcoming round of redistricting to consolidate Randolph's precincts into a single district.

Randolph lacks a strong regional identity. All the various departments of state government, service agencies, and researchers categorize Randolph differently, sometimes grouping it with the Boston region, sometimes the South Shore, sometimes Brockton, and even sometimes MetroWest. The confusion about where Randolph belongs has tangible drawbacks for the town.

Superintendent Silverman explained the problem of regional services like this. "We're in that island that nobody owns... really divorced from resources. There are a load of resources in Boston but none of them in Randolph. It's adjacent to other large communities, Brockton, Quincy, and others, all of which have resources, none of which come to Randolph. Because Randolph is small and doesn't have anything to offer, they don't need Randolph. So, Randolph is really kind of separated. It's an island unto itself with no help and no resources and no income." Size matters. Town Manager David Murphy who previously worked in Quincy city government noted, "Quincy has benefited from access to federal monies based on its population that Randolph has not. As a result, there are many more services and programs available to residents. That is the biggest difference that I have seen - we are essentially the same and have the same issues, but yet the "city" gets more resource funding from the state and federal government."

Randolph must develop stronger partnerships with regional service providers. It should insist on appropriate definitions of Randolph within service catchment areas. Randolph leaders and officials should establish a stronger presence at state and regional meetings.

Randolph is a gateway suburb, but why should it be the only accessible gateway? For decades, other suburbs in the region have remained exclusive while Randolph lived up to fair housing ideals. The *Changing Patterns* reports point out that total home-purchase lending to blacks and Latinos in Massachusetts has for years been highly concentrated in a small number of cities and towns and entirely absent in many others. Randolph was one of the four cities and towns that accounted for over one-half of total loans to blacks in Massachusetts. The other three are Boston, Brockton, and Springfield. Randolph is the only suburb on the list. The Norfolk County District Attorney and the state Attorney General should enforce fair housing law and encourage fair housing practices in the rest of the region's suburbs. History shows that areas segregated by

race and class become neglected. Randolph's diversity is an asset, but it should not be unique.

Finances

Proposition 2 ½ enforces a perpetual crisis for municipal finances. In the absence of a broad based state movement to repeal the law – a highly unlikely prospect – Randolph must deal with this reality. Superintendent Silverman made this suggestion. “I think what the town, or any town has to do is a long-range financial plan. And I think you need to build into that plan an expectation that there will be an override every X number of years, a smaller override, and then periodically a larger override to cover major changes in its plan.” After the crisis year of 2007, Randolph residents stepped up for the future of their town. They voted to pay more in taxes to support education and public safety. The town government and school system should make the case to voters that they will need to make that stand again to protect their community. It could do this through the creation of a long-term plan and the exhibition of responsible spending and investment of current resources. An honest and credible plan for the town's resources, what it will require from residents and what it will provide them, should motivate people in Randolph to not repeat the neglect that led in part to the problems of 2007. The progress made by Randolph officials since 2007 has been a good start in this direction. But, frequent, direct, and clear communication with residents about the costs and benefits associated with taxes and services must be increased.

Additionally, Randolph will need access to outside funds. Its tax base is too small and its needs are too great. The current town manager and superintendent both made more aggressive pursuit of state and federal grants a priority, and this behavior must continue. Randolph's position as a gateway suburb make this very difficult however. According to Town Manager David Murphy, “Randolph is not eligible for some of the community block grants that a city may be. We, because of our population figures, are forced into a competitive grant situation that reduces our predictability and limits our planning capabilities for valuable programs and services. Our current resources are different from other suburbs in that we have not capitalized fully on our commercial development potential. We aim to do that.”

The Brookings Institution pointed out in its study of first suburbs that there is growing attention being paid to communities like Randolph. As the problems face by struggling suburbs are being labeled and defined, new programs are being rolled out to assist them. There needs to be more advocacy on the state and federal levels for these kinds of places. The development of a language and an identity labeling and defining them will make this advocacy much easier.

The pursuit of outside resources will be made easier if Randolph more strongly establishes and asserts its identity as an important place unique from other more typical suburbs or urban areas. It would also be much easier if Randolph had strong representation at higher levels of government.

Development

Randolph is essentially built-out. Growth and development choices must be made carefully to make the best use of scarce open land and land to be redeveloped. It has become all too fashionable for planners to call for more density, walkability, and mixed-use development. Yet, there are good reasons to call for this kind of development in Randolph, including historical form, economic development, housing market changes, and competition with other suburbs.

Development in Randolph over the last two decades transformed Randolph's form away from the density and pedestrian scale of the historic New England town towards the auto-centric homogeneity of the American suburb. Architect and Randolph native Caitlin Duffy said, "I'm nervous about the loss of open space and the overall privatization of space. Randolph is becoming a pavement town. A suburb should have some trees." On Warren Street, buildings that provided spaces for multiple small businesses and multi-unit housing were demolished and replaced by parking lots, McDonald's, Work Out World, Jiffy Lube, and Walgreens. Where there were once professional buildings for small offices on North Main Street is a Sovereign Bank branch and where there was housing there is an empty lot. Mai Ha, another architect and former resident said, "The commercial development, like the McDonald's, took away from the town feel. Randolph's legacy, a sense of the old place and some walkability would be much better." Recently developed housing in Randolph has mostly been larger single-family homes on lots created by sub-dividing the larger lots of old homes, although more multi-family housing was recently permitted.

In spite of the emphasis on generic suburban development in recent decades, Randolph has vibrant main street areas downtown and in North Randolph. Randolph's main street is filled with a variety of small businesses, including old mainstays and newer ethnic businesses. Future development should capitalize on the strengths of the existing main streets areas and the energy of Randolph's immigrant entrepreneurs. Other suburbs hire planning consultants to strategize how they can create the sort of vibrancy and diversity that Randolph has. Town Manager David Murphy described Randolph's advantages. "From a business perspective, the diversity also allows for small businesses to thrive. We have a number of smaller businesses in town that cater to specific cultures. Those businesses will never suffer from the "Wal-Mart" effect. Diverse businesses can be the backbone of smaller town squares and downtown areas."

Randolph already has some of the content; it needs to improve the form. Streetscape improvements are planned for the downtown. Other main street improvement strategies like consolidating lots into convenient municipal parking, building façade improvements, and especially the addition of more residential units above and around the commercial area should also be explored.

Like many suburbs, Randolph has a hard time keeping its young professionals. Randolph native Aaron Fellman, who now lives in Connecticut for his job at ESPN, said he hopes Randolph could have "more activity, nightlife for young people, more community activities, a town green type feel." At the same time Amy Couture-Rizzo, a young professional who moved from Randolph to nearby suburban Canton, echoed many of my interviewees when she said she would like to

move back to Randolph because it provides “the benefits of city living without the headaches of city living.” Additional housing units geared towards young professionals near areas of the town where there are already a number of restaurants and businesses would give these people the opportunity to move back while supporting the kinds of commercial development that would encourage them to do so.

Planning Director Richard McCarthy recognizes the desire for mixed-use development, “One of the things in the master plan is Crawford Square downtown redevelopment, calling for retail first floor, residential on the second floor. I test that by developers, come in and say this is what the town is trying to do at a certain site, but often the economics don't support that. My job is to try to find ways to make that happen.” Conventional thinking about suburbia and the thought that Randolph is a conventional suburb create a difficulty for encouraging developers to build in that form. McCarthy gave this example, “There was some interest in putting a bank in the downtown area, and I said, well, how about a bank on the first floor and residential above it? Now, if I had TD Bank North, Bank of America trying to go in downtown Boston on the first floor with residential above it or commercial above it, they wouldn't blink an eyelash. But when you come out to Randolph, a suburban community, they want no part of it. So that's the challenge: you have to get beyond the party lines to get the business community to buy into it.”

More multi-family housing near the main street commercial areas would be a wise investment for several reasons. National and state housing market predictions focus on the aging of the baby boomers, a glut of single-family housing, and the changing preferences of the millenials to argue that future construction opportunities lie in denser housing within walking distance of desired amenities. My interviews revealed these market shifts already emerging as a problem for Randolph. Some interviewees reported that they plan to leave Randolph because they cannot find housing appropriate for their retirement and aging. Younger interviewees cited living elsewhere because they could not find the opportunities for starter condos or apartments geared towards young professionals.

This study has also made clear that Randolph is unlike most other suburbs in the Greater Boston market. People who value suburban amenities are shifting towards those other suburbs with larger lot homes and box stores. Randolph cannot compete with those other suburbs through the construction of more box stores, parking lots, and large lot homes. It simply does not have the land resources, and it faces too many so-called urban challenges. Randolph should instead bank on its unique characteristics – urban diversity and vitality in the suburbs – to compete. Development that reinforces the walkability and vibrancy of its main street areas and that provides housing opportunities for the young people and retirees who must now look for options elsewhere would do just that.

The advantages of diversity have the potential to be marketed to the cohort of Boston metropolitan area residents who value them. Some of these people belong to ethnic groups that are more present in Randolph than in other communities and would like to live near their co-ethnics and their accompanying restaurants and shops. Another potential market however are the educated young professionals who value exposure to other cultures and the advantages of cosmopolitan living, or the people who would want what Raffaella Poteau described as

“more worldly experience without having to travel around the world.” Many of these people currently choose to live in Cambridge, Somerville, the South End, and Jamaica Plain. Often, these young professionals choose to move to more suburban settings after having children. Popular communities among this cohort include Arlington, Waltham, and Roslindale. These neighborhoods are in close proximity to the urban neighborhoods in which this market currently lives. They are more familiar to them. Randolph could market its diversity to these people to vie to be their top choice suburb. Of course, the quality of schools and other factors will impact Randolph’s competitiveness to this market.

Another focus for development in Randolph should be the preservation and revitalization of its historic structures. There are a number of historic homes and buildings in the town. Some have been well preserved or recently rehabilitated, like the iconic Stetson Hall in the town center. Yet, several architects who reside in Randolph highlighted this as an area for improvement in my interviews. Randolph’s historic buildings are an under-utilized asset.

Education

Randolph’s first priority must be its public school system. Without quality schools, a community cannot be competitive. The decade of declining school quality culminating in 2007 drove residents away from Randolph and wrecked the town’s reputation. Indications are that the turnaround team has been successful and progress has been made. Continuing that progress and making Randolph schools excellent will quickly face some hard challenges. Again, the issues of leadership and financial resources are at the heart of the issue.

Richard Silverman will retire as superintendent in August 2010. The town must find a skilled, innovative, and dedicated replacement. In April, the school committee chose Oscar Santos, principal of Boston International High School and a Randolph resident. Santos’ experience in urban education and particularly his focus on English language learners suggest that he is a good choice. Superintendent Silverman noted that stability in the schools can also be maintained by the administrative and teaching talent the Randolph Public Schools now have. “We have a really strong leadership team within the schools that wants to stay and is dedicated to do doing this work [turning around a struggling and diverse district]. Everybody has come here because they’re dedicated to doing this kind of work. There was a time we had, in the not too far past, where we took whoever we got, and we were lucky to get them. We now are able to be selective of the people who come here, and the people who come here choose to come here because they want to work in a multicultural environment like this.”

Even the best leadership will not be able to maintain the schools without resources however. The boost in funding from the 2008 override is already beginning to subside. The 2011 school budget includes plans to cut \$1.9 million from staff and programs. The town must continue to prioritize the schools and provide adequate resources. The public schools in turn must deliver results and constantly communicate to parents and residents that the schools both need the resources and provide a return on the investment.

Beyond continuing to implement the well-crafted school turnaround plan, Randolph schools should seek to further capitalize on the unique elements of the education they provide. The advantages given to students educated in such a diverse school system are hard to quantify but are invaluable for working and pursuing higher education in our globalized economy and society. Without exception, all of my interviewees who graduated from Randolph High School cited specific advantages of a Randolph education they discovered in college and the work place. The Randolph schools should catalogue and institutionalize the advantages of its diverse schools. Randolph alumni and the school system could work together on a project to visibly demonstrate the benefits of a Randolph education. The public schools could also take better advantage of the extant talents in its diverse student body. For example, Randolph public school students on a whole possess tremendous linguistic talent that could be cultivated and shared through language learning, teaching, and translation programs.

There is growing interest in the establishment of charter schools in struggling school districts, and Randolph has been highlighted as a potential host for a new charter school. The community should resist any attempt at the creation of a charter for the older grades, and any potential charter serving younger grades must work closely with the district and capitalize on its unique population. The Randolph schools are progressing through an as yet successful but fragile turnaround. A charter would detract from the effort at reinvestment in the community's school system by draining funds and providing a distraction. A charter school, especially in the older grades when all Randolph students come together, could also potentially destroy the asset that is the school's diversity if it, like most charters, does not end up enrolling a representative cross-section of the community's students. If a group does begin the process to charter a school in Randolph, it is of utmost importance that the charter cooperate with the district schools' turnaround plan, market itself so as to ensure an appropriately diverse student population, and focus innovations that would capitalize on the advantages of diversity or expressly fulfill the particular needs of Randolph students.

Public safety

Randolph needs to tackle its two major problems with public safety – crime in Randolph and people's perceptions of crime in Randolph.

Improvements have been made since 2007's peak of violent crime. But, there is no question that Randolph still has issues with violent crime. Youth crime is a particular worry. The police have had some success preventing youth crime through closer partnership with the public schools. As discussed in chapter six, prevention has worked for Randolph before. Renewed investment and continued effort from not just local police but the district attorney's office will be a necessity.

The town also needs to provide more opportunities for youth activities and jobs. Many of my interviewees highlighted this as the town's largest need. During the years of decline in the schools, most youth activities were cut. Thankfully many have revived, but the need is still great. Caitlin Duffy, an architect and Randolph native, also called for opportunities for youth activities to be promoted through development of "spaces for kids to hang out, un-programmed

space where people can interact instead of driving by in an anonymous car.”

The Randolph police must also make better efforts to work with all of Randolph’s communities. Perhaps it should emulate the community policing strategies used in more urban areas, including community-police events and festivals, active outreach, recruiting for linguistic and racial diversity, and visible dedication of neighborhood beat officers. The onus is on these professional public servants to gain the trust and admiration of the community, a relationship that has been damaged by past abuses including those detailed in chapter six.

Besides addressing the reality of crime in Randolph, the town must reverse the public reputation that sees it as more dangerous than it is. Some of this reputation is the result of the subtle and ingrained racism in American society that views an area with black youth and other people of color as automatically dangerous. Some of it results from memories of incidents that have occurred in Randolph. The Randolph police must be more transparent with its crime data. It should advertise its successes and admit and explain its failures.

Conclusion

Randolph is different from other places, and it needs different solutions

There have been a number of recent studies seeking to label and understand places beyond the established urban-suburban framework. The growth in studies like this is necessitated by the growing challenges faced by many places that do not fit the existing definitions. Randolph is one of these places. The gateway suburb label is an attempt to define its difference so that different solutions can be pursued.

Diversity is currently Randolph's most strikingly apparent characteristic. This diversity was created by Randolph's function as a gateway. Randolph's diversity can only be maintained if it continues to function as a suburb that people find attractive and choose to move to, and if it continues to provide the opportunities in housing, schools, safety and other areas that allow these people to choose Randolph. Diversity itself is a challenge. It increases the cost and difficulty of educating the town's children, engaging the town's community, policing, and providing services. But if Randolph can no longer succeed in performing these core functions, then its diversity will decline because ethnic and socioeconomic groups with greater means will choose to live elsewhere. This study suggested some strategies for improving those key areas that will help maintain Randolph as a community of choice.

The diversity created by Randolph's gateway function can also now play a role in preserving Randolph's vitality. Town Manager David Murphy describes the potential. "Randolph's diversity gives me great hope for the future of Randolph. I believe that our diversity is a true "separator". Other communities will long for the diversity that Randolph already enjoys. We are in the process of harnessing that diversity as a strength and I believe that this issue is the true reason that Randolph can be much greater than other communities."

Randolph is OK...

Popular thought about Randolph includes fear of what is known in planning and economics literature as the tipping point. Randolph matches tipping point theory in terms of directionality but not time. Randolph's racial changes have taken place over 30 years. Studies on neighborhood change show that sudden dramatic change is bad. Gradual change can be absorbed and adapted to. In short, Randolph is not Mattapan.

Randolph has problems. Clearly, the town struggles with issues of public safety, education, municipal governance and finance, and reputation. Yet, Randolph is still a safe place – in itself, compared to the state, and compared to the nation. Randolph schools provide an education that allows students to go on to higher education and to be successful in life. Randolph has many amenities for living, including groceries, shops, parks, youth sports leagues, and public transportation. Homes continue to sell. Randolph's median income and poverty rate are still better than the Massachusetts average. Life in Randolph is fine.

... *but, at risk*

The issues that came to a head in 2007 are improving, but the problems are real. If the recovery is reversed and problems worsen, then Randolph may no longer be a community of choice. Guerline Menard moved to North Carolina for graduate school, “When I was little, I always talked about wanting to come back to Randolph and raise a family, but I’m not sure anymore.” Most of my interviewees talked about many things they liked about Randolph. But, if the school system is no good, if crime rises so that people do not feel safe and secure, if Randolph loses its diversity, if people feel they are not getting services for their tax dollars, even fans of Randolph will look elsewhere to live and raise their families.

Randolph’s diversity lives in a delicate balance. No neighborhood is truly stable, let alone a suburb whose function is as a gateway for families to move through. Yet, for a couple decades Randolph has remained a place of tremendous – if shifting – ethnic and racial diversity. Tipping point theory would label Randolph in the 1990s and 2000s as unstable. It would assert that change will continue until Randolph is no longer diverse. I believe Randolph’s generation of diversity can be maintained as long as it provides both the reasons and opportunities for people of all backgrounds to reside there.

The Future of America

Randolph and other gateway suburbs are at the forefront of demographic changes that will shape America for the next generation at least. The most diverse and the second largest period of immigration in America’s history began with the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 and continues today. The slow breakdown of race-based barriers and divisions in American society and the globalization of world culture shape the ways we live our lives. The shift of America’s jobs and population to the suburbs has begun to be matched by greater inclusion and accessibility for people of various socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds to live in the suburbs. These trends are coming together to create more places like Randolph. Rabbi Loel Weiss of Randolph’s Temple Beth-Am said in the Patriot Ledger, “This town is a microcosm of how this country is going to deal with a multicultural society. If it succeeds in Randolph, it will succeed in this country.”

The Rabbi’s vision may be grand, but Town Manager David Murphy’s vision for Randolph comes from a similar goal of a successful new suburban diversity. “The vision is a 21st century community that enjoys a diverse population, thriving and hip business base, and amenities for families and young people. I compare my vision to being a Cambridge of the South Shore. We can be a unique town with farms and city amenities. A hip, vibrant, but bucolic town.”

Greater recognition of Randolph’s special characteristics, and greater understanding of other places similar to Randolph will enable us to plan for the coming changes in American society. The story of Randolph and other gateway suburbs needs to be told so that other places can learn from its successes and its failures. The generation of us that learned these lessons through experience can lead the way. I would like to echo the sentiment Jennifer Harrison shared with me, “I am humbled by the experience of growing up in such an innocently unusual place.”

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Appendix: Summary of Resident Interviews

Family	Race	Ethnicity	Immigrant Generation	Arrival Year	Reason for Moving to Randolph	Additional Reason for Moving to Randolph	Place of Previous Residence	Opinion on Schools	Who are Randolph's Leaders?	Is Randolph a Good Place to Live?	How is Randolph Different From Other Places?	What Impact Has Diversity Had on You?	What Impact Has Diversity Had on Randolph?
Tran T.	asian	Vietnamese	1	1999	leave Boston's violence		Dorchester	Declining	Don't know	OK	Access to transportation and urban amenities	Friendships	
Tran H.	asian	Vietnamese-Chinese	1	1992	Homeowners hip		East Boston-Dorchester	Bad now	Don't know	no	Diversity	Cultural understanding, pride	don't know
Christian	black	African-American	?	1994	Diversity		West Bridgewater	Wonderful	politicians are not leaders	yes	Diversity	Cultural understanding, career goals	challenge for teachers, more attractive to urban people, harder to coach sports
Nguyen	asian	Vietnamese	1	1989	Suburbanize	Location	Quincy	Good reputation undervalued	no idea	yes	smaller than other diverse places	Tolerance, less understanding of racism	food choices
Cheng	asian	Chinese	1	1996	Suburbanize	Family	Chinatown-Cambridge	Good but declined	Don't know	yes	less community than cambridge	not sure b/c cambridge also diverse	more families and children
Fellman	white	Jewish	3	1981	Homeowners hip		Mattapan; Canton	On the rebound	Local gov't, specific people, religious leaders	Yes	Diversity	Cultural understanding	Detriment to social capital; white flight
Poteau	black	Haitian	1	1996	Homeowners hip	Diversity	Boston	Great by 03, bad now	Local gov't, abusive of power	Yes	Diversity	High standard for diversity; less exposure to racism	Cosmopolitan
Couture-Rizzo	white	French-Canadian, German	4	1983	Suburbanize	Location	Hyde Park	Good, downturn and rebound		yes	Diversity, urban/suburban	Cultural understanding, high standard for diversity	le
Yoffe	white	Jewish	3	1986	Suburbanize	Location	Brockton	great	Don't know	yes	Diversity	Cultural understanding, career	draw for some residents, but difficult for schools
Duffy	white	Irish-Polish-Other	5	1987	Suburbanize		Brighton	Good then, declined now	specific families	yes	Diversity, accessibility	Cultural understanding, Life in NYC	White flight
Williams	black	African-American	?	1990	Suburbanize	hip	Dorchester	Declining, less diverse	Don't know	Yes	Diversity, quiet	Friendships, cultural understanding	draw for some residents, push away for others
Gladstone	white	Jewish	3	1971	Suburbanize		Mattapan	best in area			Mix of urban forms, diversity	Cultural understanding	
Joyce	white	Irish-Jewish	3	1983	Suburbanize	Homeowners hip	Dorchester & Mattapan - Milton		specific people and politicians	yes	Diversity	Cultural understanding, career, less exposure to racism	uniqueness, People from Randolph are more tolerant
Adhanom	black	Eritrean	1	1987	Suburbanize	Location	Mattapan	Good but declined	specific families	Yes	Diversity, urban/suburban	relationships	
Mason	white	Irish	3	1960s	Suburbanize	Affordability	South Boston	Bad with undervalued reputation		yes	convenience		
Chartier	white	Irish/English	3	1960s	Suburbanize		Dorchester	reputation	Don't know	No	Diversity, reputation	Friendships, cultural understanding	Detriment to social capital
Menard	black	Haitian	1	1994	Family	Suburbanize	Dorchester-Brockton-Waltham	Once good, now violent	Don't know	No	Community oriented	Cultural understanding	People from Randolph are more tolerant
Harrison	asian	Chinese	1	1990	Immigration sponsor		Hong Kong	A little above average		Yes	Diversity	Humility	People from Randolph are more tolerant
Anon. (1)	white	Caucasian	?	late 50s	move to rural area		South Boston	No Faith		No	Diversity	None	
Paul An	asian	Bengali	1	1980	Suburbanize		Cambridge	Great but now too violent	Don't know	OK	Diversity	Cultural understanding, dress	Fights and friendships
Paul Ap	asian	Bengali	1	1985	Suburbanize	Homeowners hip	Brockton	Bad			Diversity	Cultural understanding, music	
Ha	asian	Vietnamese	1	1996	Family	Location	Boston-Woburn	Bad now			Diversity	Pride, cultural understanding	
Anon. (2)	white	English	5	19th century			England	Fine in 70s, reason to leave now	Don't know	No	Urban/Suburban		Detriment to social capital

Family	Leave/Stay	To where	Reason for Staying or Leaving	Additional Reason for Staying or Leaving	Hopes for Randolph	Fear for Randolph	What Change Needs to be Made
Tran T	Stay		Affordable housing		Bigger city with more to offer Diversity remains and is made central part of town and education	Inner town filled with crime Lose diversity, another Dorchester	Education money gathering space, education about town's actual demographics
Tran H	stay		Convenience	Family			
Christian	stay		diversity		safe, diverse, good schools	crime	economic development, schools, youth activities
Nguyen	stay		Family	Homeowners hip	Diverse, good schools Move away from cookie cutter development, historic preservation	2nd Dorchester, bad rep, less diversity slum-like from lack of maintenance by property owners	need leaders, someone advocating for Randolph small businesses, better planning, events to connect people
Cheng	stay		Family	Homeowners hip			
Fellman	Stay		Homeowners hip		More activities	Another Lawrence or Lynn	Representative political system
Poteau	Stay		Homeowners hip	Family	More activities financially stable, better reputation, better open spaces	Intolerant, deteriorating	Education money, activity money
Couture-Rizzo	stay		Likes it	accessibility		financial problems	reputation
Yoffe	stay		Likes it		back to what it was in 90s Better use of environment, sustainability, unprogrammed space	abandonment	better politicians, more activities
Duffy	Stay		Likes it		More vibrant	Overbuilding	Greening
Williams	Stay		Likes it		Younger leadership modernization, better downtown parking	Less diversity Current good efforts will fail b/c of bad implementation	Schools Attract young people, commuters, new society
Gladstone	plans to	Mashpee	Retirement				
Joyce	plans to		Retirement				
Adhanom	plans to	south	weather		"cultural epicenter," Get in order, schools, community involvement	"expansion of Boston"	involvement of alumni stop MBTA access
Mason	plans to						
Chartier	Left	Bridgewater	Family	Suburbanize	Diverse and tolerant	Violence and misunderstanding, another Dorchester or Brockton	Outreach and activities
Menard	Left	Stoughton	Family		Stays like it was in the 90s, diverse, safe, enjoyable	Less diversity, less safety	School funding, better police
Harrison	Left	Charlestown	Family	Property value fears	Stays like it was in the 90s, diverse, safe, enjoyable	Either poor or rich community of stranders	
Anon (1)	Left		Retirement	Sense of decline	Not sure	Drugs, crime, decline "Mattapanoliph"	Resident involvement activities for youth
Paul An	Left	Stoughton	Schools	Homeowners hip	Loses stigma		
Paul Ap	Left	Easton	schools				
Ha	Left	Bridgewater	Schools	Schools negative	Organizations that encourage blending of cultures	Another Brockton	schools, historic preservation, crime, gathering space, housing for young ppl, more pedestrian friendly
Anon (2)	Left		Suburbanize				