

**Understanding the Dynamics of Drug-Related Problems in Public Housing  
and its Surrounding Neighborhood**

by

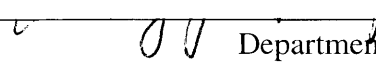
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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of

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# Understanding the Dynamics of Drug-Related Problems in Public Housing and its Surrounding Neighborhood

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Anthony J. A. Petropulos

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
on May 23, 1996 in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Master of City Planning

## ABSTRACT

Drug-related problems produce dynamics across people and space that transcend the physical boundaries of public housing developments. To develop successful drug-fighting strategies in and around public housing, therefore, it is important to understand the relationship of the development and its residents to the space and people in the surrounding neighborhood. The *dynamics* among *four critical factors* determine whether drug activity will motivate or alienate the capacity of the development and neighborhood to organize effectively against drugs. These factors are (1) the dynamics of the drug market, (2) the involvement and institutional capacity of land users in the neighborhood, (3) the involvement and organizational capacity of public housing tenants, and (4) the effectiveness of police forces operating in the area.

I explore the dynamics among these four variables in three public housing developments and their surrounding neighborhoods in Boston, MA. The South Street case study demonstrates how strengths in three of these factors -- a small drug market, active and competent surrounding land users, and effective police -- can compensate for a largely uninvolved tenant population and control drug-related problems. The second case study, Charlestown, illustrates how severe weaknesses in all four variables create negative dynamics that will be difficult to untangle. A large and tightly-organized monopolistic drug organization that produces little random violence, withdrawn surrounding neighborhood residents, and frightened tenants mean that police efforts are of little use in the fight against drugs. The third case study, Bromley Heath, shows how strong organizational capacity to address formidable drug problems exists within the development and neighborhood, but barriers between the two places weaken the overall impact of drug-fighting efforts.

In the final chapter, I suggest what the Boston Housing Authority would have to do organizationally to employ at the development level the framework suggested herein. I conclude by examining the strategic interventions that the four-point framework implies for South Street, Charlestown, Bromley Heath, and their surrounding neighborhoods.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>6</b>
METHODOLOGY.....	7
ORGANIZATION OF THESIS.....	9
<b>CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>10</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	10
HISTORY AND THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT/NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONSHIPS.....	10
HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS.....	16
<b>CHAPTER II: SOUTH STREET.....</b>	<b>22</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	22
CONTEXT AND PROBLEM.....	22
1. <i>The Development and Surrounding Neighborhood</i> .....	22
2. <i>History of Development/Surrounding Neighborhood Relations</i> .....	28
3. <i>Drug Market and Crime in South Street and Surroundings</i> .....	29
INSTITUTIONS AND RESPONSES.....	30
1. <i>Involvement and Institutional Capacity of Land Users in Neighborhood</i> .....	30
2. <i>Involvement and Organizational Capacity of Tenants</i> .....	36
3. <i>Effectiveness of Police Forces Operating in the Area</i> .....	39
4. <i>Expanding the Scope of Drug-Fighting Initiatives</i> .....	40
5. <i>Conclusion</i> .....	41
<b>CHAPTER III: CHARLESTOWN: THE BUNKER HILL PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT 42</b>	<b>42</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	42
CONTEXT AND PROBLEM.....	42
1. <i>The Development and Surrounding Neighborhood</i> .....	42
2. <i>History of Development/Neighborhood Relations</i> .....	47
3. <i>Dynamic of the Drug Market</i> .....	52
INSTITUTIONS AND RESPONSES.....	56
1. <i>Involvement and Institutional Capacity of Land Users in the Neighborhood</i> .....	56
2. <i>Involvement and Organizational Capacity of Development Tenants</i> .....	62
3. <i>Effectiveness of Police Forces Operating in the Area</i> .....	65
4. <i>Conclusion</i> .....	67
<b>CHAPTER IV: BROMLEY HEATH.....</b>	<b>68</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	68
CONTEXT AND PROBLEM.....	68
1. <i>The Development and Surrounding Neighborhood</i> .....	68
2. <i>History of Development/Neighborhood Relations</i> .....	74
3. <i>Dynamic of Drug Market</i> .....	77
INSTITUTIONS AND RESPONSES.....	79
1. <i>Involvement and Institutional Capacity of Land Users in Neighborhood</i> .....	79
2. <i>Involvement and Organizational Capacity of Tenants</i> .....	83
3. <i>Effectiveness of Area Police Forces</i> .....	85
4. <i>Conclusion</i> .....	87

<b>CHAPTER 5: COMPARISON AND ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>88</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	88
1. <i>The Dynamics of Drug Markets</i> .....	88
2. <i>Institutional Capacity of Space in Surrounding Neighborhood</i> .....	90
3. <i>Involvement and Organization of Public Housing Tenants</i> .....	95
4. <i>Effectiveness of Police Forces</i> .....	98
DYNAMICS ACROSS VARIABLES .....	101
<b>CHAPTER 6 -- STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>105</b>
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BHA.....	105
<i>Central Office Changes</i> .....	106
<i>Development-level Changes</i> .....	108
<i>Linking the Central Office with Developments</i> .....	109
STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR THREE CASE STUDIES .....	110
<i>South Street</i> .....	110
<i>Charlestown</i> .....	111
<i>Bromley Heath</i> .....	114
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	115
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>MAPS .....</b>	<b>122</b>
MAP 1: SOUTH STREET NEIGHBORHOOD .....	122
MAP 2: SOUTH STREET CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS .....	123
MAP 3: CHARLESTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD .....	124
MAP 4: CHARLESTOWN CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS .....	125
MAP 5: HYDE SQUARE/JACKSON SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD.....	126
MAP 6: HYDE SQUARE/JACKSON SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD.....	127
MAP 7: HYDE SQUARE/JACKSON SQUARE CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS .....	128
MAP 8: BROMLEY HEATH DEVELOPMENT .....	129

## INTRODUCTION

The dilemma over what to do about drugs and crime in public housing has puzzled policy makers over the last thirty years. The long-term, big picture answer to this dilemma certainly centers on generating well-paying jobs, reforming public schools, mending broken households, and addressing drug addiction, to mention a few pieces of the puzzle. Those explanations, however, offer little guidance, however, to people struggling with this issue on a day to day basis at the neighborhood level. Local strategies, on the other hand, have focused almost exclusively within the boundaries of the public housing development. Little has been done to articulate a vision between these two extremes -- a strategy that considers the people, institutions, and space in the development and surrounding neighborhood.

A place I stumbled upon during the daily tasks of my work/study job at the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) illuminated drug-fighting approach that appeared to cut across development/neighborhood lines and bridge the gap between the conventional strategic extremes. This place is the South Street development in Jamaica Plain. What surprised me about South Street was that neighborhood residents were heavily involved in working with tenants of the development to address drugs and related problems. Lots has been written on how poverty and attendant problems have isolated public housing from its surroundings. (Abt, Boston Housing Authority, National Commission of Severely Distressed Public Housing, etc.) I had assumed that drug problems had driven deeper the wedge between the South Street development and the surrounding neighborhood, particularly because sharp socioeconomic and racial differences exist. This appeared to be an instance where concern about drug problems had broken some of the development's isolation and untied two communities that previously were quite separate.

I had heard before that drugs and crime could bridge sharp racial and class differences, but I remained skeptical about whether this theory was grounded in reality. It seemed too abstract an idea and smacked of something developed in a classroom seminar. South Street offered the opportunity to examine how such a theory played out at the street level under what seemed to be optimal circumstances.

Something else interested me in the South Street. Things seemed to be working there. I wanted to look at successful drug-fighting strategies between development and neighborhood to find out why and how this had occurred. All too often, evaluations focus on failures and let partial successes go unnoticed. I wanted to see what caused developments and neighborhoods succeed or fail in the fight against drugs. The question, then, that I seek to explore in this thesis is:

What is important to understand about the dynamic relationship between public housing and its surrounding neighborhood if one wants to effectively address drugs and related problems?

## **METHODOLOGY**

To explore this question, I look at how three public housing developments and their surrounding neighborhoods have fared in their efforts to combat drugs and related problems. In my search for examples of success, I asked knowledgeable BHA employees whether they knew of specific developments and neighborhoods that were implementing coordinated and effective strategies to address drugs. These BHA employees paused at this question and had difficulty answering it. Part of this hesitation arose because they thought about drugs predominantly within the confines of the development, and another part resulted because few public housing developments and surrounding neighborhoods in Boston appear to work effectively together in the fight against drugs.

I selected my case studies based on two criteria. First, I heeded BHA employee opinions about which developments were implementing effective development/neighborhood based strategies against drugs. As the cases that follow shall demonstrate, some of these choices were good and others were bad. All three cases, however, shed important light on the kinds of factors and dynamics that determine whether a development and larger neighborhood can cope effectively with drug problems. My second criterion for selecting developments was based on how many contacts I could make in the development and neighborhood from my BHA connections. On the basis of these two criteria I chose to examine the South Street, Charlestown, and Bromley Heath developments.

My selection criterion raise concerns from a traditional research perspective. Conventional wisdom advocates selecting cases so as to narrow the range of variables one seeks to compare. Each of these three developments and neighborhoods are extremely different in many ways. I would argue that the complexity of reality and the number of factors that contribute to the drug situation in each development and neighborhood make it next to impossible to find “comparable” developments.

Another problem with the conventional comparative approach is that it assumes that humans behave according to social science categorizations. Take the socioeconomic variable. Although middle-class residents live in the neighborhoods around South Street and Charlestown, this socioeconomic categorization does not say much about what kinds of people they are, whether they are involved in their community, or whether they know how to exercise political clout. Middle-class people in Charlestown have a quite different set of interests than middle-class people in Jamaica Plain. I jettisoned the idea of a carefully controlled comparison and selected developments that offered me the greatest promise for seeing the issues from the perspectives of different players in these neighborhoods and uncovering the dynamic that exists on the street level.

Another methodological issue that I struggled with was how to define the boundaries of surrounding neighborhoods. I have tried to define the boundaries based on residents’ perceptions of how the neighborhood should be defined with regard to crime. In all three cases, then, the surrounding neighborhood is not defined solely in terms of physical boundaries such as main roads or particular topographies, but rather by people’s perception of how far drugs and related problems extend.

I based my research almost exclusively on interviews with neighborhood residents, members of neighborhood organizations, development tenants, police officers, and city officials. In all I conducted 49 interviews. I also went on “ride-alongs” of all three developments with police officers in the evenings. I supplemented my knowledge of these neighborhoods and developments with local newspaper reports and literature on the various initiatives in each place.



## **ORGANIZATION OF THESIS**

In order to examine the question posed, I have organized the body of the thesis into four sections. In Chapter One, I describe briefly history and theory of public housing/neighborhood relationships, as well as how government interventions to address drugs in public housing have evolved over the past twenty years. Chapters Two, Three, and Four are the case studies of drug-fighting efforts in each of these three developments and neighborhoods. In Chapter Two, I tell the story of how external pressure from neighborhood activists has contained the drug problem in and around the South Street development in the face of a weak public housing tenant organization. Chapter Three tells the story in Charlestown of how negative dynamics both within and between the Bunker Hill development and surrounding neighborhood has exacerbated drug problems in and around the development. In Chapter Four, the Bromley Heath case demonstrates the possibilities and limitations of strong internal and external organizing energy when communication and cooperation across development/neighborhood lines are not fluid.

Chapter Five synthesizes the four major factors that emerge in the three case studies as critical to understanding and addressing drugs problems and examines how these factors interact to produce distinct dynamics in each neighborhood. The four factors are:

- (1) the dynamics of the drug market;
- (2) the involvement and institutional capacity of land users in the surrounding neighborhood;
- (3) the involvement and organizational capacity of public housing tenants; and
- (4) the effectiveness of police forces in the area.

These four factors and the dynamics they produce in each case serve as a framework for understanding drug problems in almost all neighborhoods with public housing. In Chapter Six, I use this framework to set forth options for strategic interventions in each neighborhood and discuss how the BHA as an institution should assess its role within this larger framework.

## **CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Drugs and crime produce dynamics across people and space that transcend the physical boundaries of public housing developments. To develop successful strategies that address drugs and related problems in and around public housing, it is important to understand the relationship of the public housing development to the space and people in the surrounding neighborhood. Then it is critical to see what factors and dynamics determine whether drugs will promote or reduce the capacity of the development and neighborhood to organize effectively against drugs.

Two contexts are important to pursue this agenda. First, a historical and theoretical context is necessary to understand the relationship between the development and surrounding neighborhood. On this backdrop, I shall layer the question of how drug-related problems affect the development/neighborhood relationship -- do these problems fragment or draw together the two communities? Second, it is important to understand what the government has tried to do about drugs in public housing, and more specifically how government interventions have treated the development/neighborhood relationship to drugs.

### **HISTORY AND THEORY OF DEVELOPMENT/NEIGHBORHOOD RELATIONSHIPS**

From the start, the history of public housing and its surrounding neighborhood has been a story of division. Although the development/neighborhood relationship has changed dramatically, it has always been characterized by separation. The people in the development and neighborhood have differed racially and in class terms. The development and neighborhood have been differentiated sharply in physical terms. Moreover, the development and surrounding neighborhood often have had profoundly adverse impacts on one another during different time periods. This history of separation and tension between development and neighborhood is crucial to understand, because it

has contributed powerfully to the disjointed and narrow way that strategies have been devised to address drugs in and around public housing. The following look at public housing history examines the transformation of these tensions.

In the beginning, public housing was better than the surrounding neighborhood. In 1934, the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration was organized to alleviate some of the pernicious effects that the Great Depression was exacting on the vast American middle class. These efforts were focused on upgrading parts of the swelling stock of slum housing in cities and providing jobs for the unemployed. In 1937 Congress passed legislation that established the United States Housing Authority and required one for one replacement of slum housing with public housing. This legislation sought to improve rather than increase the affordable housing stock, stabilize distressed neighborhoods, and provide temporary shelter for the submerged middle class until it reemerged on its feet.

The theory behind the policies of urban planners and redevelopers was that erecting new public housing developments in distressed neighborhoods would improve the conditions of the surrounding neighborhood. (Dee, p. 4) The “Annual Report of the United States Housing Authority” of 1941 stated:

The ultimate objective of public housing has been to produce better communities as well as better citizens by getting rid of slums and substituting wholesome living conditions for that third of the Nation that has been ill-housed.(cited in Dee, pg. 6)

Researchers at the time were scrutinizing the hypothesis that the location of public housing developments in distressed neighborhoods would improve the social and economic characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood. William Dee’s dissertation on the subject concludes that “some real social changes of a reorganizing nature have been fostered by the presence of the Jane Addams houses in the Near West Side of Chicago.” (Dee, p.162) Of the variables examined, juvenile delinquency rates and residential mobility rates decreased, and the percent of citizens who registered as voters increased in

the neighborhood with the public housing development, while these trends did not occur in control neighborhoods without public housing. (Dee)<sup>1</sup>

Residents of surrounding neighborhoods initially received the projects with ambivalence. On the one hand, residents of poor- to moderate- income neighborhoods looked upon public housing developments with admiration. On the other hand, slum clearance produced visceral hostility among some displaced residents and neighbors who felt that the government had bulldozed livable communities. The Bunker Hill development in Charlestown, which will be the subject of the second case study, is an example of the bad blood that slum clearance produced between the development and neighborhood. (Lucas)

Immediately after World War II, public housing became less controversial as it came to serve returning veterans. Politicians supported veterans' housing because they saw it as a way to stabilize moderate-income neighborhoods and gain votes by clustering high densities of voters.

### ***Beginnings of Turmoil***

Three trends began to change fundamentally the population that public housing began to serve and precipitated the view of public housing as a threat to the neighborhood. These three trends were the Housing Act of 1949, the large migration of blacks from the south to northeastern and midwestern cities, and the middle-class exodus to the suburbs facilitated by post-war middle-class wealth and government mortgage policies. The combination of these three trends meant that much of public housing in northeastern and midwestern cities started to serve a poorer minority population.

The Housing Act of 1949 introduced a fundamental change in public housing policy that shifted the way many neighborhoods, particularly white, middle-class neighborhoods, regarded public housing. (Meyerson, Martin, and Banfield; 1955) Whereas the 1937 Housing Act was intended merely to replace substandard housing, the

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<sup>1</sup> This dissertation tests the hypothesis through a before and after experiment of the effects that the first public housing development in Chicago had on its surrounding neighborhood. The periods of examination are from 1935 through 1937, the period before the development was occupied, and from 1938 through 1940, the period after the development was opened.

Housing Act of 1949 provided federal funds for new development of public housing on vacant and other lands. This change presented many moderate- and middle-income neighborhoods with the prospect of having public housing developments located in their back yard.

In the early 1950s, neighborhood associations, particularly those in moderate- to middle-class neighborhoods, opposed the siting of public housing nearby for three main reasons. (Meyerson)<sup>2</sup> The first reason was *racial*; residents of these neighborhoods feared that public housing inevitably would bring blacks into the neighborhood. The legislation coincided with a large migration of blacks from the south to midwestern and northeastern cities. The second reason related to *class*. The 1949 Housing Act restricted public housing to low-income people by mandating that the highest rents be 20 percent lower than the lowest prevailing market rents and by authorizing eviction of above-income families. (Bratt, p. 341) One neighborhood council leader in Chicago articulated his view of the new lower-income public housing population:

You know, a lot of people say it's the colored we don't want, but the kind of whites who live in public housing are just as bad. It's not the colored alone. It's the whole class of people who live like that." (Meyerson, p. 110)

The third reason residents in these neighborhoods opposed public housing was concern that new black arrivals to the neighborhood would decrease property values.

### ***The 1960s and Urban Renewal***

Urban renewal pushed public housing further toward its future role as the scourge of the neighborhood. Urban renewal exacerbated the concentration of poor people in public housing by depositing people displaced by the program to the top of the waiting list for public housing. This population urban renewal displaced often consisted of poorer households, which meant:

a relaxation of the tenant screening processes and a reduction of average income. Since rent was a fraction of residents' income, and income was declining, project maintenance also became an increasing problem, especially because of the absence of separate government operating subsidies. Slowly, public housing

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<sup>2</sup> All of these reasons are based on Meyerson and Banfield's Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest, Chapter 4, "The Climate of Neighborhood Opinion."

became seen not as a temporary haven for the incipient middle class, but as a domicile of last resort. (Vale, p.5)

By the end of the 1960s, the project had become worse than the neighborhood in many cases.

### ***1970 -1990; Further Isolation of Public Housing from Neighborhood***

A number of trends in the 1970s further isolated public housing developments from their neighborhoods. The 1993 Final Report of the Public Housing Drug Elimination Program (PHDEP) stated: “often physically isolated from the beginning, the social isolation of many public housing developments has increased, in many cases dramatically, over the last two decades. (Abt Associates, p. 74)” Deindustrialization of urban areas, particularly in the midwest and northeast, and movement of businesses and working- and middle-class families to the suburbs isolated public housing residents from jobs. (ibid.) As the population of public housing became poorer, the percentage of welfare households and families headed by single females grew, and the population became more isolated socially and economically, drugs, crime, and other social problems soon followed.

Residential and commercial abandonment of central city areas surrounding public housing developments “left a vacuum which the illegal drug trade has exploited.” (ibid.)<sup>3</sup> Because public housing received lower police coverage than other areas of their cities and because developments had such an anonymous design, the projects often became a place where people could deal drugs and conduct other illicit behavior with impunity. One public housing police officer summed the situation up nicely:

I’ll tell you, if I was a drug dealer, I’d go set up my shop in the projects. It’s the safest place in the whole city to deal drugs.<sup>4</sup>

These dynamics weakened community control systems in the development and set off a vicious cycle in which drugs and crime further incapacitate public housing communities to resist. Consequently drug dealing roots itself more strongly into the development, which further isolates it from the outside.

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<sup>3</sup> ibid.

<sup>4</sup> McKenna, Kevin. Personal interview. 29 February, 1996.

During the 1970s and 1980s, federally mandated integration of the projects drove another wedge between project and neighborhood. Integration generated acute project/neighborhood tensions in areas that had previously resisted racial mixing and had maintained racial homogeneity. Federally mandated integration of the projects often generated white flight from developments and surrounding neighborhoods. As a result of these trends, the central city projects became inhabited predominantly by poor minorities.

A flurry of theories arose to reverse the self-reinforcing trends of drugs, crime, and isolation. During the 1960s and 1970s most of these hypotheses revolved around physical design issues. In the 1960s, theorists hypothesized that “physical integration” of the development into the neighborhood would foster social and economic integration of public housing residents into the larger community. (Kreisberg)

Louis Kreisberg considered the effect of the design, siting, and socioeconomic characteristics of four public housing developments on their surrounding neighborhoods and concluded that “socioeconomic differences are not a particularly important barrier to social interaction between project tenants and neighborhood residents.” (ibid.) Most social interaction occurred when developments were spatially integrated into their surrounding area -- when buildings faced outward and there was a high degree of continuity and interconnectedness between neighborhood and development streets and walkways. (ibid.) Conversely, physical barriers were the most important cause of a development’s isolation from its neighborhood. The development Kreisberg found most isolated faced inward, was fronted only on one side by houses, and housed a small percentage of its tenants on street level.(ibid.)

Early 1970s’ theories about how to address increasing crime in public housing continued to focus on physical design, but represented a radical departure from the integrative approach of the 1960s. Oscar Newman’s theory of defensible space and turf reclamation advocated physical redesign to focus developments inward and erect physical barriers against predators from outside. If anything, however, the defensible space theory helped to further isolate the development residents from the surrounding neighborhood. (Gardiner, p. 13)

The increasing concentration of poor minorities in public housing in the 1970s also spawned a number of theories about how crime correlated with the socioeconomic and racial mix of the public housing population. Oscar Newman led the charge on this front as well. First, Newman advocated that an income mix is essential to safety. Middle class values are the key to eradicating crime -- “the majority of inhabitants in such communities who, although poor, are not criminals, are unable to enforce conventional middle-class morals and attitudes.”(Newman, 1975, p. 22)

Newman enumerated a number of reasons why middle-class flight increases crime. First, a middle-income population is replaced by a low- to moderate-income population. Second, such flight usually results in higher density occupancy. Third, there is a lower tax base for municipal services, and fourth, such flight “removes a population with a low tolerance for crime, a strong demand for police presence, and a support for police activities that deter crime.” (Newman, 1980, p.83) Anthony Downs describes a threshold of middle-class families that a neighborhood needs in order to avert the downward spiral of neighborhood deterioration -- “both the upgrading desired by low- and moderate- income households and the protection of neighborhood quality desired by middle-income can be achieved in the same neighborhoods if a significant number of low- and moderate- income families live there and if middle-class dominance is maintained.” (cited in Newman, 1980, p. 45)

The general transformation of public housing from the ray of hope in distressed neighborhood to a weight that drags down the surrounding neighborhood has been fraught with tension and division. Throughout this history, the development and the neighborhood for the most part have been looked at separately. This division has reverberated in the types of interventions that the government has proposed to address drugs and crime in and around public housing.

## **HISTORY OF INTERVENTIONS**

During the last 20 years, the federal government has employed a myriad of interventions to address drugs and crime in public housing. The history of interventions is not primarily about how drugs and related problems affect the development and



surrounding neighborhood, rather it has focused narrowly on what to do about crime *in* public housing. Concern over the relevance of development/neighborhood relations to drugs has surfaced in bits and pieces of comprehensive plans to fight drugs in public housing, but has flickered and died out quickly.

Anti-crime interventions of the early 1970s focused narrowly on the site boundaries of the public housing development and sought to wall off the development from the surrounding neighborhood. These strategies were premised on Oscar Newman's theories that public housing developments needed physical protection from outside criminals. Newman advocated redesigning buildings to increase physical barriers to intruders from the outside. Newman hypothesized that reducing the size of development clusters and reconfiguring the design of the development inward would evoke the latent territoriality in development residents and allow them to better monitor criminal activity. Ultimately, such design changes would frighten off criminals by conveying to them the sense that "if they enter, they are very likely to be observed, to be identified as intruders, and to have difficulty escaping." (Newman, 1980, p.83)

By the late 1970s there was little faith that Newman's physical redesign theories coupled with hardware approaches could effectively address crime in the development. A number of major criticisms were leveled at defensible space interventions. First, defensible space focused the development in on itself and ignored the more complicated dynamic between the development and surrounding neighborhood. Second, the defensible space approach was ill-equipped to deal with developments where crime was generated from within, particularly when criminals resided in buildings. Third, interventions based on this theory walled off developments from their surrounding neighborhoods, creating a "fortress within a neighborhood, further stigmatizing the public housing project rather than making it part of the neighborhood." (Gardiner, p.14)

### ***Urban Initiatives Anti-Crime Demonstration (UIACI), 1978***

The waning faith in hardware approaches moved HUD to consider a more comprehensive approach to crime in public housing in its Urban Initiatives Anti-Crime Program. The program sought to address in a holistic way the social, economic, and

physical problems of crime in public housing. The comprehensive strategy incorporated one of the first real efforts to understand the relevance of development/neighborhood relationships to crime issues:

One theme that emerged again and again...was the need to understand how much and what kind of crime is committed by whom within the projects versus surrounding residential neighborhoods. Where do crimes occur? What are the crime-specific mobility patterns? To what extent does project crime involve invasions from outside and what program strategies does this imply? To what extent are project crimes “inside jobs” and what program strategies are implied? If our interventions reduce some kinds of crime in projects, will the result be that such acts merely are displaced to the surrounding neighborhood? At present, there are few answers to such questions. Yet such answers and their variations among different kinds of crime are critical for implementing practical programs which have a chance of succeeding. (HUD, 1980, p. 67)

Despite expert exhortation to understand development/neighborhood relationships with regard to crime, these issues never made it to the forefront of HUD’s agenda, and the important questions set forth above went unanswered. I shall, however, briefly lay out the extent to which HUD dealt with the development/neighborhood issue in the UIACI.

To develop a comprehensive approach to crime both inside and outside of the development, HUD designated as one of its UIACI program areas “Establishing Stronger Linkages with Programs from Local Government and Other Sources Which Co-Target on the Project and the Surrounding Neighborhoods -- Residential, Recreational, Commercial and Industrial.” (ibid.) To accomplish this, experts advised that:

resident groups in public housing should solicit the support and aid of other community, public, and private non-profit organizations. Public housing is often socially isolated from the rest of the city with its residents cut off from others. Overcoming social isolation has the potential of expanding the resources available to combat crime in and around public housing. (HUD, 1978, p. 104)

The UIACI guidebook was silent about *how* to link individuals and institutions in the surrounding neighborhood with local government so as to leverage crime-fighting resources in the development. Moreover, the guidebook did not mention the kinds of activities and programs that could effectively link neighborhood institutions with tenant organizations. The new components that the demonstration introduced were important

normative ideas; however, they remained static recommendations. No effort was made to explore what the dynamic relationships would look like among development organizations, neighborhood institutions, and local government in the fight against crime in public housing. The guidebook simply stated what the final outcomes should be without providing a map or framework of how to get there.

The Reagan Administration HUD promptly rubbed out the rudimentary beginnings of a development/neighborhood strategy to address crime, and gave strongly mixed signals about what the UIACI had accomplished to reduce crime in general in public housing. With regard to the development/neighborhood component of the UIAIC, the Final Report of the Evaluation of the Urban Initiatives Anti-Crime Demonstration found that working relationships between the development, neighborhood organizations, and local government improved only in the rare instances when cooperative, mutually supportive relations already existed. (HUD, 1985, p.73) Where relations between development and outside agencies were hostile or nonexistent, efforts to establish linkages failed. (ibid.) In short, the report dismissed as hopeless government interventions to establish linkages with outside organizations; groups predisposed to cooperate with one another would do so on their own, and funded initiatives could not forge or repair frayed or non-existent relations between groups inside and outside of the development.

### *Oasis Technique*

In the otherwise barren public housing crime-fighting landscape of the Reagan years, the one initiative to touch on the relation of the development and surrounding neighborhood to crime was the Oasis Technique. It should be emphasized, however, that Oasis *was not* a clear effort to join the public housing developments and surrounding neighborhoods in crime-fighting efforts, but rather an effort to deal with a distressed urban area whether it had public housing or not. Oasis targeted interventions on specific areas of larger distressed neighborhoods, which was supposed to produce a ripple effect throughout the entire neighborhood. (Keyes, 1992, p. 157) Some of these target areas

happened to be public housing developments, but the general program was not explicitly aimed at addressing crime in public housing and surrounding neighborhoods.

***Public Housing Drug Elimination Program (PHDEP) 1988-1996***

With the advent of the crack epidemic in the mid-1980s, HUD framed what it had had previously deemed crime prevention as combating drug use and related crime in public housing. (ibid., p.32) The driving principle behind the PHDEP is the long-delayed recognition that drug use and related crime were being generated more from within the development than without, so that more than a defensible space approach was needed. (ibid., p. 33) Once again, the comprehensive approach returned; however, this time to address drug use and related problems rather than crime. In general, the program seeks to strike a balance between the law enforcement/security and the preventative component of drug elimination. As was true with the UIACI, the development/neighborhood and the inside/outside linkages issues once again surface only as a subsidiary component of the comprehensive strategy.

The PHDEP deals foremost with how to reduce drug use and related crime in public housing. (Abt) The development/neighborhood part of the intervention is quite secondary. In fact, the “neighborhood effects” component of the evaluation it is merely used as one of the six criteria to evaluate the impact of the PHDEP. The evaluation appears to include this criterion to guard against the accusation that development-focused interventions such as the PHDEP serve only to displace crime into the surrounding neighborhood. There is little effort to understand the impact of crime from the surrounding neighborhood on the development other than the one example of the Weed and Seed Program’s displacing crime into a development in Pittsburgh. (ibid.) Moreover, there is little if any mention of the effect that the dynamic of the development/neighborhood relationship has on the shape that crime takes in the area and the capacity of the development and neighborhood to deal with crime.

The PHDEP raises as a part of one of its six program areas the importance of expanding the public housing agency linkages with other government and private agencies. As was true of the UIACI, however, the evaluation fails to connect these local

government linkages to the neighborhood level. There is no examination of how the political and institutional capacities of land users in the surrounding neighborhood link development, government, and private agencies to address drugs and related crime in and around the development. Moreover, the evaluation discusses the issue of linkages with outside agencies mostly at the public housing authority level rather than the development and neighborhood level. In short, the evaluation does not make explicit the role that the neighborhood plays in establishing linkages with government and private agencies on behalf of, or in concert with the development.

HUD's most recent efforts to consider the development and surrounding neighborhood are embodied in the Urban Revitalization Demonstration Hope VI Plus Grant (URD Plus). The URD Plus represents one of the first earnest attempts to plan revitalization of the most distressed public housing in concert with rehabilitation of larger core urban areas. URD Plus requirements intend to address the physical, social, and economic isolation of public housing developments by forcing local housing authorities to draw on the network of organizations around the development. (BHA, 1995, p. ES.1.) Site redevelopment and other collaborations involving public/private partnerships are the mechanism proposed to link public housing developments into the institutional network of the surrounding neighborhood and larger city. Since drug issues will play a substantial role in determining whether such a strategic conception can work at the local level, the chapters that follow will provide a framework for addressing drugs within the larger goal of integrating developments into their surrounding neighborhoods.

## **CHAPTER II: SOUTH STREET**

### **INTRODUCTION**

A group of activist homeowners from the neighborhood surrounding the South Street public housing development in Jamaica Plain have led successful community efforts to combat relatively moderate drug problems in and around the development.<sup>5</sup> The homeowners have played the predominant organizing role because, with the exception of a few tenant leaders, the public housing tenants have been withdrawn. Homeowners and a few tenants from the development have made gallant efforts to build the organizing capacity of the development tenants, but these efforts have failed to institutionalize a self-sustaining, politically potent tenant organization capable of getting things done. To date, however, pressure that individuals from the neighborhood have exerted on the city has been sufficient to effectively address drug problems without strong support from development tenants.

### **CONTEXT AND PROBLEM**

Before looking at the way that the development/neighborhood relationship has affected drugs and related problems, and vice versa, I provide a general picture of Jamaica Plain. Second, I examine the characteristics of the development surrounding the neighborhood and give a brief history of the relationship between the places. Third, I shall describe the drug market that has operated in and around the development.

#### ***1. The Development and Surrounding Neighborhood***

##### ***Jamaica Plain -- the Larger Neighborhood Context***

During most of the twentieth century, Jamaica Plain has been home to a predominantly working-class white population. Over the last 30 years, however, Jamaica Plain has undergone dramatic demographic changes that have characterized many other neighborhoods in Boston. Blacks and Hispanics replaced many of the middle-class

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<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise specified, "the neighborhood" refers to the sub-neighborhood within Jamaica Plain that surrounds the development.

whites who moved to the suburbs after World War II. As a result, Jamaica Plain has become a place where acute racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic differences exist within narrow boundaries. Unlike other parts of Boston where racial and ethnic transitions of neighborhoods have been fraught with hostility and violence, however, communities in Jamaica Plain have managed this transformation with far less confrontation and animosity. Consequently, Jamaica Plain has developed a reputation as an ethnically diverse and tolerant enclave in Boston.

Another important feature of Jamaica Plain is the dense network of neighborhood institutions that historically have cooperated at critical moments rather than competed with one another to sustain the neighborhood. (Feloney) This cooperative spirit has been a crucial factor in preserving the neighborhood during times of change and transition. (Feloney) Moreover, residents of Jamaica Plain also have a tradition of political activism.

#### *Boundaries of Neighborhood Surrounding the Development*

I have defined the neighborhood surrounding the development according to how the residents have perceived the reach of drugs and related problems (see Map 1). The neighborhood is bounded on the west by the Arborway and Centre Street and Sedgewick Street to the North. The intersection of Centre Street and South Street is as far north as the neighborhood runs. On the east, The T line bounds the neighborhood running from Sedgewick Street down to the Forest Hills Station T-Stop. The Forest Hills station does bring drug traffic into the South Street neighborhood.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Demographic Characteristics -- the Development and Surrounding Neighborhood*

There are considerable socioeconomic and racial differences between the development and the surrounding neighborhood. Residents of the development are considerably poorer than the residents of the surrounding neighborhood, and the development has a higher percentage of minorities.

#### *Income Differences*

Considerable income differences exist between residents of the South Street development and the surrounding neighborhood. The average household income for the development is \$9,939 (1996 dollars) and the average household income for the

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<sup>6</sup> Hayes, Chris. Personal interview. 3 April, 1996.

surrounding neighborhood is \$38,718 (see Map 2)<sup>7</sup> Table 2.1 shows the large difference in average household income between the development and neighborhood.

**Table 2.1 Average Household Income of Development and Neighborhood**

	<b>Project (1996)</b>	<b>Tract 201.004 (contains project) (1996)</b>	<b>Neighborhood (1996)</b>	<b>Boston (1996)</b>
<b>Average Household Income</b>	\$9,939	\$37,928	\$38,718	\$32,682

[Source: Boston Housing Authority (BHA) MIS and 1990 Census, STF 3A]

*Racial and Ethnic Differences*

Over the past 20 years, the demographics of the development have changed dramatically. Working-class whites have moved out of the development and lower-income blacks and Hispanics have replaced them. Currently, the development is 22% white and 78% minority. The surrounding community contains a much higher percentage of white families, but Hispanics have moved into the neighborhood during the last five years.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 2.2 Racial and Ethnic Composition**

	<b>Development (1990)</b>	<b>Development (1996)</b>	<b>Neighborhood (1990)</b>	<b>Boston (1990)</b>
<b>Whites</b>	40%	22%	78.7%	59.4%
<b>Minorities</b>	60%	78%	21.3%	40.6%
<b>Hispanics</b>	23%	43%	9.0%	10.8%
<b>Blacks</b>	35%	32%	9.4%	24.3%
<b>Asians</b>	2%	4%	3.4%	5.2%

(Source: 1996 BHA MIS and 1990 Census)

*Differences in Age Composition*

The family composition of the development is quite different from that of the surrounding neighborhood. The development is composed of many female-headed households. Although the percentage of youths in the development is very high, the absolute numbers of youth are relatively low compared with larger public housing

<sup>7</sup> All income figures for the surrounding neighborhood in the thesis are 1990 incomes inflated by the Consumer Price Index to 1996 prices.

<sup>8</sup> Since the 1990 Census is that last source of racial and ethnic data at the block group level, it was not possible to document the current racial and ethnic composition in the surrounding neighborhood.



developments. The small number of youth in the development means that drug dealing is not as rampant as in places with larger concentrations. Moreover, small youth populations usually are easier to control because officers can get to know all youth in the area.

**Table 2.3 Age Composition<sup>9</sup>**

	<b>Development (1996)</b>	<b>Neighborhood (1990)</b>
<b>0-4</b>	14.1% (46)	6.8%
<b>5-13</b>	22.3% (73)	7.1%
<b>Under 20</b>	51.1% (168)	17.9%

*Housing Stock*

The neighborhood around South Street is struggling to hold the line against forces of physical deterioration, crime, and disinvestment. Much of its housing stock consists of single-family homes and dilapidated triple-deckers. In 1990, the median value for a single-family home in the South Street neighborhood is \$55, 534 as opposed to \$160,100 in Boston. The neighborhood has a group of homeowners who have lived in the immediate neighborhood for a long time; however, in the last five years, seven or eight homeowners have sold their homes and left the neighborhood. Homeowners who do remain also feel the threat of decreasing property values that result from crime and disinvestment. Such a threat makes retaining those middle-class homeowners both more difficult and important.

**Table 2.4 Housing Stock**

	<b>South Street Neighborhood (1990)</b>	<b>Boston (1990)</b>
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	2078	250,863
<b>Percent of Vacant Units</b>	4.7%	9.0%
<b>Owner Occupied</b>	31.1%	30.9%
<b>Renter Occupied</b>	68.9%	69.1%
<b>Median Value of House</b>	\$55,534	\$160,100
<b>Median Rent</b>	\$567	\$625

(Source: 1990 Census)

<sup>9</sup> Numbers in parenthesis are absolute numbers.

### *Siting and Size of Development*

The small size of the development and its siting in the midst of a dense residential neighborhood have facilitated interaction between development and neighborhood residents. The dynamics among the small size of the development, residential siting, and activist homeowners produce fortuitous circumstances for drug-fighting efforts.

#### *Size*

At 132 units, the BHA's smallest family development, South Street does not alter the overall character of the neighborhood. Although the lowest-income households in the area live in the development, it is small enough that low-income households still compose a relatively small percentage (6%) of the total South Street neighborhood population. The smaller absolute number of poor people in the development means that the magnitude of the social problems associated with poverty, such as crime is not as great as in larger public housing developments.

Another way that the small size of the development has contributed to the success of community public safety initiatives is captured by Oscar Newman's hypothesis that "smallness is essential to identity." (Newman, 1980) Newman was referring to the capacity of public housing residents to identify each other, but this concept applies for residents of the surrounding neighborhood, as well. Residents from the neighborhood emphasized the sense of security they derived from knowing the parents of youth from the development. According one neighborhood resident:

Neighbors began trying to get to know kids and who their mothers were, so that if a child were acting out or putting himself in danger, the neighbors knew who to contact immediately. South Street's size was instrumental to allowing everyone to recognize each other.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Siting*

South Street is sited in the middle of an extremely dense residential neighborhood of triple deckers and is abutted by residences along most of its edges. The physical proximity of the development to the neighborhood makes neighbors feel the impact of

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<sup>10</sup> Malia, Liz. Personal interview. 22 November, 1996.

drug dealing and has created an imperative for the neighborhood residents to address issues occurring in the development. According to Liz Malia:

Because the development is so close geographically to the immediate residential neighborhood, the neighborhood really felt the impact of the drug trafficking. Crime would spill out into the neighborhood. People heard gun shots at night. Surrounding neighbors realized that they couldn't just remove themselves from the problem.<sup>11</sup>

There are a few physical barriers that separate the development from the immediate neighborhood. First, no streets run through the development, which closes it off from the neighborhood. Second, the topography in back of the development constitutes both a barrier and an integrative mechanism. The houses sited on the incline above the development look down upon the roofs of the project buildings. Ironically, the topography appears to have brought drug dealing from the roofs of development buildings within immediate visibility of houses that border the development along this incline. This physical relationship created an incentive for residents of these neighborhood houses to address drug-related issues.

#### *Non-Residential Uses*

A commercial strip along South Street abuts one side of the development. Most of the stores along the strip are small owner-run stores -- convenience stores, a pizza shop, hair salon, -- that service the local market. Hispanics have come to run increasingly more of these businesses along South Street. There are no vacant store fronts along the strip that runs near the development. Finally, because parking is scarce, there is a good deal of foot traffic in the area.

#### *Neighborhood Institutions*

There are some institutions in the immediate neighborhood. St. Thomas Aquinas Church and the Farnsworth Elderly Center abut the development to the north. These institutions have not been heavily involved with initiatives involving the development. The Agassiz School, located in the neighborhood has supported many neighborhood activities, many of which have addressed youth issues and drugs.

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

## *2. History of Development/Surrounding Neighborhood Relations*

Before the mid-1980s there was little interaction between residents of the development and the South Street neighborhood.<sup>12</sup> Historically, the only interaction between residents of the development and neighborhood has centered around drug issues. The crack epidemic of the late 1980s rekindle interaction, albeit tense, between residents of the development and surrounding neighborhood.

Cooperative organizing efforts did not occur immediately. Initially, residents of the surrounding neighborhood could ignore the drug dealing problem because most of the dealing and associated crime occurred inside the development -- in the apartments and hallways. Neighborhood activist Diane Quiroga characterized the initial neighborhood response to the problem as an "us vs. them thing."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, neighborhood residents still wanted to believe that the illicit behavior was occurring solely within the confines of the development.<sup>14</sup>

As drug dealing and crime pushed beyond the boundaries of the development, neighborhood residents realized that the neighborhood's survival was linked inextricably to what happened in the development.<sup>15</sup> Residents in the development, on the other hand, began to recognize that they needed help from anyone they could find.<sup>16</sup> This recognition of interdependence has been a fundamental factor in breaking down class and racial differences and leading the communities to work together to implement successful crime-fighting strategies.

Successful crime fighting efforts have spawned broader attempts at community building. What initially started from homeowner self-interest in preserving property values and quality of life soon became a neighborhood crusade to pressure city officials to improve the living conditions and quality of life of South Street residents.<sup>17</sup> Activists from the surrounding neighborhood also have made strong efforts to build the organizing

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<sup>12</sup> Quiroga, Diane. Personal interview. 3 November, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> McNary, Earlene. Personal interview. 1 November, 1995.

<sup>17</sup> Quiroga.

capacity of South Street residents, as well as increase their expectations for city services.<sup>18</sup> In almost all of these efforts, however, the activists have taken the initiative and provided the energy for such efforts.

### ***3. Drug Market and Crime in South Street and Surroundings***

#### ***The Problem***

Although the South Street neighborhood has faced all types of drug dealing organizations, I shall focus on the neighborhood's success in addressing a small monopolistic market in the development. In the early 1990s, the root of drug dealing in the South Street neighborhood stemmed from one family in development.<sup>19</sup> This family attracted a host of dealers from outside the neighborhood to begin working from the development.

#### ***Structure of the Drug Market***

Two brothers from the development, the Menendez brothers, were primarily responsible for increasing drug dealing and crime in the neighborhood. The brothers would recruit youth from the development and neighborhood to deal drugs and keep watch for police from the roofs of the development buildings. Most of the dealing took place in the hallways and apartments of South Street buildings.

#### ***Buyers and Users***

Most buyers appear to have come from outside the neighborhood. The Menendez brothers used the development as a base from which to supply customers from all over the city. South Street is an appealing location for drug dealing because it is located near upper-middle income neighborhoods whose residents are good customers -- they pay and generally do not create problems. Moreover, the location of the development set back in a residential neighborhood bounded off by the Arborway and Centre Street helps seal off the area from market competition from other dealers for the most part (see Map 1).

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<sup>18</sup> Malia.

<sup>19</sup> This statement is in no way intended to trivialize the seriousness of the drug dealing problem that existed in and around South Street or the impact that it had on the lives of residents in the development and the neighborhood. Rather, it is merely a framework for examining the different magnitudes of drug dealing situations so that solutions can be tailored according to particular circumstances.

### *Property and Disorder Crime*

As more people began coming into the development from outside of the neighborhood to purchase drugs, the dealing became more overt and began to spill out into the neighborhood. Car break-ins, loud music and noise, and occasional gunfire began to occur on the borders of the development and eventually in the neighborhood. Moreover, the dealing appears to have produced a rash of housebreaks in the neighborhood between 1991 and 1992.<sup>20</sup> Homeowners in the neighborhood expressed outrage at house breaks and shoot-outs between police and the drug dealers from the rooftops of development buildings. Residents in the neighborhood said that they began to feel unsafe walking around the development when it was dark.<sup>21</sup> The noise -- the all-night traffic, the loud music -- began to keep residents from the neighborhood up all night. All of this activity eventually came to a head when a Hispanic from the development shot a black resident from the development in broad daylight in front of children playing in the area. This incident sparked a series of community organizing efforts to combat drug dealing.

## **INSTITUTIONS AND RESPONSES**

Three factors are important to understand how the greater South Street community has responded to drug problems in and around the development. These three factors are (1) involvement and institutional capacity of land users in the neighborhood, (2) involvement and institutional capacity of development tenants, and (3) the effectiveness of police forces operating in the area.

### ***1. Involvement and Institutional Capacity of Land Users in Neighborhood***

A number of forces have existed in the surrounding neighborhood to address the drug problem and compensate for a weak South Street tenant organization. Individual activists and residents with strong political connections were the agents capable of

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<sup>20</sup> Hayes.

<sup>21</sup> Malia.

connecting the available neighborhood, municipal, and state institutions to bear down on the concentrated and relatively manageable drug problems in the development. These individual activists connected with a few development tenants, which has proven to be enough of an entree for activists to address drug problems spawned from within the development. Most of the impetus and capacity to address drugs in the development has come from the surrounding neighborhood. In this section, I shall examine how the neighborhood has linked different institutions in the fight against drugs.

#### *Neighborhood Activists and Institutions*

Three main factors explain the relentless commitment of neighborhood activists to address drugs and related problems in and around the development. First, many of the activists in the neighborhood are homeowners and have a strong financial motive to insure that drugs do not overtake the neighborhood. The precarious position of the neighborhood has made homeowners and other middle-class activists the bulwark against neighborhood decline and abandonment. Second, the physical proximity of the development to the neighborhood means that neighborhood residents feel immediately the impact of drug-related problems in the development. Third, these residents are well immersed in the strong culture of activism that dominates in Jamaica Plain.

#### *Activist Strategies*

After the shooting in the development, tenant task force leader Earlene McNary and concerned activists from the neighborhood met at a Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council monthly public safety meeting. The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council monthly public safety meeting provided the initial opportunity for development and neighborhood residents to connect when the drug problem became bad. Neighborhood activists had considerable experience in community organizing in Boston and strong ties with local and state officials. A number of neighborhood residents were and still are involved in politics. State Representative John McDonough lives in the neighborhood as do a number of aides on his staff. These players also attended the community policing meeting following the shooting, and have contributed enormously to drug-fighting efforts.

One of the first initiatives that the monthly meetings generated was a crime watch. At the first meeting, neighborhood activists, McNary, and the police established the

personal contacts to initiate crime watches. Residents employed crime watches to provide beat officers with precise and consistent information -- the time that trouble occurs, who are the troublemakers, when they hang around, where are the "hot spots," what are the license plate numbers of drug dealers and buyers -- so these officers could do their job.<sup>22</sup>

After residents implemented crime watches on two streets, other neighborhood residents became involved, and crime watches spread from street to street. The proximity of resident houses to the development allowed neighborhood residents to keep track of what was occurring in and along its borders and to compensate for a withdrawn development population. Once the surrounding neighbors had provided an initial baseline of support, some development tenants also joined in the crime watches.

Crime watches traced most patterns of dealing and crime back to one family from the development. Because the roots of the drug dealing problem stemmed from one family, eviction served as a key strategy to marginally decrease drug dealing activity.

The eviction process was extremely long and difficult. The ringleaders would be arrested, appear in court, and be back in the development dealing drugs the following day. Eviction proceedings became clogged in the BHA bureaucracy. Residents from the neighborhood began calling the BHA administrator only to hear that the BHA could not evict problem tenants because of the courts.<sup>23</sup>

Activist Diane Quiroga used knowledge from her previous work in the court system to advance the court proceedings against the Menendez family. She educated development and community residents about the evidence needed to evict the family and convict the two brothers. Development and neighborhood residents would keep tabs on the two brothers -- when they would come and go -- and communicate that information to police officers assigned to the area.

Second, the activists organized a court watch. Neighborhood residents appeared at court proceedings to testify and express concern about the negative impact of failure to convict criminals on the community. Resident testimony in court greatly increased the

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<sup>22</sup> Quiroga.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*



judge's ability to convict the brothers and evict the family from the development. South Street tenants did not testify in court because they feared retribution from the drug dealers.<sup>24</sup>

A third strategy that activists employed in the eviction process was to lobby judges who had been indifferent to the needs of the community through a community-impact statement that demonstrated the pernicious effects of failure to enforce sentencing guidelines. Staff of State Representative McDonough and City Councilor Maura Hennigan's office helped put together this document and communicated with the District Attorney's office to help prepare cases against drug dealers in the neighborhood. As with the information that residents reported to police, the power of the document to influence a particular judge lay in its strong degree of detail and organization.

*Playing City Politics*

Activist homeowners' understanding of how to navigate the municipal political process has been the most critical component of successful community organizing efforts against drugs. According to Councilor Hennigan's aide, Mary Mulvey, "most communities do not demand anything of public officials once they are elected, but South Street activists know what to ask for once they get someone elected."<sup>25</sup>

One of the most effective methods that activists have employed to extract demands from municipal institutions has been the middle class threat to leave the neighborhood. On numerous occasions, neighborhood activist Quiroga has used her personal connection with the mayor to remind him of his campaign commitment to retain Boston's middle class by addressing quality of life issues. During 1995, BHA and BMP officers assigned to South Street often were pulled randomly to perform duties at Mission Main. The manager at the time, Diane Adler, saw this as her cue to contact Quiroga, who would call the mayor, quote the latest number of homeowners who had left the neighborhood, and threaten to sell her home and move as well.<sup>26</sup> Soon, the BPD would reassign officers to South Street.

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<sup>24</sup> Storey, Sandra. Personal interview. 9 March, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Mulvey, Mary. Personal interview. 21 November, 1996.

<sup>26</sup> Adler, Diane. Personal interview. 13 February, 1996.

Neighborhood activists also have demonstrated a sense of how to increase political leverage. One activist was conducting a voter registration campaign in the development on the day that I interviewed her. Such efforts have met with limited success, however.

*'Shared Vision' between Manager and Activists*<sup>27</sup>

Shared vision is a concept used to describe the ideal relationship between subsidized housing tenants and management in the fight against drugs.<sup>28</sup> Neighborhood activists have assumed the role that development tenants ideally would play in such a relationship. Neighborhood activists influenced the BHA administrator's assignment of managers at South Street. At the end of 1994, when neighborhood activists were pressuring the BHA aggressively on a number of fronts, the BHA administrator appointed Diane Adler, a long-time Jamaica Plain resident and community activist, as manager of South Street in order to work cooperatively with the activists.<sup>29</sup> Adler stated:

I knew the people and the politics of the neighborhood. Their politics matched my politics, and there was an understanding of the manager's need to focus on the community around the development not only the development. In South Street this was easy, because the community in the surrounding neighborhood was already there.<sup>30</sup>

Since the residents of the development were disengaged, the only people whom she could work with around drug issues were neighborhood activists and McNary.

*The local newspaper -- The Jamaica Plain Gazette*

The *JP Gazette* also has been a vehicle through which activists and staff of the state representative and city councilor have pressured different city agencies. The newspaper, community players, and police all know each other and have established relationships of mutual trust. For instance, Swan asks the Area E Police Captain Parlon to review the stories he writes before they are published in order to make sure that they are even-handed.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the values of the newspaper's reporters are focused on

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<sup>27</sup> Keyes, Langley C. *Strategies and Saints*.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Adler was manager at South Street from January 1995 to January 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Adler.

<sup>31</sup> Swan, John. Personal interview. 21 February, 1996. The following discussion is based on this interview.

understanding the issues in the neighborhood as well as supporting and facilitating cooperative efforts in the community. Reporter John Swan said that the aim in many of his stories is to report the issues of the neighborhood in a balanced way and summarize with a recommendation about what can be done to resolve the issues.

Local resident access to the newspaper's reporters is excellent. Swan, who founded the newspaper about six years ago, lives in the neighborhood and spends a good deal of time hanging around, attending neighborhood events, listening to neighborhood residents, and "shmoozing," all of which gives him access to privileged information. In addition, he has personal contact and access to all of the major players in neighborhood politics.

The *JP Gazette* publicizes positive accomplishments in the neighborhood as well as negative occurrences. According to Swan, city officials often take full credit for accomplishments which they are not responsible for, and therefore, *JP Gazette* writers try to assign credit where it is due. One example is the attention that Swan has given the South Street Survivors, a group of young women from the development who perform community outreach. Swan regards the South Street Survivors as a model of grassroots organizing efforts, and has tried to give them positive media coverage to help their fund raising efforts.

Not all of the reporting is positive, however. For instance, Swan signaled the recent election for development tenant task force board members as ominous sign for the community. The neighborhood activists sponsored the election and had trouble persuading residents to run for the seat and to vote, and former head of the South Street tenant task force, Earlene McNary refused to run again. Swan covered the story and voiced the negative impact that such a relapse could have on the community. In short, much of the reporting appears to reflect the needs of the community and identify ways that these needs can be met.

#### ***Local Businesses***

The weakest link of the institutional network in the surrounding neighborhood is the local business owners. Little if any financial support has been forthcoming from "legitimate" businesses along the commercial strip of South Street. Neighborhood

activists have pressured businesses along the strip to get involved in community efforts, but business owners have offered little help.

Local business apathy becomes particularly important in light of the recent drug dealing has shifted to the commercial strip across from the development. The commercial areas do not have the persistent vigilance and organization of residents who live along borders of the development. Much of the dealing occurs in front of a pizza shop on the strip, but the owners have been unable to organize the other business owners along the strip.<sup>32</sup> Such trends make it imperative that neighborhood activists focus energies on engaging business owners.

## ***2. Involvement and Organizational Capacity of Tenants***

The missing element to a sustainable drug-fighting strategy in the area has been an engaged and organized tenant population. Although there always is at least one involved and committed tenant in the development, the tenant population has remained apathetic toward drug-fighting initiatives. The gallant efforts of the neighborhood activists and lone development tenants have failed to institutionalize a tenant group that knows how to work the municipal political system.

Earlene McNary has generated what limited organizing energy has flowed from within the development into the surrounding neighborhood. After the 1991 shooting, McNary's concern about the future of her daughter and other girls from the development prompted her to solicit help from the city and the surrounding neighborhood in funding and organizing programs for girls. At the time, there were programs for the boys from the development -- gang peace meetings, etc. -- but no programs for the girls. McNary said that:

At first, no one would listen to me, and I had to go to community meeting after community meeting to make the surrounding neighborhood realized that the development was a part of the community whether they liked it or not.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Hurley, Officer. Personal interview. 14 February, 1996.

<sup>33</sup> McNary.

Eventually, McNary organized the girls from the development to perform volunteer work in the neighborhood, mostly at the Farnsworth Elderly Center across the street from the development and at a homeless shelter in the area. The group raised funds through raffles, spaghetti dinners, and other events. This group named itself the South Street Survivors. The more the South Street Survivors volunteered quality services, the more willing were institutions in the neighborhood to fund the group.

The South Street Survivors have helped break down socioeconomic barriers between residents of the development and surrounding neighborhood. McNary and the girls have demonstrated efforts to embrace middle-class values to disabuse neighbors of negative stereotypes of public housing youth. The good faith efforts of the South Street Survivors have encouraged residents and institutions of the surrounding neighborhood to become supportive of issues facing development residents.

Earlene's focus on volunteer work at the Farnsworth elderly center was strategically astute. Within the development, relations between the elderly and teenagers had been sharply strained. Since the South Street Survivors began to volunteer work, the elders' impression of youth from the development, at least female youth, has improved dramatically. Indeed, elderly residents both from the development and the Farnsworth Elderly Center have come to depend on the South Street Survivors for services.

Neighborhood activists and the JP Gazette have supported and encouraged the efforts of the South Street Survivors. Residents from the surrounding neighborhood meet with the girls on a regular basis as part of a mentoring program. Activists also have assisted fund-raising efforts and helped link McNary into the political network of the city councilor and state representative's office. According to Councilor Hennigan's aide, "Earlene calls us for volunteers and tips on sources of funding for the South Street Survivors all the time."<sup>34</sup>

*Overcoming Development / Surrounding Neighborhood Tensions*

Initial development/neighborhood efforts to address drug dealing were not free of class and racial tensions. When McNary first started attending community meetings after

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<sup>34</sup> Mulvey.

the 1991 shooting, she felt “the white peoples’ eyes saying ‘who is this black welfare mother, and what is she doing here?’”<sup>35</sup> She was determined, however, to make the white neighborhood residents recognize her and residents of the development as members of the community. Through the community organizing process she learned a lot about the power of numbers and realized that, in order to accomplish changes in the development, she would have to work with residents political of clout from the surrounding neighborhood, race and class differences notwithstanding. She also decided that “there were enough good people in the neighborhood who cared about the community to make it worth trying to work with them.”<sup>36</sup>

White activists from the neighborhood initially experienced class and racial tensions, as well. One activist said that in the beginning, some residents from the development expressed suspicion and hostility toward the activists. Some development residents asked neighborhood activists, “Why bother trying? Nothing is ever going to happen.”<sup>37</sup> Other development residents would look at activists as if to say “who are you and why do you want to help us?”<sup>38</sup> As soon as organizing efforts started producing tangible results, some development residents said “See, look what the neighborhood gets when they shout, the city would never give us this if we were the only ones shouting.”<sup>39</sup> Moreover, according to Quiroga, “some tenants thought that we were trying to do everything for them.”<sup>40</sup> Some white residents from the development wanted to know “what on earth middle-class whites were doing coming into the development to help poor minorities?”<sup>41</sup>

Development and neighborhood residents, however, saw that numbers were important and that both sides stood to gain by working together. This was not easy to accomplish, however -- “It has been really hard to get the trust of the people in the

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<sup>35</sup> McNary.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Quiroga.

<sup>38</sup> Malia.

<sup>39</sup> Quiroga.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

development. Seeing tangible results reduced some of this skepticism, though.”<sup>42</sup> Today it still is not easy for activists to gain the trust and involvement of development residents.

Poor resident participation in the latest election of the tenant task force demonstrated how limited activist efforts to build South Street tenant capacity have been. The existing tenant task force asked neighborhood activists to organize the development tenants.<sup>43</sup> Such lack of resident initiative leaves vulnerable the gains neighborhood gains against drugs.

### ***3. Effectiveness of Police Forces Operating in the Area***

South Street activists have developed an extremely positive working relationship with the BPD, BMP, and BHA officers who control the area. First, interaction is excellent between police and residents from the neighborhood and development. Second, the institutional policing environment in the area is relatively simple. Only officers from the BPD, BHA, BMP partnership patrol the area, which means that mostly the same officers are assigned to the area and reinforces positive interaction between police and residents. The main obstacle that the neighborhood faces is a scarcity of police resources. Neighborhood activists continually lobby Area B-2 police and City Hall for police resources which at least provides a check against a reduction of police presence in the area.

The JP Neighborhood Council meetings have been a vehicle through which both neighborhood activists and McNary have established strong relations with police. Current head of the Municipal police, Jerry McHale, attended regularly the monthly meetings during the early 1990s when drugs became a big problem around South Street. Consequently, these residents can contact him directly when BMP officers are pulled from the development. Neighborhood activists also know personally and meet with Captain Parlon of the Area E BPD on a regular basis. Monthly meetings also allow activists and residents to follow up issues raised the previous month and hold the police accountable for past commitments. City Counselor Maura Hennigan and State

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<sup>42</sup> Malia.

<sup>43</sup> Thompson, Mary. Personal interview. 4 April, 1996.

Representative John McDonough also attend meetings and maintain pressure on the BPD for additional police coverage.

Most important, neighborhood residents and police have established relations of mutual trust. The police heavily depend on residents to provide them with detailed information about the drug market and residents know that they can get police attention when necessary. One BMP officer assigned to the South Street development expressed admiration and respect for the activists and the community as a whole:

They know how to get attention from the city when they want it. That is a great neighborhood that really has their shit together and zero tolerance for crime. That neighborhood won't go down the tubes because the community won't let it.<sup>44</sup>

#### ***4. Expanding the Scope of Drug-Fighting Initiatives***

A rare feature of South Street neighborhood drug-fighting efforts is that they have gone beyond drugs to address broader issues that confront the development tenants. First, activists have broadened the scope of demands on the BHA beyond drug issues. Second, the neighboring community has rallied to support the South Street Survivors. Third, both development residents and neighborhood activists have organized more social events.

Neighborhood activists have pressured the BHA to improve living conditions in the development. As activists spent more time at the development to address drug issues, they observed the poor state of physical living conditions. Consequently, for years activists have pressured that the BHA undertake comprehensive plumbing repairs in the development, but the BHA has not responded. The *JP Gazette* also has identified plumbing deficiencies as a crucial issue to the well-being of South Street residents. Second, neighborhood pressure on BHA administrator David Cortiella in the early 1990s was instrumental in his decision to locate a youth center in the development. The youth center has brought youth from the neighborhood into the development for activities. Activists also have served as watchdogs to ensure BHA compliance with management selection procedures.

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<sup>44</sup> Hurley.



Also, neighborhood residents have supported the South Street Survivors in terms of financing and mentoring programs. Finally, residents from the neighborhood and development have increased the number of block parties and social gatherings to develop relationships that go beyond dealing with drug issues.

## **5. Conclusion**

A neighborhood of talented activists with strong links to local political institutions and the local newspaper has held its ground against drug dealing and crime that invaded a small public housing development in its midst. Community initiatives, however, have depended largely on the voluntary efforts of neighborhood residents and a few tenant leaders within the development. These efforts have been sufficient to contain drug problems in the area and have served to improve resident quality of life in the development and neighborhood. Moreover, residents from the development interact more socially with residents of the surrounding neighborhood. Yet, because activist efforts have been voluntary, neighborhood activists and players have been unable to institutionalize a self-sustaining tenant group capable demanding of city bureaucracies and effectively moving them to respond. This absence of a well-organized and engaged resident population in the development severely threatens the continued success of the impressive gains in drug-fighting efforts.

## **CHAPTER III: CHARLESTOWN: THE BUNKER HILL PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Charlestown is a story about what happens when massive drug problems confront a public housing development -- the Bunker Hill development -- and the surrounding neighborhood with badly frayed community fabric both within and between the development and the neighborhood. The destructive dynamic these relationships produce will make it extremely difficult for the Charlestown community to address the widespread drug problem in a meaningful way. Understanding how these dynamics affect drug-related problems in and around the development, however, is essential to seriously address these problems.

### **CONTEXT AND PROBLEM**

Before examining how the dynamic relationship between development and neighborhood affects drugs and related problems and vice versa, I give a description of Charlestown and the Bunker Hill development. Next I look at the historical relationship between the development and the rest of Charlestown, and how it affects current dynamics. I then trace out the parameters of the drug problem to set the stage for the discussion of how institutions and individuals in the development and surrounding neighborhood have tried to address the problem.

#### ***1. The Development and Surrounding Neighborhood***

##### ***Charlestown -- The Larger Neighborhood Context***

Historically, Charlestown has been an extremely insular, homogeneous community of Irish working class families linked by ties that go back for generations. Since Charlestown was annexed by Boston in the 19th Century, it has maintained an acrimonious relationship with the city. Townies feel that the City of Boston has dumped an unfair share of undesirable development projects, facilities, and government programs

in Charlestown.<sup>45</sup> This relationship between Boston and Charlestown has magnified the already insular culture and produced strong Townie suspicion of outsiders. Insularity and the suspicion of outsiders, in turn, have fueled tensions between Townies and newcomers to Charlestown during the last 50 years.

Two other characteristics are necessary to understand the Bunker Hill development and its relation to the rest of Charlestown. First, a deep and violent history of racism has plagued Charlestown as minorities have arrived during the last years. Because almost all minorities have moved into the development, separation between development and neighborhood has grown. Second, Townies have a strong tradition of competition with one another, which is captured by the phrase “up to me, up to me, but never above me.” (Lucas) Townies have applied this principle to the other newly arrived group to Charlestown -- upper-income professionals who work close by in downtown Boston and use Charlestown as a bedroom community. Sharp tensions also exist between these two groups. Since Townies live in the development and surrounding neighborhood, understanding tensions with these two newly arrived groups is necessary to explore the dynamic between development and neighborhood.

#### *Boundaries of Neighborhood Surrounding the Development*

Charlestown is the smallest official planning district in Boston at 1.37 square miles. Because the neighborhood is so small geographically, I shall consider the neighborhood surrounding the development as all of Charlestown (see Map 3).

#### *Demographic Characteristics -- The Development and Surrounding Neighborhood*

Within this small area exist subneighborhoods with sharp physical boundaries and acute income and racial differences. These physical, socioeconomic, and racial divisions have severely isolated the development from the surrounding neighborhood.

#### *Income Differences*

Dramatic income differences exist within the narrow geographic boundaries of Charlestown. Median household income in the Bunker Hill development is \$10,085 in 1996 as opposed to \$40,414 in the rest of Charlestown. (See Table 3.1)<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The term ‘Townie’ is a commonly used expression in Charlestown used to refer to People whose families have lived in Charlestown for generations.

<sup>46</sup> Source: 1996 BHA data.

**Table 3.1 Median Household Income of Development and Neighborhood**

	<b>Development (1996)</b>	<b>Charlestown (1996)</b>	<b>Boston (1996)</b>
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$10,085	\$40,414	\$32,682

(Source: Boston Dept. of Public Health and 1996 Boston Housing Authority (BHA) MIS)

Average family income demonstrates the geographic proximity between the low-income and high-income tracts. In 1990, the two census tracts containing the development, tracts 402 and 408, had a median family income of \$30,840 and \$29,447, respectively. Conversely, census tract 401, which directly abuts the development, had a median family income of \$72,648 in 1990 (see Table 3.2 and Map 4).<sup>47</sup>

**Table 3.2 Average Family Income by Census Tracts**

<b>Tract 402 (Development)</b>	<b>Tract 408 (Development)</b>	<b>Tract 401</b>	<b>Tract 407</b>	<b>Tract 403</b>	<b>Tract 404</b>
\$30,840	\$29,447	\$72,648	\$70,701	\$38,200	\$44,933

(Source: Healthy Charlestown, p.9)

#### *Racial and Ethnic Differences*

Charlestown is divided sharply along racial and ethnic lines. Almost all of the neighborhood's minorities are concentrated in the two census tracts that contain the development. Charlestown is 94.5 % white and 5.3% minority.<sup>48</sup> Currently 60.6% of the development is minority, and 39.4% is white. The development is 33.3% Hispanic, 13.9% black, and 13.0 % Asian and Pacific Islander.<sup>49</sup>

**Table 3.3 Racial and Ethnic Composition**

	<b>Charlestown (1990)</b>	<b>Development (1990)</b>	<b>Development (1996)</b>
<b>White</b>	94.5%	81%	34.9%
<b>Minority</b>	5.3%	19%	60.6%
Hispanic	2.1%	6%	33.3%
Black	0.7%	6%	13.9%
Asian	2.1%	7%	13.4%

(Source: Boston Department of Public Health, p. 3 and BHA MIS)

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> No census data is available at the block group or tract level for the last five years. From BHA data and anecdotal data, most new minorities in Charlestown have moved into either the Bunker Hill development or Charles Newtown.

<sup>49</sup> 1996 BHA data. The BHA considers Hispanic as a racial category.

*Differences in Age Composition*

A high percentage of Charlestown's youth is concentrated in the Bunker Hill development, which contributes to drug and crime problems there. Currently, 45% of the 2, 317 residents who live in the development are under 20 years old. (Source: 1996 BHA MIS) Although age breakdowns differ between data for the development and the rest of Charlestown, Table 3.3 indicates the larger percentage of youth in the development.

**Table 3.4 Age Composition**

	Development (1996)	Charlestown (1990)	Boston (1990)
0-4	14.3%	5.9%	6.3%
5-14	24.2%	7.8%	9.8%
Under 20	48%	18.6%	23.9%

*Housing Stock*

Gentrification and the influx of low-income households into subsidized housing has left a shortage of housing options for working-class Townies. Charlestown has a relatively high percentage of subsidized housing compared with Boston; approximately 25% of housing in Charlestown is subsidized as opposed to 18% in Boston.<sup>50</sup> The three main housing developments that constitute the bulk of affordable housing in Charlestown are the Bunker Hill development, the Charles Newtown development, and Mishawam Park (see Map 3). The non-subsidized stock of housing has become much more expensive in the past 15 years. Owner-occupied units increased by 34% between 1980 and 1990, and the median value of a single family home increased from \$36,000 in 1980 to \$180,700 in 1990 (in 1988 dollars).<sup>51</sup> The median value of an owner-occupied unit in 1990 was \$165,700 versus \$160, 100 in Boston. (Boston Dept. of Public Health, p. B-18) Median rents in Charlestown also skyrocketed from \$215 in 1980 to \$569 in 1990 as young professionals flocked to Charlestown.<sup>52</sup> These trends have reduced the stock of moderate- to middle-income housing and have made it more difficult for working-class Townies to remain in Charlestown.

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<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> The high percentage of subsidized rents in Charlestown bring down the median rents for Charlestown as a whole.

**Table 3.5 Housing Stock**

	<b>Charlestown (1990)</b>	<b>Boston (1990)</b>
Total Housing Units (1990)	7,752	228,464
Owner Occupied	2,259 (33.0%)	70,544 (30.9%)
Renter Occupied	4,582 (67.0%)	157,920 (69.1%)
Subsidized Rental	25%	18%
Median Value--Owner Occ.	\$165,700	\$160,100
Median Rent	\$569	\$625

(Source: Boston Dept. of Public Health)

***Siting and Size of Bunker Hill Development***

The size and the siting of the development isolate it from the rest of Charlestown. Incompatible non-residential uses surround the development; Interstate 93, the Mystic River, and the Harbor bound the development along two of its edges (see Map 3). A BHA architect said of the highway that separates the development from the new residences in the Navy Yard, “it may as well be a river separating the two.”<sup>53</sup> This physical barrier exacerbates already minimal communication resulting from pronounced economic differences between the Navy Yard and development residents.

Few residences actually border the development. The Charles Newtown development borders the Bunker Hill development along Medford Street. Architects designed Newtown with its back facing the development, and fencing separating it from the development. This development simply magnifies the Bunker Hill development’s drug problem. Farther down Medford Street, the athletic fields of Charlestown High School begin and later give way to a series of antiquated industrial plants. Along Polk Street, Charlestown High School and a few houses abut the development. Neighborhood residences and businesses run adjacent to the development along the length of Bunker Hill Street.

The development’s size dominates the character of the neighborhood around it. The development is the largest that the BHA operates in units and, combined with Charles Newtown, houses over 2,500 low- to moderate-income residents. The

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<sup>53</sup> Smith, St. John. Personal interview. 9 February 1996.

concentration of poor people in the area inevitably contributes to drug and other social problems.

## ***2. History of Development/Neighborhood Relations***

### ***The Beginnings***

Since the start, relations between residents of the Bunker Hill development and the rest of Charlestown have been strained. In order to construct the new public housing development in 1941, the city leveled a 24-acre site of poor immigrant housing. Many neighbors and people who lost their homes were incensed at what they felt to be the heavy and arbitrary hand of the city in conjunction with the federal government. On the other hand, neighbors also envied those residents selected for the development. The City promised residents displaced from their homes that they would have preference for the new apartments in the Bunker Hill development if they met federal income requirements; however, only 36% of those families displaced actually moved into the highly sought after apartments. (Lucas, p.146)

Moving from the cold water flats to the development was upward mobility. Current Bunker Hill Tenant Task Force Leader, Mary MacInnes moved from a cold water flat in Charlestown to the development shortly after it opened in 1941. She said that “the cold water flat was horrible. It was always cold, and winters were miserable.”<sup>54</sup> The apartments in the development had steam heat and hardwood floors. When she moved into the project, she thought “this is really what heaven on earth must be like. The rest of Charlestown, though hated people from the projects. They called us ‘project rats.’”<sup>55</sup>

At first the development was a temporary haven for working class families before they moved to the suburbs. The development served many positive purposes. It served as a source of jobs. Everyone knew each other. It was a social community:

Once, years before, the project had teemed with social activities; a Men’s Club, a Women’s club, Boy Scouts, Brownies, movies, softball and football teams, a sewing club, a boy’s airplane group, victory gardens, boxing and hopscotch tournaments, dances and block parties. (Lucas, p. 151)

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<sup>54</sup> MacInnes, Mary. Personal interview. 29 January 1996.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*

### *The 1960s -- Urban Renewal*

Urban renewal began to change the composition of the development population and erode the sense of the “urban village.”<sup>56</sup> First, urban renewal in Boston neighborhoods displaced poor white families from all over the city into the development. Townies did not regard new tenants from other parts of the city as “true townies.” (ibid.) Secondly, changes in federal legislation severely limited the authority of development managers, making it more difficult for them to screen out and evict problem tenants. (ibid.) The development, then, came to house a poorer and more difficult to manage tenant population.

These changes, in turn, further severed interaction between development tenants and the rest of Charlestown. Middle-class residents from Breed’s Hill and Bunker Hill increasingly tried to isolate themselves from the development. (ibid.) One non-Townie who raised seven children and lived in the development during this time said that “Townies from the town thought they were better than the ‘project rats,’ but they really thought they were better than whites in the development who weren’t Townies.”<sup>57</sup>

By the end of the 1960s, the idea of the development as a safe place to bring up a family was beginning to crumble. One mother who lived in the development at this time would tell her kids “You live here, but you don’t hang here.”<sup>58</sup> Three decades after Mary MacInnes proclaimed the development a “heaven on earth”, a residents who left the development declared such new-found frontiers as Dorchester to be “heavens on earth”:

I grew up in the project until I was 14. It was a real hard place. It was all concrete and everything was broken. The kids were hard too. As a Charlestown kid, your right of passage was beating up a cop. When we finally moved to Dorchester, it seemed like heaven. I mean there were patches of grass.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The term ‘urban village’ used in Herbert Gans’ *The Urban Villagers* emphasizes that social interaction is essential to the achievement of urban safety, harmony, and functionality. (Gardiner, p.12).

<sup>57</sup> McDougal, Theresa. Personal interview. 28 February, 1996.

<sup>58</sup> ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Forrester, Richard. Personal interview. 24 November, 1995.



### *1970s -- Busing and Job Flight*

The calamitous effect that busing produced in Charlestown further divided the project from the neighborhood. The federal government mandated forced busing to even the racial balance in Boston public schools. Many working and middle-class families evaded the busing issue by sending their kids to private or parochial schools or leaving for the suburbs.<sup>60</sup> Working-class families who could move out of the project did so, leaving mostly poorer families who could not, which further damaged the already deteriorating sense of community. As one former tenant expressed: "A lot of the good families moved out of the project during this time, and a lot of the bad families stayed. Busing gave the project a bad name."<sup>61</sup> Also, much of the violence associated with the busing crisis occurred in and around the development because it was physically close to the old high school and because project families who could not avoid busing were its most fierce opponents. (Lucas, p. 265) Many people from Charlestown directly link the decline of the development and the high school with the busing crisis.<sup>62</sup>

Flight of industries from Charlestown during the 1960s and 1970s dealt a crippling blow to Charlestown's working class and increased the gap between rich and poor. The Navy Yard, Dominoe Sugar, Schraft Chocolate, and Revere Sugar all closed during this period as did businesses that serviced former industry workers. Although residents from the development and neighborhood lost jobs during this period, development residents appeared to have been impacted the most.

### *1980s and 1990s -- Besieged by Outsiders from Above and Below*

Two major trends during this period have widened the gap between the rich and poor in Charlestown and exacerbated already deteriorated development/neighborhood relations. First, the influx of upper-income young professionals into Charlestown has driven up real estate and has contributed to the working-class Townie exodus. Second, federally-mandated desegregation of the Bunker Hill development has produced an influx

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<sup>60</sup> McGann Jeff and Leo Boucher. Personal interviews. 14 February, 1996 and 23 February, 1996.

<sup>61</sup> Boucher, Leo. Personal interview. 23 February, 1996.

<sup>62</sup> McGann.

of low-income minorities and an exodus of working-class whites. Ten years ago, the racial composition of the development was 99% white, and today it is 60% minority and 40% white.<sup>63</sup> Federal policy changes that set stringent income limits helped insure that minorities who moved to the development were low-income. Consequently, many Townies from the neighborhood expressed the feeling that upper-income newcomers from above and low-income minorities from below are squeezing them out of Charlestown.<sup>64</sup>

Many Townies resent the upper-income newcomers. One life-long Charlestown resident said, “many long-term residents are rightfully resentful of the new people who have come in and driven the prices sky high so that no one can afford to live here anymore.”<sup>65</sup> Upper-income newcomers appear, for the most part, to withdraw from Townie civic life.

Influx of minorities into the development as a result of forced integration that began in the 1970s has generated acute racial tensions and further isolated the development from the surrounding neighborhood. Tensions have been especially prevalent between low-income minorities, particularly Hispanics, and low- to moderate-income whites. Many Townies feel that while upper-income newcomers drive up cost of market rents, minorities are taking up the remaining low-income housing. One community leader said of minority immigration, “The feds turned on the faucet and they never figured out a way to turn it off. Every place starts out 98% white and ends up 98% black.”<sup>66</sup>

Forced integration has also generated tension with homeowners in the surrounding neighborhood. Some property owners in the neighborhood feared that introducing blacks into the development would eventually drive down surrounding property values:

Homeowners were most opposed to integrating the project. One homeowner at the top of the hill near Monument Square was the one who really raised trouble about the blacks, because he said they would drive down property values. He

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<sup>63</sup> BHA MIS, March 7, 1996.

<sup>64</sup> Looney, Peter. Personal interview. 25 January, 1996.

<sup>65</sup> McGann.

<sup>66</sup> Looney.

didn't have to worry about anything. Most residents from the development stay down the hill anyway.<sup>67</sup>

The dynamic between forced integration and Townie culture of competition has also generated tension between Townies from the development and neighborhood. On the one hand, being a Townie transcends class differences. Many neighborhood Townies used to live in the development and still have family there. Moreover, drugs pose the same threat to all Townies, regardless of whether they live in the development. On the other hand, some Townies from the neighborhood appear to equate remaining in the development with personal failure. Even within the restricted ladder of social mobility for poor and working families in Charlestown, moving from the development to Newtown and particularly Mishawam is viewed as moving up.<sup>68</sup> Some Townies who remain in the development appear to have internalized this message, and vent this frustration on minorities in the development.

#### *Racial Tensions*

Racial tensions have isolated minority residents from other whites in the development and the rest of Charlestown. Most minority families in Charlestown are concentrated in the Bunker Hill development or in Newtown. Minorities have experienced frequent verbal threats and periodic racial violence. (Healthy Charlestown, p. 41) Moreover, many non-native English speaking residents keep to themselves and do not shop or use services in the neighborhood. (ibid.) The assistant manager of the Bunker Hill development stated, "many minority families from the development feel uncomfortable or scared and don't venture out of their apartment and around the town."<sup>69</sup>

Racial incidents have sharpened the already well defined racial boundaries in Charlestown. Hispanics generally feel unwelcome along Main Street. Minority fear was exacerbated last year after a group of white youth stabbed a Hispanic youth on Main Street. As more minorities have entered the Bunker Hill development and Newtown, racial tensions between minorities and whites have increased in that area.<sup>70</sup> About three

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<sup>67</sup> MacInnes.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Danny Ryan.

<sup>69</sup> McDougal.

<sup>70</sup> Coyne, Ron. Personal interview. 7 December, 1995.

years ago, a group of Hispanic youth visiting a Hispanic friend from the development stabbed two white young men. Within an hour, 400 to 500 Townies, most of whom were from the development and Mishawam, had gathered outside the apartment of the Hispanic, demanding revenge. Such incidents have magnified racial tensions in and around the development.

This history of complex and strained relations between development and surrounding neighborhood has contributed strongly to the inability of the development and neighborhood to respond effectively to combat the urgent problems in their midst.

### ***3. Dynamic of the Drug Market***

#### ***The Problem***

Drugs are a community-wide problem for the low- to moderate-income population of Charlestown. Because a large portion of this population lives in the three subsidized developments, most drug dealing and use are concentrated in and around these areas. Father Ron Coyne of St. Catherine's Church summed it up this way, "there is no place where a kid from Charlestown can be drug free."<sup>71</sup> Although drugs dealing occurs in all three subsidized developments, it has really taken root in and around the Bunker Hill development. Because Newtown and the High School are so close to the development, the lines of dealing among these three complexes are blurred, and the whole area is viewed as a hotbed for drug dealing and use.<sup>72</sup> Dealing and use also occur heavily in the Mishawam Development along Main Street, but not to the same intensity as in and around the development.

Drug dealing is rampant in all areas of the Bunker Hill development and along its borders. An undercover investigator stated that he knows of 30 to 40 apartments all over the development where individuals sell drugs.<sup>73</sup> He estimates the actual number to be much higher.<sup>74</sup> The hallways and roofs of buildings all over the development are testament to the serious drug problem. One particular area of the development, Carney

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<sup>71</sup> *ibid.* The only exception to this statement would appear to be youth who study outside of Charlestown.

<sup>72</sup> Keaney, Joseph. Personal interview. 14 February, 1996.

<sup>73</sup> Anonymous. Personal interview.

<sup>74</sup> There were approximately 982 occupied housing units on April 1, 1996.

Court, has two buildings with hallways in disastrous conditions.<sup>75</sup> The walls are covered with graffiti, and the hallways smell of urine and excrement. On some days, hundreds of empty heroin bag wrappers are scattered on the hallway floors. In one of these buildings, hallways are in this state because two families deal drugs out of apartments on the first floor -- one sells heroin and the other sells cocaine and crack.<sup>76</sup> As a rule, someone is dealing from one or more of the apartments in the building when hallways are in this condition.<sup>77</sup> Some outdoor hot spots for dealing are the strip of Monument Street that runs through the development and the storefronts on the border of Charles Newtown and the development (see Map 3).

### *Structure of the Drug Market*

A long-time monopoly controlled by a few Townie families tightly oversees the drug market in Charlestown. The multiple families dealing out of their apartments in the development all operate within the hierarchy of the Charlestown drug monopoly. The top of the hierarchy determines who will and will not deal. Newcomers cannot simply start dealing. The boyfriend of a development tenant said, "Let's put it this way, if I were to go in there and start dealing tomorrow, I'd have problems, big problems."<sup>78</sup>

The profile of drug dealers in the development has begun to change. Although the system is closely regulated, newcomers seem to be gaining approval of the monopoly and their representation in the ranks is growing.<sup>79</sup> Development residents conduct most of the dealing in the development in their apartments, in hallways, or on street corners. Many of the dealers are between the ages of 24 and 40 and are members of long-time white families in the development.<sup>80</sup> In a December drug sweep, 17 of the 21 people arrested were development residents.<sup>81</sup> Those dealers who are not BHA tenants are usually boyfriends or children of development tenants.<sup>82</sup> A new set of dealers has emerged:

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<sup>75</sup> The author made the following observations on a police ride-along. 29 February 1996.

<sup>76</sup> Anonymous. Personal interview.

<sup>77</sup> Keaney.

<sup>78</sup> Peters, Joseph. Personal interview. 17 April, 1996.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Anonymous.

<sup>81</sup> Melia, Steven. Personal Interview. 11 February, 1996.

<sup>82</sup> McKenna, Kevin. Personal interview. 29 February, 1996.

women who sell drugs for their boyfriends. One officer estimated that about 40% of dealers are females from the development who deal for their boyfriends.<sup>83</sup>

The monopoly operates according to strict rules and an honor system called the Code of Silence. Dealers whom police apprehended are sworn to secrecy, and those who confess face swift and definitive punishment. The Code of Silence also is an implicit deal with all Charlestown residents; residents in the development and town are safe from violence if they mind their own business and turn a blind eye to things they should not see. Residents who have broken the code often have ended up mysteriously murdered with no witnesses. The Code of Silence makes it extremely difficult to get anyone to testify about crimes. The monopolistic drug structure, then, encourages a culture of silence among residents both inside and outside the development.

A few trends have begun to erode the discipline of the monopolistic drug structure, however. The *Code of Silence Trial* in which a number of key organized crime figures were convicted weakened the monopoly somewhat. Second, increases in mandatory sentences have begun to entice arrested dealers to inform on higher-ups even though the consequences are perilous.

#### *Buyers and Users*

The lower-to middle income community in Charlestown provides most of the demand for drugs in the development and the larger neighborhood. Most people who buy drugs in the development are residents, Charles Newtown tenants, and Charlestown High School students (some of whom live in the development). Townies from other parts of Charlestown as well as people from Everett and Revere who have friends or relatives in the development also buy there.<sup>84</sup> Drug use is not limited to youths in Charlestown. Although a number of high school students skip school and do drugs in the hallways of development buildings, a large number of adults, however, appear to be users as well.<sup>85</sup>

The scale of dealing in the development has increased because many dealers are heavy drug users. Some dealers do up to 40 or 50 bags of heroin a day.<sup>86</sup> In order to

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Keaney.

<sup>86</sup> McKenna.

support their habit, drug dealers are under severe pressure to sell as much as possible, which shifts the supply curve for drugs outward and creates a vicious cycle. Moreover, this phenomenon appears to be exploding in the large population of female-headed households of the development:

Some dealers have girlfriends all over the development, and they bring them drugs, get them hooked, and then make them sell drugs to pay their habit. Some guys even have different girlfriends in the same building who sell for them. The guys drop off the drugs at the girl's apartment and pick up the proceeds at night.<sup>87</sup>

Given this phenomenon, effective drug prevention programs among young female mothers could help reverse this dangerous trend.

#### *Drugs Sold*

Heroin has become recently the preferred choice of drugs in Charlestown and is reaching epidemic proportions. Heroin is particularly convenient for youth, because bags sell for six dollars a piece. In addition the market continues to offer crack cocaine and regular cocaine.

#### *Degree and Type of Violence*

The monopolistic structure tightly regulates who deals drugs, which diminishes turf rivalry in the development, and consequently there is little unplanned violence. In Charlestown, "things happen for a reason. There is very little random crime between unknown people."<sup>88</sup> The violence that does occur is usually punishment against informants. Moreover, organized crime tries to stifle crimes that draw attention. Such control over violence makes it easy for residents of the surrounding neighborhood to ignore the drug problem.<sup>89</sup>

#### *Property Crime*

The monopolistic drug structure does not regulate property crime. The geographic proximity between the development and wealthy subneighborhoods contributes strongly to the high level of property crime, such as car theft and vandalism. In 1992, Downtown/Beacon Hill and South End/Back Bay were the only Boston Police

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<sup>87</sup> McKenna.

<sup>88</sup> Coyne.

<sup>89</sup> McKenna.

Department reporting districts to exceed Charlestown in their rate of auto theft.<sup>90</sup> (Healthy Charlestown, p. 32) Many of the car thefts and car break-ins occur in the Charlestown Navy Yard and Breed's Hill. Although some people who do this are from the development, residents from the Navy Yard and Breed's Hill exclusively blame the development for the problem because of its geographic proximity.<sup>91</sup> The rampant use of heroin also appears to have increased incidents of thefts and burglaries. In order to support a heroin habit, users are desperate to find funds.

Residents of the neighborhood are reluctant to make too many waves about property crime because of the Code of Silence. The residents, therefore, responded to property crime through crime watches in which they try to secure their own front doorstep.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, neighborhood crime-fighting efforts do not reach beyond residents' front door steps and certainly do not reach the development. The combination of the Code of Silence and high property crime has prompted residents of the wealthier parts of Charlestown to respond to crime by walling themselves off from the development.

## **INSTITUTIONS AND RESPONSES**

Three factors are important to understand how the Charlestown community has responded to drug problems in and around the development. These factors are (1) involvement and institutional capacity of land users in the neighborhood, (2) involvement and institutional capacity of development tenants, (3) and the effectiveness of police forces operating in the area.

### ***1. Involvement and Institutional Capacity of Land Users in the Neighborhood***

The deleterious effects that drugs have exacted on Charlestown's low- to moderate-income community and Townie instinct to preserve a semblance of the old Charlestown have moved individuals and institutions in the neighborhood to forge

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<sup>90</sup> The Healthy Charlestown Coalition. "Charlestown Community Needs and Resources Assessment Report," November 1993.

<sup>91</sup> Forrester.

<sup>92</sup> Hayes, Chris. Personal interview. 3 April, 1996.



community efforts against crime. For the most part, however, negative dynamics within the surrounding neighborhood and between the development and neighborhood have exacerbated drug problems and rendered many well-intentioned organizations and community efforts ineffectual.

Problematic institutions most immediately bound the Bunker Hill development, which itself is managed by a troubled housing authority.<sup>93</sup> Charlestown High School and Charles Newtown present the most immediate problems for the development. Moreover, neighborhood residents with political and economic clout have removed themselves from issues that involve the development. Finally, lack of political clout and the conflict between the distinct groups of Charlestown -- Townies, minorities, and young professionals -- have derailed those neighborhood organizations that have rallied in earnest to address drugs in the development. Consequently, the massive drug problems in and around the development have overwhelmed these neighborhood organizations.

#### *Charlestown High School*

The seemingly intractable problems of Charlestown High School coupled with the drug problems of the Bunker Hill development produce an explosive dynamic that exacerbates tensions between the development and surrounding neighborhood. Moreover, the marriage of these two troubled institutions offers little capacity to respond effectively to these local issues.

Students from Charlestown High School use the hallways of the adjacent Bunker Hill development to skip classes and get high. The rampant heroin market and the unsupervised buildings in the development provide adolescents with a safe haven to do drugs. High school students who hang out along Bunker Hill Street after school also aggravate development/neighborhood relations, and the lines distinguishing who is from the development and who is not are blurry.

Residents and businesses in the surrounding neighborhood blame the drugs and nuisance on the development. Store owners along Bunker Hill Street meet monthly with representatives from the MBTA, the BPD, the high school principal, the Bunker Hill

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<sup>93</sup> St. Catherine's Church, which abuts the development along Corey Street, is the clear exception to this statement.

Tenant Task force, development managers, and the city councilor to address the issue. From these meetings, a full-time person has been hired to promote efforts between the high school and the development and bring students who skip class back to school. Despite these efforts, the students are unrelenting, still use BHA hallways to use drugs, and still loiter in front of businesses after school.

The failed efforts are the product of the two institutions at the heart of the problem. The task of coordinating local responses to the high school/development issue through the two large and troubled city bureaucracies that operate these institutions has overwhelmed local community efforts.

*Charles Newtown and Mishawam Park*

The institutions that manage Newtown and Mishawam have not coordinated and cooperated on a regular basis with management from the Bunker Hill development to address the drug issue.<sup>94</sup> This is important because youth from one development hang out in the other developments, particularly youth from Newtown and the Bunker Hill Development. Mishawam youth walk through the development on the way to the High School every day. Because management at these developments do not communicate amongst one another, the subsidized developments, particularly Newtown, serve only to expand drugs problems around the development, rather than to help address them.

*Navy Yard*

A rich network of institutions and resources exists in the Charlestown Navy Yard; however, physical and socioeconomic barriers between the development and the Navy Yard render them of little use to the development. Limited interaction that has occurred between the two areas has been mostly negative. Youth from the development and other parts of high school have vandalized cars and other property in the Navy Yard, and this has been blamed on the development.<sup>95</sup> Residents of the Navy Yard also have protested the use of one of the public pools by development children because they are noisy.<sup>96</sup> In

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<sup>94</sup> McDougal.

<sup>95</sup> Forrester.

<sup>96</sup> MacInnes.

short, individuals and institutions from the Navy Yard appear to responded to tensions with the development by walling themselves off.

#### *Local Businesses*

Local businesses have offered little support for efforts to address drugs in and around the development. Support consists of contributions for local sports teams and leagues but stops there. Although businesses along Bunker Hill Street have organized to address the problem of loitering high school students, financial support for solutions like after school programs has not been forthcoming.

Local realtors have undermined Healthy Charlestown efforts to orient new residents about resources in Charlestown and drug addiction services. Realtors have refused to distribute the welcoming bags that Healthy Charlestown has prepared to new comers, because the bags make reference to services for drug and alcohol related use and provide advice on how to avoid crime. Realtors are nervous that these references will drive away the upper-income market that they target.<sup>97</sup> To remedy this dilemma, realtors have proposed a separate welcoming bag that omits information about drugs and crime for new middle- to upper-income residents.

#### *St. Catherine's Parish Rectory*

St. Catherine's Church, located adjacent to the development on Corey Street, represents a ray of hope in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the development. The church's pastor, Father Ron Coyne, appears to be one of the few people who can break through the seemingly impermeable barrier of social isolation that envelops many minority residents of the development. Father Coyne describes his role as "seeing that I know every person in the development, because the development is the neighborhood that surrounds this church."<sup>98</sup> The church holds mass in Spanish as well as weekly meetings for the different minority groups in the development to discuss their problems in the Charlestown community. Moreover, the church provides a food and clothing pantry and runs AA meetings.

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<sup>97</sup> Ryan, Danny. Personal interview. 28 November, 1995.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

### *Neighborhood Residents and Organizations*

Neighborhood organizations have proven powerless to address the core issues that would be necessary to change the drug situation in and around the development. First, this ineffectiveness has resulted primarily from the destructive impact that the influx of young professionals and the exodus of working-class Townies have inflicted on the social capital in the surrounding neighborhood. Second, the lack of upper-income newcomers' participation in Charlestown civic life has meant that neighborhood organizations are dominated by the same group of Townies who have little political clout over the city. Third, Townie organizations use the political clout that they do have ineffectively.

Upper-income newcomers with political clout have removed themselves from drug issues in and around the development. They are physically separated from the development geographically, and the inward design of their houses and neighborhood blocks separate them from the development. The combination of physical isolation and safety from random violence makes drugs in the development an issue with which upper-income newcomers need not deal. Second, extreme class and racial differences exist between the upper-income areas and the project. Third, class tensions with Townies in control of neighborhood organizations also explain some of the upper-income isolation from civic life in Charlestown. Also, the history of insularity and suspicion of outsiders in Charlestown discourages newcomers from addressing controversial issues. Fourth, and perhaps most important, the young professionals have a fundamentally different set of concerns than the rest of Charlestown.<sup>99</sup> The separation of concerns arises in part from differences in household structure. Many of the young professionals, or DINKs (Double Income No Kids), as Townies refer to them, do not have children, and therefore, drugs and safety issues do not pose the same threat they do for parents who have children growing up in Charlestown.

Withdrawal of residents with economic and political clout from Charlestown civic life translates into Townie dominated neighborhood organizations with little political

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<sup>99</sup> Coyne.

clout. Many of the same Townies are on the board of directors of the same organizations. Since Townies have grown up within the entrenched underground crime structure of Charlestown, they are less likely to initiate a concerted attempt to disrupt this structure. In many ways, an organization of outsiders with few local ties is the group that would be most likely to succeed in taking on the crime structure. Because Townie neighborhood organizations are careful not to confront the crime structure, their drug-fighting strategies consist exclusively of prevention-based strategies. Examples of such organizations are the Healthy Charlestown Coalition and Charlestown Against Drugs (CHAD). Another barrier that domination of neighborhood organizations by long-time Townies presents is that many older Townies are reluctant to acknowledge the true extent of drug and racial problems in Charlestown.<sup>100</sup> Such reluctance makes it unlikely that neighborhood organizations as they exist today will address the difficult and dangerous drug issues.

A third reason that neighborhood organizations are ineffective is because the limited political and organizational capacity they do have is not utilized well. Charlestown is overflowing with community organizations -- "there are so many committees and organizations in Charlestown that you could trip over them. Everyone in Charlestown has their own organization."<sup>101</sup> The proliferation of organizations results because there is "...no unanimity in Charlestown about anything." (Keyes, Rehabilitation Planning Game) The sheer number of organizations and committees make coordination more difficult and causes repetition of functions and services. A 1993 resident survey "noted the significant number of programs that are available, and that with one or two exceptions, additional service programs were not the best solution for the community." (Healthy Charlestown, p. 49)

Fourth, neighborhood organizations have difficulty involving development residents, particularly minorities, in those organizations. Although there are people from the neighborhood, primarily Townies, who reach out to development residents, they do not appear to connect with tenants outside the Bunker Hill Tenant Task Force. Task force

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<sup>100</sup> Anonymous.

<sup>101</sup> Looney.

leader Mary MacInnes has connected with neighborhood organizations, but bringing the development residents outside of the task force into the process has been difficult.

## ***2. Involvement and Organizational Capacity of Development Tenants***

Residents from the development face barriers to organizing effectively against the drug problem on virtually every front. Although there are small pockets of residents who have initiated informal building patrols, resident capacity to address the drug problem is almost non-existent. A strategy to address drugs in and around public housing without support of the tenants faces tremendous odds, particularly when combined with weak institutions in the surrounding neighborhood and a large drug problem. One officer summarized well the need for resident participation: “The buildings are only as good as the tenants in them. You look at the building that have clean, safe hallways, and it’s because the tenants are in control of the place.”<sup>102</sup>

First and foremost, residents are unwilling to participate in organizing efforts against drugs because they are petrified of retaliation from the organized crime structure. Second, deep racial problems divide the development and isolate minorities. Third, the Tenant Task Force of the development has not been effective in or supportive of drug-fighting efforts. Fourth, there is wide spread distrust and suspicion among development residents.

Resident withdrawal from fear of retribution constitutes the most fundamental obstacle to tackling the drug problem in the development. Crime statistics represent resident reluctance to report drug-related crimes in the Bunker Hill development. In 1995, only 3 of the 176 crimes reported in the development were drug-related crimes -- 1.7%. (BHA Public Safety Department, 1995) BHA developments with comparable drug problems, such as Mission Main and Orchard Park, reported 73 of 177 crimes (41.2%) and 93 of 220 crimes (42.3%), respectively to be drug-related.

In the Charlestown development, many residents in the development lock themselves in their apartments from their fear of widespread drug dealing and use in

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<sup>102</sup> McKenna.

building hallways. At seven in the evening, most of the window shades of the apartments are drawn.<sup>103</sup> According to one officer, many residents, particularly old residents, are afraid to leave their apartments, because junkies harass them in the hallways.<sup>104</sup>

Resident fear of retaliation makes community policing a difficult idea for anyone to take seriously. Resident fear is well founded. A community organizer said that when he tries to engage residents in community policing initiatives they ask him “Yeah, and where are you gonna be when they come banging on my door at night, threatening my life, when they threaten my kids’ lives?”<sup>105</sup> Moreover, residents have little faith that the police can protect them and so do the police. One officer said:

Maybe I can protect one resident one night by stopping by her apartment once in a while, but what about nights when I’m off? Then, there’s no one on duty from 4 p.m. to 8 a.m. The worst time in public housing is from 4 p.m. to 4 a.m., and some nights no one is even here. Who is going to protect the old lady then? This is the biggest development in the city, and I’m the only guy on duty here. No one’s got my back here either.<sup>106</sup>

Resident fear of retribution has helped produced a deeply rooted resident mistrust and suspicion of police officers in Charlestown. Residents simply are not supposed to communicate with officers. Long-time residents are particularly reluctant to communicate with police.<sup>107</sup>

Second, severe social isolation among the minority population of the development creates a significant barrier to resident organization in general. Sharp racial tensions have badly isolated minorities from the rest of the development and the town. Residents face constant verbal and physical harassment from whites in the development.<sup>108</sup> Hate crimes against Hispanics, blacks, and Asians frequently surface and exacerbate racial tensions. Minority groups are beginning to speak out more about the racial problems, however; many still remain fearful and withdrawn.<sup>109</sup> Since the development is 60% minority,

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<sup>103</sup> Author’s observation on police ride-along.

<sup>104</sup> McKenna.

<sup>105</sup> Keating, Brian. Personal interview. 6 March, 1996.

<sup>106</sup> McKenna.

<sup>107</sup> Anonymous..

<sup>108</sup> Geeta Anand, “BHA tenant details racial harassment,” Boston Globe 6 February, 1996.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*

isolation of this population presents a formidable challenge to the tenant population's capacity to address the drug problem.

Third, the Bunker Hill Tenant Task Force is more of an obstacle than a facilitator of drug-fighting efforts. The tenant task force leader is strong and well respected within the Charlestown community; however, her strength has been pushing through individual resident complaints through BHA bureaucracy rather than building an effective resident organization.<sup>110</sup> Long-term residents dominate the tenant task force and are characterized as closed, and concerned primarily with protecting their turf rather than incorporating other tenants into the power structure.<sup>111</sup>

The tenant task force has been unreceptive to outside efforts to build resident participation and organizing capacity or to implement community policing efforts. There is speculation that some residents involved in public safety issues have relatives involved in the drug trade. This is a problem in many public housing developments. One officer summarized the general dilemma:

How do you bring up drug dealing at the public safety meetings. If I were a dealer, I'd have my girlfriend or whoever in there in those meetings keeping tabs for me.<sup>112</sup>

In general, the heavy drug use among development tenants means that many residents have family members who deal or use drugs, which often creates a disincentive for residents to join drug-fighting initiatives.

Moreover, the TTF has been at odds with management, and there is little trust between the two entities. Some members of the tenant task force feel that management is "out to get them." Moreover, some tenants feel that management is unresponsive to tenant needs in terms of physical repairs. Managers, on the other hand have found it difficult to break through resident suspicion of them. Consequently, management and the tenant task force communicate little about drug-related problems.

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<sup>110</sup> Keating.

<sup>111</sup> Anonymous.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*



Fourth, there appears to be strong suspicion and mistrust among development residents, racial matters aside. Few residents have faith that other residents will follow through on their part of the bargain they take steps to start initiatives. For example, in recent efforts to clean hallways, residents have assumed the attitude: “Why should we bother cleaning the hallways and picking up trash when we know nobody is gonna help out.”<sup>113</sup> This lack of faith in collective action presents daunting challenges to those people trying to organize residents against drug-related problems.

### ***3. Effectiveness of Police Forces Operating in the Area***

The police forces operating in the area have been ineffective in addressing drug issues and confront a number of significant obstacles. The first obstacle police face is difficulty opening lines of communication with residents. Second, rivalry and poor coordination among the six different police forces that operate in the area create fragmentation and overlap in services and suspicion among residents. Third, lack of consistent police presence in the development undermines police ability to win the trust of residents and sustain short-term victories against drug dealers. A final theme that emerged is the lack of institutional support that officers in the development receive to cope with enormous amounts of stress.

First and foremost, police/resident interaction in and around the development is almost non-existent. Although many officers assigned to the development have earnest intentions, they have great difficulty connecting with development tenants. The Code of Silence has erected a wall between the residents and the police. This absence of communication generates resentment with tenants as well as with officers. Residents feel that the officers are never around and cannot insure their protection, and officers feel frustrated because residents do not provide the information officers need to do their job.

Second, coordination and communication is extremely poor among the numerous police forces that operate in the area. Many different law enforcement agencies are conducting a myriad of drug investigations with seemingly little coordination. Federal

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<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*

drug investigators, state police, the BPD, the Boston Municipal Police, and BHA police all have different operations underway at the same time, and there is little information sharing among the groups. Local police are resentful because they feel that federal police simply use them for information to promote their own careers.<sup>114</sup> Also, the number of different undercover investigators in the area magnifies widespread suspicion and silence among residents.

The BPD/BHA/BMP police partnership, the most important policing relationship to the development is strained. According to one BHA officer, “the real problem between BHA and BPD police is communication.”<sup>115</sup> Officers from the BPD and BHA cannot communicate directly, because their radios are not linked. If a BHA officer is in trouble, the BHA officer must call a dispatcher, and the dispatcher then contacts the BPD officer to respond. BHA officers, therefore, have little idea about what BPD officers in the area are doing, and vice versa.

Moreover, police officers from the different developments do not communicate with each other regularly. Wakenhut, a private security company, patrols Newtown and the BHA police patrol the Bunker Hill development. Different preconceptions account for some of these barriers in communication. One BHA officer said of the Wakenhut officers, “some of them are nice guys, and they really want a career as police officers, but they’re really not there yet.”<sup>116</sup>

Third, lack of consistent police presence within the development undermines the ability of police to form relationships of mutual trust with development residents. No officers are assigned to the development from 12 p.m. to 8 am, and there is only one officer on duty four days a week on the 4 p.m. to 12 p.m. shift, the busiest drug dealing shift. Officers can do little to insure residents protection once they have provided officers with information. Lack of a consistent and substantial police presence in the development renders large multi-agency drugs sweeps virtually useless. After a major sweep of the development in December 1995 resulted in 21 arrests, dealing resumed

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<sup>114</sup> Anonymous.

<sup>115</sup> McKenna.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

quickly to its previous level, because there was little police presence to follow up the sweep.<sup>117</sup> One officer said, “those sweeps, they don’t even make a dent in the problem. Look at this place. The sweeps are like pissing into the wind.”<sup>118</sup>

The thin police resources in the development place tremendous stress on the few officers assigned there. Officers on the front line rarely receive the kind of support they need to do their job effectively. A number of dealers have placed threats on the life of an officer who covers the development alone at night. The only backup the officer has is from the BPD, but requesting help through a dispatcher can take longer than it should. This kind of stress makes it difficult if not impossible for an officer to do his job effectively.

#### ***4. Conclusion***

Charlestown suffers severe problems in all areas that determine whether a development and surrounding neighborhood can cope with drugs and related problems. Involvement and institutional capacity are poor both within and outside of the development. Moreover, the institutional policing environment is extremely ineffective. The dynamic among these three factors arms a weak arsenal to combat the rampant drug problems that have rooted themselves in and around the development. Furthermore, the class and racial trends in Charlestown most likely will weaken the capacity of the development and neighborhood to organize and confront social problems in the area.

Barring dramatic change in at least two of these four variables, the drug situation in and around the Charlestown development is likely to remain the same or worsen. One way to begin addressing the drug-problem in the development would be to insure more minority participation on the tenant task force, which may make minorities more comfortable participating in addressing public safety issues. This would have to be accompanied by a dual policing strategy that addresses the upper echelons as well as the street level of the drug dealing structure.

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<sup>117</sup> Melia.

<sup>118</sup> McKenna.

## **CHAPTER IV: BROMLEY HEATH**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Potent resources exist both within and outside of Bromley Heath, but barriers between the development and neighborhood diminish their combined impact on severe drug-related problems in the area. Inside the development, the Bromley Heath Tenant Management Corporation (TMC), the first public housing tenant management body in the country, provides strong organizing capacity. Outside the development, a number of organizations and resources are poised to address drug-dealing issues. Although organizing energy inside and outside the development often are not channeled in a coordinated manner, recent real estate development in the immediate neighborhood of Bromley Heath provides neighborhood institutions with a market incentive to address drug-related problems in the area. This incentive makes it likely that drug problems will not defeat the development and larger neighborhood.

### **CONTEXT AND PROBLEM**

#### ***1. The Development and Surrounding Neighborhood***

##### ***Jamaica Plain / Roxbury -- The Larger Neighborhood Context***

Bromley Heath is situated in Jamaica Plain on the border with Roxbury. The location of the development at the crossroads of these inner-city Boston neighborhoods places it in the middle of Boston's drug-trafficking world. Physical neighborhood boundaries, therefore, are of secondary importance in defining how the development and neighborhood relate to one another with regard to drug-related problems. I shall define the boundaries of the surrounding neighborhood, then, according to the lines that the different gangs in the area have drawn, because gang turf is the critical neighborhood issue.

The number of rival gangs operating within the larger neighborhood creates formidable challenges to drug fighting strategies. The most intense gang rivalry that has existed for generations and continues strong today is between youth from Bromley Heath

and Academy Homes, which is government subsidized housing located across Columbus Avenue from Bromley Heath (see Map 5). The Hyde Square neighborhood, which borders the development to the west and south, is composed primarily of Hispanics and some whites. Some of the Hispanic youth in this area have formed the Mozart Park Gang (see Map 6). Although not located in the immediate neighborhood, youth from Mission Main also enter into rivalry with the youth from Bromley Heath.

#### ***The Neighborhood Surrounding the Development***

Institutions in the immediate neighborhood surrounding Bromley Heath have played an important role in shaping the relationships between the development and the surrounding neighborhood. Recent residential and commercial development in the neighborhood, in particular, have forced the development and neighborhood to address drug-related issues.

#### ***Residential Uses***

The proximity of residences along two sides of Bromley Heath have provided these neighbors with an incentive to concern themselves with what occurs in and around the development. The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC) has developed 41 units of cooperative housing immediately abutting the development along Centre Street, Walden Street, and Gay Head Street on what used to be vacant lots. Modest homes surround the development along Heath Street.

Homeownership provides another incentive for neighborhood residents, particularly those in the block group to the west of the development, to address drug issues in and around the development. In this block group to the west, 812002, 42.8% of occupied housing units were owner occupied in 1990. (Cambridge Systematics) In the overall neighborhood, the percentage of homeowners was slightly lower than percentage for the city of Boston in 1990, 24.2% vs. 28.1%, however (see Map 7). The percentage of homeownership and the change in the number of housing units over the decade, however, vary widely among the different block groups in the neighborhood as is shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Homeownership**

<b>Boston</b>		Tract to <b>West</b> of Development-- 812002		Tract to <b>South</b> of Development -- 1205001		Tract to <b>Southeast</b> of Development -- 1205003	
% own occ		% own occ	% change in h_units 1980-90	% own occ	% change in h_units 1980-90	% own occ	% change in h_units 1980-90
28.1%		42.8%	32.4%	14.1%	-17.2%	21.1%	1.7%

(Source: 1990 Census)

*Commercial Uses*

Until recently, commercial uses have not played a significant role in drug-related issues in and around the development. Retail businesses abut the development along Centre Street. A number of these businesses are small Latino grocery stores (bodegas). Most recently, a local developer, Mordi Levin of Boston Community Ventures has made efforts to attract a mix of business uses in the immediate area. The recent development of the Jamaica Plain Plaza has brought needed services to the neighborhood and increased foot traffic in the area. Moreover, plans to develop a new supermarket on a vacant lot next to the development should create a market incentive for the limited partnership of Community Ventures, NDC, and TMC to address drugs and crime.

*Transportation*

The development is located next to the Jackson Square T-stop which produces a constant flow of foot traffic along Centre Street past the development. The T-stop is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it increases the number of “eyes and ears” on the street level adjacent to the, but at the same time it is located along a transportation route that serves youths of rival gangs from Academy Homes and Mission Main. (Jacobs) The T-stop also increases access to local drug markets in and around Bromley Heath. Residents from the development and neighborhood, therefore, do not feel safe walking to the T-stop, particularly at night. (Brown, p.54) Reluctance to use the T in this area creates “homeboundness” and isolation among development residents. (Brown)

### *Other Uses*

Finally, the Martha Elliot Health Center, located in the Bromley Heath development, generates tensions with the surrounding neighborhood. Because the health center serves mostly non-residents, Bromley Heath residents have difficulty getting served. Each year, the health center treats 8,400 non-resident patients, many of whom are Hispanics. (Brown) TMC Director Mildred Hailey cited this as an issue that needs to be addressed, because Bromley Heath residents are being undeserved. Moreover, outsiders come to use the facilities and leave, and so interaction between Bromley residents and the outside does not improve.<sup>119</sup>

### *Size and Design of the Development*

The physical design of the buildings in Bromley Heath and the density and size of the tenant population physically and socially isolate these tenants from neighborhood residents. The physical design of Bromley Heath creates divisions even within the Bromley Heath community. The development has three sections that were built during different time periods and at different density levels (see Map 8). Heath Street was constructed in 1940 and consists of 17 three-story walk-up buildings that constitute 420 units. Bromley Park was constructed in 1954 with 732 units in 10 seven-story elevator building and 6 three-story walk-up buildings. Finally, Bickford Street, constructed in 1962 has 64 elderly, one bedroom units in a nine-story elevator building. (Brown, p.79)

The dense clustering of families in Bromley Park midrises most severely isolates residents from the surrounding neighborhood. Many of these residents do not go out into the neighborhood. (Brown, p. 59) At least two midrises attract a good deal of drug dealing in apartments and hallways, which further isolates residents in their apartments. In one of the midrises on Centre Street where a lot of dealing occurs, a steady stream of buyers from outside the development moves in and out of the building at night.<sup>120</sup> Few people who actually lived in the building appeared to move about the hallways. The

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<sup>119</sup> Rodriguez, Gladys, Personal interview. 9 March, 1996.

<sup>120</sup> Author's observations on police ride-along, 4 April, 1996.

anonymity of the high-rise design combined with the building's location next to the Jackson Square T-stop facilitates the drug situation there.

*Demographic Characteristics -- the Development and Surrounding Neighborhood*

*Income Differences*

In general, socioeconomic differences between residents of Bromley Heath and the surrounding neighborhood vary widely. Median household income in the development was \$12,880 and \$38,195 (1996) in the neighborhood surrounding the development.<sup>121</sup>

**Table 4.2 Median Household Incomes of Development and Neighborhood**

	Development (1996)	Surrounding Neighborhood (1996)	Boston (1996)
Median Household Income	\$12,880	\$38,195	\$32,682

(Source: BHA MIS 1996 data and Cambridge Systematics)

*Racial and Ethnic Differences*

The Hyde Square neighborhood is extremely heterogeneous; however, different ethnic and racial groups are heavily concentrated in particular areas. Historically, Bromley Heath has been almost all black, but some Hispanic families have moved into the development during the last decade. In 1990, 73.9% of the development was black, 12.6% was white, and 34% was Hispanic.<sup>122</sup> The surrounding neighborhood is predominantly Hispanic, although whites are concentrated in certain areas. The two block groups directly south of the development, 1205001 and 1205003, are 94.2% and 86.9% Hispanic, respectively (see Map 6). Many of these Hispanics are newly arrived -- the percentage of Hispanics in these two block groups increased 65.9% and 40.1% respectively, from 1980 to 1990. The block group directly to the west of the development, 0812002, is quite racially and ethnically mixed -- 35.8% white, 25.4% black, and 46.3% Hispanic. Hispanics probably represent a larger percentage of the

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<sup>121</sup> The surrounding neighborhood is defined according to Map 6. Although the boudoirs of this map differ slightly from the neighborhood boundaries I have drawn according to gang activity, it is the most accurate available income data to the comparison that I am making. (BHA MIS and Cambridge Systematics) The income data differs in the Bromley Heath section, because the same data was not available for South Street and Charlestown.

<sup>122</sup> A large percentage of Hispanics in Bromley Heath are black.



surrounding neighborhood population than the data reveal, because the Hispanic population is under-reported.<sup>123</sup>

**Table 4.3 Racial and Ethnic Composition**

	<b>Develop ment</b>	<b>Block group 812001</b>	<b>Block group 812003</b>	<b>Block group 812002</b>	<b>Block group 1205003</b>	<b>Block group 1205001</b>	<b>Census Map Totals</b>
<b>Race</b>							
<b>White</b>	1.6%	27.4%	3.5%	35.8%	39.2%	65.4%	51.3%
<b>Black</b>	76.3%	70.7%	75.9%	25.4%	23.2%	8.35	26.5%
<b>Asian</b>	0.1%	6.2%	0%	6.2%	0.7%	0%	2.3%
<b>Other</b>		32.6%	20.7%	32.6%	36.8%	26.3%	19.3%
<b>Hispanic</b>	22.0%	47.6%	25.7%	46.3%	86.9%	94.2%	39.9%

[Source: Bromley Heath TMC 1993 Demographics Report (qtd. in Brown) and 1990 Census]

The ways that these racial and ethnic differences affect the capacity of the neighborhood and its organizations to deal with crime are complex. A few basic observations, however, can be drawn. Race and ethnicity is more of a barrier among the adult black, white, and Hispanic population.<sup>124</sup> Communication between Blacks and Hispanics has been poor at times, partly because many newly arrived Hispanics do not speak English. Within the development, Hispanics are often withdrawn from the larger population to a greater extent than blacks -- "let's put it this way, there is not a lot of community leadership coming from the Latinos within the development."<sup>125</sup> Among Hispanic and African American youth, tensions exist, but these tensions appear to arise more from battles over turf than as a result of race and ethnicity.<sup>126</sup> Because sections of the neighborhood are divided along racial and ethnic lines, youth gangs have formed along these lines, which has exacerbated tensions between African Americans and Hispanics. It should be borne in mind, however, that the most intense violence still occurs between black youth from Bromley Heath and Academy Homes.

<sup>123</sup> Jeffrey Sanchez of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services estimated that the Hispanic population in the Hyde Square / Jackson Square area was undercounted from 30 - 50 % in the 1990 Census. (Sanchez, Jeffrey. Personal interview 22 February, 1996.)

<sup>124</sup> Martinez, Claudio. Personal interview. 11 April, 1996.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*

*Age Differences*

The populations both in Bromley Heath and the surrounding neighborhood are extremely young (see Table 4.4). This has been one of the key reasons that the area has a significant number of youth gangs.

**Table 4.4 Age Composition**<sup>127</sup>

	<b>Bromley Heath (1996)</b>	<b>Hyde/Jackson Square Neighborhood (1995)</b>	<b>Boston (1990)</b>
<b>0-4</b>	5%	7.2%	6.3%
<b>6-14</b>	19.4%	8.9%	9.8%
<b>Under 20</b>	40.%	25.6%	23.9%

(Source: BHA MIS data, 1996. Cambridge Systematics. 1990 Census)

**2. History of Development/Neighborhood Relations**

The Bromley Heath community has been both a major player in the larger neighborhood, at the same time as it has remained an insular and separate. The TMC management philosophy over the years has been that Bromley Heath residents will collaborate with outside forces, including those of the surrounding neighborhood, as long as the development's interests are advanced through such efforts.

During the 1960s, the surrounding neighborhood offered little help and support to the Bromley Heath community. This sense of exclusion motivated a core group of Bromley Heath activists to focus inward to build their internal organizing capacity.

According to Mildred Hailey:

in the beginning, Bromley Heath had to do things on its own because nobody from the surrounding neighborhood was going to help. People from the outside looked at Bromley Heath like it was a concrete jungle.<sup>128</sup>

Bromley Heath tenants focused on self-reliance after Martin Luther King's assassination - "when all the looting and riots were going on in cities all over the country, the residents of Bromley Heath mapped out a strategy to keep the community intact."<sup>129</sup> Residents initially organized around public safety issues. Activists from the development began

<sup>127</sup> 1995 estimates were not available for the City of Boston.

<sup>128</sup> Hailey, Mildred. Personal interview. 4 April, 1996.

<sup>129</sup> *ibid.*

voluntary patrols and eventually secured funding to operate an independent police force for Bromley Heath. These public safety efforts produced the seeds for establishing the TMC.

The TMC developed direct links with federal, state and municipal institutions, and this allowed Bromley Heath residents to depend less on the surrounding neighborhood for resources and develop in an insular way. TMC also has brought services to Bromley Heath residents rather than send residents out to the surrounding community for services. Historically, the TMC has been particularly successful at lobbying directly federal agencies for security resources. At one point in the 1970s, the LEA funded 32 Bromley Heath police officers. According to Milton Cole, who started volunteer patrols in the 1960s, “They liked us so much (LEA) that they would give us funding for more and more officers through budget funds that were never used.”<sup>130</sup> The abundance of security resources allowed Bromley Heath to remain to a large degree autonomous in their efforts to fight drugs, and did not force the development to reach out to the surrounding neighborhood.

The organizing capacity of the TMC has made the size and the largely homogenous composition of the development an important source of political leverage for Bromley Heath. Because of the Bromley Heath population’s size, it has not needed to rely on residents of the surrounding neighborhood to influence the political structure at different levels. Also, the combination of size and organization has enabled Bromley Heath to run larger programs and activities

At the same time as it developed as a distinct community, Bromley Heath also emerged as an important player within the neighborhood. Through the history of community organizing and confrontation, the TMC became a force with which the surrounding neighborhood had to reckon. Hailey feels that the most important achievement of Bromley Heath residents throughout the years has been to earn the respect of the neighborhood, the city, and the nation.<sup>131</sup> The TMC has become a major player in all neighborhood decisions: “Bromley Heath has always been involved in the

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<sup>130</sup> Cole, Milton. Personal interview. 24 November, 1996.

<sup>131</sup> Hailey.

neighborhood and demanded to be represented in all decisions in the neighborhood because we are part of it.”<sup>132</sup>

More recently the TMC has begun to look outward toward the surrounding neighborhood for collaborative strategies. Hailey stated, “we began to realize that we were not an island unto ourselves, and we recognized the importance of collaborating with whoever could help us.”<sup>133</sup> Collaborative efforts still remain a means to serve the best interests of the Bromley Heath community, however. To this day, the TMC appears to feel tension between protecting the Bromley Heath community and looking outward to extend collaborative efforts.

The development has moved outward for resources, but it is difficult for organizations from the neighborhood to enter into issues within the development. The TMC deals on its own with what they perceive to be Bromley Heath issues.<sup>134</sup> Part of this insularity stems from the TMC instinct to protect the development from negative media coverage. The TMC has had “long drag out brawls with the Herald, the Globe, and WBZ about how they report on public housing.”<sup>135</sup> Some Bromley Heath tenants feel that the media has focused on the negative aspects -- crime, homicide, and drug dealing -- and ignored positive initiatives in the development.<sup>136</sup> During one period, the TMC severed all communication with the media.

Bromley Heath also has carried with it the stigma that labels most large public housing developments, but to a lesser degree than other housing developments.<sup>137</sup> Some residents of the surrounding neighborhood have marked the area as forbidden territory. One community activist who grew up near the development said that the stigma has subsided somewhat over the last three years, but when she was growing up parents from the neighborhood would say “don’t ever go down around the project.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Cole.

<sup>133</sup> Hailey.

<sup>134</sup> McDonough, John. Personal interview. 16 April, 1996.

<sup>135</sup> Cole.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Chacon, Karen. Personal interview. 11 April, 1996.

The combination of Bromley Heath's inward approach to dealing with problems and the stigma that the outside has associated with the development has created substantial barriers between the development and surrounding neighborhood. These differences notwithstanding, the development and the neighborhood have historically collaborated at critical moments to protect the well-being of the larger neighborhood. Bromley Heath residents have united forces with residents of the surrounding neighborhood to block the siting of I-95 through the neighborhood. The same players also lobbied to site the Jackson Square T-stop in the neighborhood and insure that it was depressed. Finally, the TMC has collaborated with neighborhood organizations on grant proposals.

### *3. Dynamic of Drug Market*

#### *Gangs*

The drug market in the larger neighborhood around Bromley Heath is a story of gangs. The level and complexity of gang activity in and around the development mean that neither Bromley Heath nor the neighborhood itself controls its destiny. The surrounding neighborhood is composed of smaller subneighborhoods that have significant gang and drug dealing activity and also feel impotent when they act alone to address problems of crime and drug dealing.

The most intense and intractable gang warfare occurs between youth of Bromley Heath and Academy Homes. This rivalry has been passed down from the adult men of the previous generation. Tensions subside for a while and grisly incidents reopen old wounds. One youth who lives with relatives in Bromley Heath, for instance, feels he cannot visit his mother who lives across the street in Academy Homes.<sup>139</sup>

Some youth from Bromley Heath are involved in two other gang rivalries. About three years ago an intense gang rivalry flared up between black youth from Bromley Heath and Hispanic youth from Mozart Park, which abuts the development. Tensions between these two groups have subsided, however, during the last three years. Second,

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<sup>139</sup> Thompson, Mary. Personal interview. 2 April, 1996.

rivalry between some youth from Bromley Heath and Mission Main has produced the most recent rash of violence around Gay Head and Walden Streets. (Gazette)

***Type of Crime that Gangs Generate***

The dense and complicated relations among the different gangs in the area generate considerable random violence in and around the development. Because boundaries between rival gangs shift frequently, shootings occur all over the development and surrounding neighborhood without much predictability. Innocent bystanders are frequently unintended victims of violence. One police officer referred to the intersection of Walden and Minden Street at the corner of the development as a “shooting gallery.”<sup>140</sup>

The random violence that gang warfare generates has a profound potential to ignite community organizing efforts in a way that planned and controlled violence does not. Because random violence touches the lives of everyday people more frequently, these types of crimes generate community outrage. Because of the intensity of gang activity in and around Bromley Heath, residents and organizations in the neighborhood eventually organize to confront drugs and violence. Unfortunately, these initiatives are usually short-lived.

***Degree of Resident Fear***

Residents in the development and surrounding neighborhood are scared of retaliation from drug dealers if they cooperate with police. Resident fear, however, is not paralyzing for two reasons. First, community outrage at random violence often can overcome individual fears. Second, enough residents are involved in Bromley Heath and the surrounding neighborhood that attention can sometimes be deflected from individuals who testify. Getting Bromley Heath residents to testify, however, has remained extremely difficult. Sergeant Lawson of the Bromley Heath Police could recall only two instances in the last six years when residents from the development testified in court.<sup>141</sup>

***Recognition of Crime and Drug Dealing***

Residents and organizations from the surrounding neighborhood openly recognize the gang and drug dealing problems within Bromley Heath and the neighborhood. The

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<sup>140</sup> Anonymous. Personal interview.

<sup>141</sup> Lawson, James. Personal interview. 4 April, 1996.

TMC, however, often has hesitated to recognize officially these types of problems to avoid media attention and has tried to deal with violent incidents informally on its own. These different approaches produce conflict between the TMC and neighborhood organizations.

## **INSTITUTIONS AND RESPONSES**

Strong institutional capacity to address drug-related problems exist both within and outside of the development. Coordinating organizational energy from within and outside of the development, however, has proven extremely difficult. The TMC occasionally reaches out to the neighborhood, but it is difficult for the neighborhood to penetrate the development.

### ***1. Involvement and Institutional Capacity of Land Users in Neighborhood***

The neighborhood surrounding Bromley Heath contains a number of competent organizations with energetic youth leadership. Although the density of these organizations insures conflict and overlap, there appears to be an underlying sense of collaboration. Moreover, all groups in the larger neighborhood have some degree of input in shaping the vision for the neighborhood.

#### ***Real Estate Development in the Immediate Neighborhood***

Recent real estate development in the area has created a market incentive for the developers to address issues of drugs in and around Bromley Heath. Boston Community Ventures' development of JP Plaza has reduced the number of vacant lots around Bromley Heath that fostered drug activity. Second, the presence of businesses has increased pedestrian traffic, which some say has increased the perception of safety. Third, the development process has initiated dialogue and participation among all neighborhood groups to decide what use to dedicate vacant lots.

Plans for the development of the supermarket/health center have attracted the attention and resources of the city and increased the neighborhood's leverage over politicians. The city has begun to make overtures to improve safety in the neighborhood. Also, commercial and residential real estate developers have forced the institutions of the

neighborhood to address drug problems in concert with Bromley Heath, whereas previously Bromley Heath dealt with their own problems.

*NDC*

The physical proximity of the cooperative housing units to the development has forced the NDC to move the TMC to address drug-related issues cooperatively. Crime and the perception of crime along Walden and Minden Streets translates directly into loss of revenues for NDC and ultimately threatens their existence. For instance, NDC was unable to find a tenants for a home on Walden Street for 10 months because of the area's dangerous reputation. The impact that drug problems have on NDC ventures creates a strong incentive for NDC to continue struggling to generate initiatives with Bromley Heath and other neighborhood organizations to address crime.

NDC also has helped address drug dealing through the neighborhood buildings they choose for renovation. NDC tries to target drug dens in the neighborhood for renovation. Moreover, NDC has been able to leverage City resources from Youth Build in order to employ youth from the development and neighborhood to assist in the renovation efforts.

Finally, residents who have contributed to NDC development of cooperative housing units have developed an emotional attachment to preserving the well-being of the neighborhood. At a candle-light vigil to address a drive-by shooting, a core group of long-time neighborhood residents expressed how hard and long they had worked to convert the vacant lots surrounding the development into decent housing and what this meant to them. Tears welled up in the eyes of a former NDC worker who lives in the neighborhood as she addressed the group in Spanish:

Each one of these houses is like one of my children. So, when I heard today that stray bullets penetrated this family's home I felt profound anguish. I want to send a message to everyone here and everyone in the neighborhood -- I beg you -- please do not move out. Stay and fight to save the neighborhood. Don't let a few people destroy the work that so many of us have fought so hard to create.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Gutierrez, Besaida. "Bromley Heath Candle Light Vigil. 22 March, 1996.



### *The Hyde Square Task Force*

The Hyde Square Task Force is a relatively new organization with young and energetic leadership. Historically, the Hyde Square area has not been well organized or connected with the political structure in Boston. The task force developed from a crime watch that began around Mozart Street about eight years ago. Eventually, the task force cohered around a feud that had developed between youth from the Mozart gang and the Bromley Heath gang. Hispanic gang, the Mozart Boys and the Bromley Heat. Members of the Hyde Square Task Force and the TMC convened meetings with youth from the development and the neighborhood at the nearby elementary school. The task force also organized an education collaborative between Bromley Heath and Hyde Square neighborhood youth, which has helped break down barriers between the two groups.

Most energy for these initiatives has come from the Hyde Square Task Force. Over the years, the Hyde Square Task Force concentrated heavily on developing leadership skills among the very young youth 6-12, which has created a strong youth leadership in the Hyde Square neighborhood.<sup>143</sup> Gang tensions between these two areas have diminished also as a result.

The Hyde Square Task Force played a central role in initiating efforts to clean up the Mozart Park playground and reduce drug dealing in the area. Youth from the “Bromley Heat” and the Mozart gang used this playground for dealing, and because the park runs along Centre Street, people walking to the Jackson Square T-stop felt unsafe. According to Chris Hayes, Director of the BPD Crime Watch, “the good people from Bromley Heath and the Hyde Square neighborhood were able to reduce the dealing in the area and clean up the park. The younger Hispanics, blacks, and the older whites in the neighborhood -- groups that have traditionally remained separate -- all came together in this effort.”<sup>144</sup> Clergy from the neighborhood, Mayor Menino, and Representatives McDonough and Fitzgerald also were involved in these efforts.

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<sup>143</sup> Martinez.

<sup>144</sup> Hayes, Chris. Personal interview. 3 April, 1996.

Finally, The Hyde Square Task Force also has become more representative of the neighborhood population and their needs, and they have paved stronger political inroads with City Hall and state representatives. Mayor Menino has appointed a number of Latino representatives from the neighborhood to his administration.

*The Merchants' Association*

Historically, the Merchants' Association neither has been involved nor representative of neighborhood businesses and residents. Part of this arose because white business owners from other parts of Jamaica Plain dominated the board of the association.<sup>145</sup> Recently, more Latinos have been elected to the board, and consequently the interests of Latino businesses have been represented more effectively. One of the issues the new board has lobbied around has been securing more police foot patrol in the area.

The Merchants' Association still faces daunting challenges, however. The new supermarket poses strong challenges to bodegas in the area. Ownership of these stores changes hands every year, in many cases, and bodega owners in the area are disorganized and feud with one another. The energy to organize the bodega owners, however, has come from the City rather than from the residents themselves.<sup>146</sup>

*TMC and/ Neighborhood Organizations*

Most recently, a number of trends have forced the TMC and neighborhood organizations to address issues together. There still, however, is a strong sense that neighborhood organizations are not able to penetrate the Bromley Heath community. As a result, there have been clashes between the TMC and the neighborhood organizations on a number of issues. Ultimately, new business ventures in the area have forced the TMC and neighborhood organizations to collaborate and have attracted enough city attention to insure that this occurs.

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<sup>145</sup> Griffin, Sarah. Personal interview. 22 March, 1996.

<sup>146</sup> Sanchez.

## *2. Involvement and Organizational Capacity of Tenants*

Bromley Heath is unique among the three case studies in that there is a well organized tenant group capable of bringing resources to bear on drug-related problems. The internal organizational structure at Bromley Heath, the TMC, has direct political ties with municipal, state, and federal agencies, which has allowed Bromley Heath to deal with drug-problems. According to State Representative McDonough, whose district formerly included Bromley Heath, “the TMC knows how to get what it wants.”<sup>147</sup>

### *Effect of Tenant Management on Relations with Neighborhood Institutions*

The unique tenant management structure of Bromley Heath has helped integrate the development with organizations of the surrounding neighborhood in some ways and isolated it from the neighborhood in other ways. The capacity that the TMC has demonstrated over the years to organize and access funds from a variety of sources has created an incentive for neighborhood organizations to collaborate with the TMC. Long-time TMC board member Milton Cole said “the neighborhood wants to include the development in issues because the neighborhood knows that the people in Bromley Heath are political movers.”<sup>148</sup> The TMC is represented on the board of the Hyde Square Task and is included as a limited partner in the development of the new supermarket/health center.

The TMC also has cooperated with neighborhood institutions in funding collaboration efforts. The TMC understands the critical importance that collaboration plays in securing funding from different foundations and government agencies. In 1995, residents of Bromley Heath, Academy Homes I and II, the Hyde Square Area, and the Egleston Square Area submitted jointly a proposal to the Boston Title V Delinquency Prevention Program -- the “New Generations Collaborative,” to address issues of youth violence and bridge differences among gangs in the area. This collaborative has secured \$236,000 to provide programming and services to address the gang problems mentioned earlier.

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<sup>147</sup> McDonough.

<sup>148</sup> Cole.

The TMC's ability to access directly funds for programmatic activity has produced tensions with surrounding neighbors as well. Part of the intense, generation-long rivalry between youths from Bromley Heath and Academy Homes has arisen because Academy Homes youth have felt that they have no resources and programmatic activity and Bromley Heath gets everything.<sup>149</sup> TMC involvement as a limited partner in the development of the supermarket/health center also has generated envy and conflict in the neighborhood. Latino organizations in the neighborhood and in City Hall have expressed concern that the supermarket threatens the existence of the large number of bodegas in the neighborhood. At a more basic level, these organizations have underlined the concern that Bromley Heath has been given an undue share of resources, whereas the Latino community in the neighborhood has not.<sup>150</sup>

#### *TMC / Tenant Relations*

Tenant management makes resident involvement in drug-fighting issues a particularly complicated path to navigate. Institutionally, resident management inevitably has created tensions, suspicion, and accusations of favoritism among some residents. Many residents therefore, appear to leave management to deal with public safety issues. Moreover, in certain instances, Bromley police and the TMC differ appear to differ over standards about who should and should not be arrested. Resident perceptions of favoritism and nepotism in the TMC appears to create barriers to active participation of some of the new Bromley Heath residents.

#### *TMC/Neighborhood Tensions*

Neighborhood organizations have experienced tensions with TMC in how to address drug-related issues. A recent incident demonstrates how some of these tensions play out among the TMC, Bromley Heath residents, and neighborhood organizations. On March 20, 1996, stray gunfire from a drive-by shooting on Walden Street penetrated the windows of a NDC cooperative housing unit abutting the development, barely missed a young child inside the house. Neighborhood organizations arranged a candle-light vigil to call community attention to the event, pressure public officials for a greater BPD

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<sup>149</sup> Thompson.

<sup>150</sup> Sanchez.

presence in the area, and offer support for the victims. Representatives from all neighborhood organizations attended the vigil as did a number of Bromley Heath residents, State Representatives McDonough and Fitzgerald, and newspaper reporters. The vigil helped pressure the BPD into assigning two full-time officers to Walden Street.

Despite these positive results, the vigil strained relations between the TMC and some of the neighborhood organizations. The TMC was concerned about the effect the vigil would have in the media. The TMC would have preferred to deal with this issue on its own. These differences and tensions are knit into the fabric of relations between the development and neighborhood; however, residents from both the development and neighborhood attended the vigil and appear capable working through such differences.

A few trends have focused some of the TMC's organizing energy outward. The recent influx of Hispanics into the development has increased the need for the Bromley Heath TMC to network with the neighborhood organizations that represent a largely Hispanic constituency.

One major gap in the organizing capacity of the development is the absence of a young group of leaders. This issue will become more critical as the older leadership must give way to younger leadership.

### ***3. Effectiveness of Area Police Forces***

The number of different police forces working the area around Bromley Heath have divided areas, created artificial physical boundaries, and ultimately fragmented efforts to address crime. Bromley Heath lies within a dense and complex network of police forces. There are at least seven different police forces that operate in Bromley Heath and the surrounding neighborhood. The TMC hires its own police force to patrol the development, and the BPD Area E-5 police operate in the development and the surrounding areas of Jamaica Plain. After the Bromley Heath officers get off duty at 3:00 a.m. every morning, a Boston Housing Authority Police (BHA) officer periodically covers the development until 8:00 a.m.. The Jackson Square T-Stop is located between Bromley Heath and Academy Homes, and therefore, the MBTA Police are in the middle of the gang rivalries between the two developments and other areas of Boston. The

Guardian Angels also patrol subway cars because different gangs operate near T-stops along the Orange Line. Academy Homes hires their own private security company, and the BPD Area B-2 police cover these two developments because they are in Roxbury. This means that different BPD officers patrol Bromley Heath and Academy Homes. Finally, the State Police patrol Parkland Avenue, which runs between Bromley Heath and Academy Homes. All of these police forces operating in this small area carve up turf and serve as a formidable obstacle to coordinating cooperative drug-fighting efforts between the development and neighborhood.

*Effect of the Bromley Heath Police*

The Bromley Heath Police influence the way that crime affects neighborhood/development relations in positive and negative manners. Bromley Heath has five officers assigned to the development per shift -- the largest number of officers assigned to any BHA development at one time. Although dealing certainly occurs in the development, such strong police presence there displaces drug activity to the borders of the development and into the surrounding neighborhood. This displacement has been a critical stimulus for the NDC and other neighborhood organizations to initiate community drug-fighting efforts.

Since Bromley Heath Police possess arrest powers only on the premises of the development, they can do little to address criminal activity that moves outside of the development and into the immediate neighborhood. As one Bromley Heath Officer said, "my job is to get those guys out of Horn Way even though I know I'm just going to move them out into Walden Street and Gay Head Street."<sup>151</sup> Bromley Heath Police have tried to pressure the Area E-5 BPD to pick up drug activity once it is pushed from the development into the neighborhood, but these efforts have met with only marginal success.

Residents in NDC cooperatives directly abutting the development bear the brunt of displaced drug dealing and crime. Youth from the development hang out on the front steps of these co-ops across from the development along Walden Street, which generates

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<sup>151</sup> Lawson.

sharp tensions in the neighborhood.<sup>152</sup> The NDC, the TMC, and other groups that compose the Hyde Square Task Force have met continually to diffuse these tensions and address these issues. What once was a Bromley Heath issue has become very much an NDC and Hyde Square neighborhood issue. The TMC and the Hyde Square Task Force have tried to keep records and information on Bromley Heath youth who go into the surrounding neighborhood to conduct illicit behavior. Because the NDC is a competent organization and because resolution of this issue will determine the survival of these 41 properties, NDC is likely to continue forcing the development and neighborhood to resolve drug issues in the area.

Bromley Heath Police have also worked well with Bromley Heath youth. Many Bromley Heath youth have tipped off the police and adults when gang activity is going to occur, and Bromley Heath Police have then secured the perimeter of the development in order to keep out youth from Academy Homes. Although this temporarily diffuses violent crime, Academy Homes youth perceive the Bromley Heath Police as protecting youth from the development.<sup>153</sup> In this sense, the Bromley Heath Police furthers the image of the development as an insular place that deals with its own business.

#### ***4. Conclusion***

Recent trends in the neighborhood have begun to spawn joint initiatives in the development and neighborhood to address the wide-spread drug activity in the larger area. The commercial and residential real estate in the immediate neighborhood of Bromley Heath has given these developers and the City a strong incentives to see that the neighborhood is safe enough for these ventures to succeed. Moreover, both within and without the development a network of competent institutions exist. The key for the neighborhood be how to combine resources in a coordinated way to address drug issues in the area.

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<sup>152</sup> Griffin.

<sup>153</sup> Cole.

## CHAPTER 5: COMPARISON AND ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

### INTRODUCTION

Four elements in each of the three cases emerged as critical to understand how drugs impact these larger communities and how capable they are to combat drugs and related problems. These four elements are:

- (1) the dynamics of the drug market;
- (2) the involvement and institutional capacity of land users in the surrounding neighborhood;
- (3) the involvement and organizational capacity of public housing tenants; and
- (4) the effectiveness of the police forces in the area.

These four elements provide a framework to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each development and surrounding neighborhood with regard to crime, as well as a means of examining the dynamic among these four variables in each neighborhood. To examine this dynamic, I first establish a continuum for each of the four variables in each development. I then discuss how these variables relate to one another in each of the three cases, and what these relationships say about what would have to be done to decrease drug-related problems in each neighborhood.

#### *1. The Dynamics of Drug Markets*

The three cases illustrate a continuum of three kinds of drug markets and the type of crime each produces. A monopolistic drug market in Charlestown bounds one end of the continuum and a free market structure in the neighborhood containing Bromley Heath anchors the other extreme. The drug market in and around South Street has fluctuated between these two extremes, but has tended more toward monopoly (see Table 5.1). The following section describes the content of these categories.

**Table 5.1 Type of Drug Market**

Monopoly						Free Market
<---x-----			x-----			x----->
Charlestown			South Street			Bromley Heath



### *South Street*

Residents of the South Street development and surrounding neighborhood primarily have dealt with small monopolistic drug organizations that periodically surface in the development. Drug markets around South Street, regardless of kind, are much smaller than those that envelop Charlestown and Bromley Heath. Since the power structure that has operated these smaller monopolies has been considerably weaker than the Charlestown monopoly, residents of the South Street neighborhood have been able to enforce a set of norms that render all types of crime, even crimes of disorder, unacceptable. South Street neighborhood residents have felt more empowered than neighborhood residents in Charlestown partly because smaller, sporadic monopolies are less difficult and dangerous to break up than deeply entrenched ones.

### *Charlestown*

In Charlestown, a small group of Townies has tightly controlled a hierarchical drug dealing system in the development and larger neighborhood. Drug dealing is rampant all over the development, however, the multiple dealers are located within a hierarchically controlled organizational structure. Because the group at the top regulates who does and does not deal drugs in and around the development, there is little turf rivalry and consequently strictly controlled violence between drug dealers.

Residents of the surrounding neighborhood are safe from violence as long as they mind their own business and remain silent about who is involved in crime and drug dealing should they have facts. Moreover, the organizational structure is so controlled in Charlestown that neighborhood residents who speak out against crime and dealing face great risk of retribution. Residents both within and outside the development, therefore, tolerate a good deal of property crime -- house breaks, car breaks, etc. -- as a reasonable alternative to taking on the organized crime structure. In summary, a monopolistic drug dealing structure produces little random violence and a culture of silence and withdrawal.

### *Bromley Heath*

At the other end of the continuum, a free market drug dealing structure generating random violence exists in and around Bromley Heath. A dense and complicated network

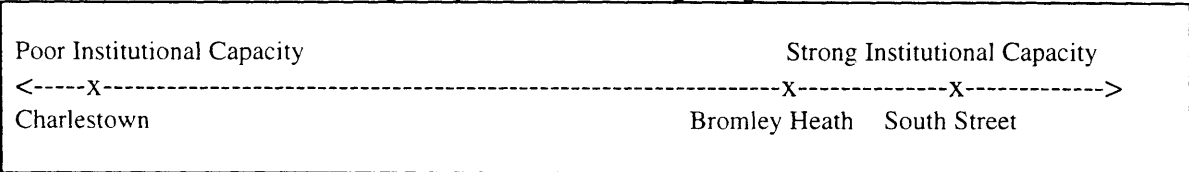
of gangs operates in the larger neighborhood, and since boundaries between rival gangs shift frequently, shootings occur all over the development and surrounding neighborhood without much predictability. Stray bullets frequently touch innocent bystanders, and such random violence often generates community outrage and organizing -- the opposite effect that violence produces in Charlestown. Unfortunately, community organizing efforts around random violence are usually short-lived.

The relationships among gangs, drug dealing, and violence in and around Bromley Heath are difficult to sort out. Although gangs do appear to revolve around the economic profits of drug dealing, the violence that gang activity produces is not all a product of market competition for drug turf. A good deal of violence also arises from social and personal vendettas between gangs. For example, youth from Bromley Heath and Academy Homes have killed over romantic escapades and for the sake of tradition. Efforts to break up gang rivalries, then, also must deal with the social aspects of these organizations. In either case, drugs and social rivalry are mutually reinforcing.

**2. Institutional Capacity of Space in Surrounding Neighborhood**

The involvement and institutional capacity of users who operate land surrounding public housing and their links to neighborhood, city, and state organizations have a profound impact on crime in and around the development. These three cases sketch out a continuum around the institutional capacity of land users surrounding these developments. At the negative end of the spectrum, individuals and institutions operating land around the Charlestown development have proven incapable of resolving drug dealing problems in and around the development. At the positive end of the spectrum, individuals and institutions in neighborhoods surrounding Bromley Heath and South Street have been more successful in addressing drug issues.

**Table 5.2 Institutional Capacity of Surrounding Neighborhood**



*Institutional Capacity in Surrounding Neighborhood*<sup>154</sup>

The institutional capacity in the neighborhood surrounding the Charlestown is anemic and the community fabric is badly frayed. The development is girdled immediately by deeply troubled institutions and more broadly by individuals and organizations that are not linked to the political system in ways that bring resources to bear on problems of the development.<sup>155</sup>

The siting of Charlestown High School next to the Bunker Hill Development creates difficulties from many standpoints. First, the dense concentration of adolescents who study in one of Boston's most troubled public schools next to a vast maze of unsupervised buildings has made the development a refuge for illicit behavior. The two institutions that operate the high school and the development, Boston Public Schools and the Boston Housing Authority (BHA), are large, city bureaucracies that have proven incapable of addressing local problems. Moreover, Charles Newtown, which abuts the development on Medford Street, is viewed by the rest of Charlestown as an extension of the project, which only deepens the concentration of drugs and crime in the area.

In contrast to Newtown, the infill of cooperative housing that the NDC has built immediately abutting Bromley Heath shows the positive influence on crime of a surrounding institutional use along the borders of a development. Because NDC cooperative housing is so physically close to the development, crime that spills from the development strongly impacts residents of these cooperatives and has forced the NDC to address these issues with the TMC and other neighborhood institutions. NDC and Boston Community Ventures, the principal developer of the supermarket, are concerned about crime in and around Bromley Heath, because the success of their venture is inextricably tied to the level of crime in the area. When the lots containing NDC housing were vacant, and the NDC did not operate in the immediate neighborhood, there was less impetus for neighborhood institutions to confront crime along the borders of the development.

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<sup>154</sup> I have not divided by development the following discussion of the surrounding neighborhood institutional capacity because it would break up the flow of comparison.

<sup>155</sup> St. Catherine's Church, located next to development along Tufts Street, is an exception to this claim. The church provides a number of valuable social services to development tenants.

A small, competent organization, NDC has been far more capable of addressing the concerns of its tenants and moving other institutions to confront crime than Boston Public Schools or the BHA have been in and around the Charlestown development. In addition, the NDC and the Bromley Heath TMC both have long-term mutual interests in other projects, such as the development of the supermarket, and therefore, these groups have greater incentive to cooperate. Administrators of Charlestown High School and BHA managers, on the other hand, come and go and have no long-term commitment to each other. Within the BHA and Charlestown High School there are individuals who have worked together to address high school student drug use in BHA hallways; however, difficulty establishing horizontal lines of responsibility across these two vertical organizations has neutralized individual efforts extremely.

Residential real estate development in areas surrounding the Charlestown development has not produced the same institutional impetus to address crime that it has in and around Bromley Heath. Real estate agencies that operate in upper-income residential areas near the Charlestown development have fundamentally different goals and approaches than the NDC. Because Charlestown real estate agencies want to attract the highest-income buyers and renters, they have denied that drugs and crime are a problem in Charlestown. They fear that such recognition would scare off potential customers. NDC, on the other hand, is a not-for-profit agency that also has assumed the mandate of confronting problems affecting the community.

The institutional capacity of the neighborhood surrounding South Street must not be viewed strictly as the institutions physically located in the neighborhood, but as the capacity of individual neighborhood residents to move outside organizations to act on drugs in the development. Since the neighborhood surrounding South Street is mostly residential, individuals rather than institutions in the immediate neighborhood provide the link to other municipal and state institutions.

Residents of the South Street neighborhood have been involved in crime issues in the development for three reasons. (1) Homeowners have a strong financial incentive to resolve crime to protect their property values. Flight of homeowners from the area during

the last 10 years has destabilized the neighborhood, and the future of the remaining homeowners will determine whether the neighborhood declines. Should the neighborhood fall apart, homeowners stand to lose a lot of money. Conversely, the strong demand for property in Charlestown because of its proximity to downtown Boston insulates property values from negative effects of crime. (2) The physical proximity of the South Street development to neighborhood residents means that they personally feel the impact of crime that spills out of the development and forces them to address the issue. (3) Drugs provide an outlet for the long activist tradition in Jamaica Plain of which many neighborhood residents are a part.

Residents of the South Street neighborhood have been the most effective of the three neighborhoods in organizing and working the political system to bring resources to bear on drugs in the development. First, individuals with the most political clout -- activist homeowners -- have advocated on behalf of South Street tenants. Second, this core group of activists and city and state political aides who live in the neighborhood have been masters at linking organizations horizontally at the neighborhood level and vertically through the city and state political levels. The third reason neighborhood organizations have successfully addressed drug-related problems is that they have mustered enough clout to tackle the most difficult issues, such as breaking up drug rings and evicting drug dealers from the development. Admittedly, the most difficult drug problems in South Street pale in comparison to those of Charlestown and Bromley Heath.

Conversely, residents with political clout in the neighborhood surrounding the Charlestown development have isolated themselves from neighborhood organizations and issues concerning the development. First, part of this isolation arises from the physical separation of the development from upper-income residential areas. The second part of the isolation arises from sharp racial and class differences between upper-income areas and the project. Such differences are nowhere near as pronounced in the neighborhoods that contain South Street and Bromley Heath. Class tensions with working-class Townies who dominate neighborhood organizations also have contributed to upper-income newcomers' detachment from such organizations. Third, Charlestown serves as a

bedroom community for upper-income residents who work in downtown Boston, which means that these residents have little interest participating in civic life, particularly a civic life in the development that does not touch them directly. Fourth, since many upper-income new arrivals have no children or their children study outside of the neighborhood, they have little incentive to insure a minimum quality of life standard in the rest of Charlestown. Fifth, there appears to be a culture in Charlestown that discourages newcomers from “making waves.”<sup>156</sup>

Upper-income resident withdrawal has devastated the capacity of neighborhood institutions to confront crime in and around the development. Since these residents have not lent their political leverage to neighborhood organizations, these organizations have remained the domain of the Townies with little political clout over the city. Townie threats to abandon the neighborhood do not hit the city with the same force as those of South Street neighbors, because higher-income residents most likely would replace Townies and lower-income residents would replace South Street homeowners. From the city’s perspective, its badly depleted tax base would grow should Townies continue their exodus, whereas continued homeowner flight from the South Street neighborhood would send that neighborhood into a spiral of further decline and depletion of the city tax base.

Townies do not effectively utilize the political clout they do have. A culture of rivalry and competition has produced a proliferation of neighborhood organizations whose purposes overlap and whose already limited political power is dispersed. This dispersal of power makes it difficult for neighborhood organizations to amass the kind of support necessary to move city bureaucracies. Furthermore, the Code of Silence has induced neighborhood organizations to avoid the most difficult drug-dealing issues and focus on preventative approaches to the drug problem. Neighborhood organizations in Charlestown, then, have been impotent against drug dealing in and around the development.

Residents of the neighborhood surrounding Bromley Heath have little involvement in drug issues of the development, but for different reasons than

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<sup>156</sup> Brattley, Carrol. Telephone interview. Feb. 15, 1996.

neighborhood newcomers to Charlestown. The TMC in Bromley Heath has not welcomed neighborhood institutions to help address drugs in the development. TMC historically has opted to “deal with their own problems.”<sup>157</sup> Consequently, residents from the surrounding neighborhood have had difficulty paving inroads with the TMC to jointly address crime problems.

Over the last eight years in the Hyde Square/Jackson Square neighborhood, residents have developed their organizational capacity; however, participation remains erratic. The leadership of the Hyde Square Task Force and the Merchants’ Association has become more representative of neighborhood needs and has improved vertical connections with City Hall. These positive strides, in addition to increased political leverage over the city from recent commercial and residential development in the area, have bolstered the neighborhood’s claim on city resources, particularly police resources.

Neighborhood residents and organizations have had difficulty creating bridges with the TMC to best leverage neighborhood and development resources against crime. The obstacle to cooperative development/neighborhood efforts, however, has stemmed mostly from within the development, whereas in Charlestown most of these obstacles have arisen from dynamics in the surrounding neighborhood. Ultimately, however, neighborhood groups and the TMC usually put aside differences when opportunities for joint gains arise, such as collaboration on youth grants, the development of the supermarket, and chances to increased police resources in the area.

### ***3. Involvement and Organization of Public Housing Tenants***

A common theme that surfaced in all three cases was the difficulty of engaging public housing tenants in drug-fighting initiatives. An engaged tenant organization is essential to successful community drug-fighting efforts in and around public housing, because tenants have the kind of front-line information that police need to take effective action. All three tenant populations face the following challenges to active involvement with drug issues:

- (1) fear of reprisal from drug dealers,

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<sup>157</sup> Tanner, Joyce. Personal interview. March 9, 1996.

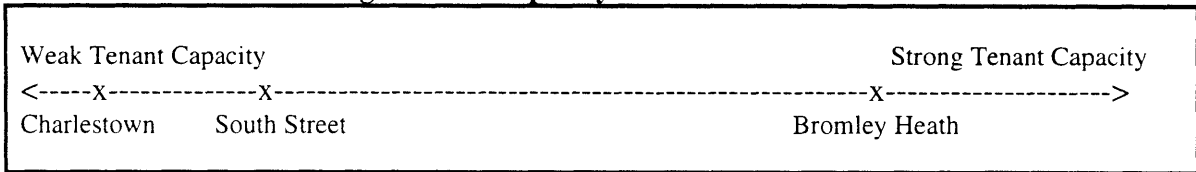
- (2) conflict of interest from family involvement in the drug trade,
- (3) general tenant apathy, and
- (4) division among residents

The extent to which these barriers exist differs in each of the three developments, as does tenant capacity to overcome such obstacles. Some factors that determine whether residents can overcome such obstacles are:

- (1) tenant relations with management
- (2) the size of the development,
- (3) tenant relations with police.

None of the three public housing populations represents a best case scenario in which tenants refuse to tolerate drug activity and communicate directly with police and management about illicit behavior. Given a sub-optimal continuum, Charlestown provides a convincing case for a worst case scenario of tenant involvement.

**Table 5.3 Public Housing Tenant Capacity**



***South Street***

An involved tenant population in the South Street development has been the missing ingredient in an otherwise potent drug-fighting effort. Usually at least one tenant from within the development has participated in organizing efforts, but generally South Street tenants also have been apathetic and reluctant to face crime. Fear of reprisal from drug dealers, family involvement in the drug trade, general tenant apathy, and division among residents, all present difficult challenges to tenant involvement, however, to no where near the extent as in Charlestown.

Good tenant/management relations as well as the small size of the development mitigate to some degree the negative effect of limited tenant involvement and organizational capacity. Moreover, tenants do have some lines of communication with police. Although residents ultimately will not testify against drug dealers from the development, they have provided police with consistent information about principal



offenders. In short, what has kept the development afloat has been the ability of one or two development residents to work effectively with activists from the surrounding neighborhood.

### ***Charlestown***

Bunker Hill tenants face the same barriers to involvement as South Street tenants, only to a much larger degree. Bunker Hill tenants have disconnected themselves entirely from efforts to address drug dealing and crime. Punishment for informing in Charlestown is so swift and definitive that few residents risk communicating with police officers. Also, there are rumors that some tenant task force members have relatives who have been involved at one time in the drug trade. Furthermore, the drug market is so all-encompassing of the development that a number of tenants are involved in drug use or distribution. Moreover, the long history of racial tensions within the development has further divided the development.

Unlike South Street, however, tenant/management relations and the size of the Bunker Hill population exacerbate rather than mitigate severely limited tenant willingness to address drugs. Bunker Hill tenants and management have a history of tension and distrust, and consequently have been unable to formulate and advance a vision about how to take on the rampant drug dealing problem. Since tenants have failed to organize and utilize the potential political clout of their large numbers, size only means that the scale of drug dealing problems is larger and neighborhood organizations feel further paralyzed to address these problems. Size, then, only helps isolate development tenants from neighborhood institutions and residents. A history of poor to non-existent tenant/police communication further incapacitates the community to address the drug problem. Strong barriers to tenant involvement and limited organizational capacity, mean that Bunker Hill tenants are impotent to address drug issues.

### ***Bromley Heath***

Tenants of Bromley Heath face the four barriers to tenant involvement to a greater extent than South Street residents and to a lesser degree than Charlestown tenants.

Although Bromley Heath tenants fear reprisal from drug dealers, the revenge often is not as definitive as it is in Charlestown, because the drug organizations are less organized

around Bromley Heath. Family involvement in the drug trade, general tenant apathy, and division among residents all present substantial barriers, however.

Tenant management makes Bromley Heath the only development of the three with a strong tenant organization. This has been a mixed blessing. On the positive side, the TMC has provided for residents' needs on their own by accessing resources directly from federal agencies. Also, TMC has been a force with which neighborhood institutions around Bromley Heath have had to reckon and has had an unprecedented say in neighborhood decisions for a public housing development.

Second, strong tenant organization also has made the size of the tenant population an advantage. Because the TMC is organized and aggressively pursues grants, the tenant population size often increases the amount of grant funds. Although the size of the development certainly isolates the development from the neighborhood, it also has given the TMC leverage at the bargaining table with all levels of outside agencies.

Tenant management also creates disadvantages to crime-fighting efforts. The TMC's greatest strength -- its organizational capacity -- has fostered a critical weakness -- its inward approach to problems. The TMC's motivation to organize is based on a tradition of self-reliance and determination to get what it needs on its own. This tradition of self-reliance has produced a self-imposed isolation from neighborhood organizations. Consequently, the TMC prefers to deal with drug and crime issues internally, which separates Bromley Heath residents from the neighborhood and makes cooperative development/neighborhood drug-fighting strategies difficult to initiate. Although the TMC has made some strides in networking with neighborhood organizations, it has not taken full advantage of resources in the area.

#### ***4. Effectiveness of Police Forces***

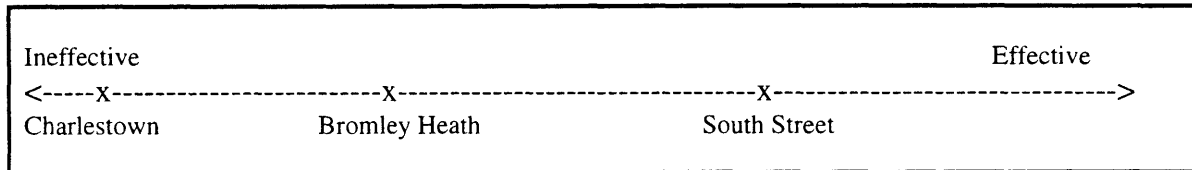
Three factors determine how police deal with crime and drug dealing around public housing developments:

- (1) The most important factor is the extent to which police positively interact with residents.

- (2) The complexity of police institutional networks and the degree of communication among different departments determine how effectively different police forces can coordinate efforts to address crime in the area.
- (3) A second factor is the intensity of police coverage in the development and neighborhood.

Along a continuum around these three factors South Street is near the positive end and Bromley Heath and Charlestown fall nearer to the negative extreme.

**Table 5.4 Effectiveness of Police Forces in the Area**



***South Street***

In terms of the neighborhood as a whole, South Street residents from the neighborhood and development have the most effective relationship with police officers. Basically only two police forces operate in and around the development -- the BPD and the BHA police. This relatively simple policing environment helps insure that the same officers patrol the area which is critical to fostering positive resident/police relations. By and large, residents provide the same officers with consistent information, and the police respond to resident concerns, although this is more a characterization of the neighborhood resident/police relationship. The real challenge the South Street neighborhood faces is scarcity of police resources.

***Charlestown***

The Charlestown development and surrounding neighborhood suffer problems in all three areas of policing. First, resident/police communication represents a worse case scenario both within and outside the development, largely because of the Code of Silence. Second, the complex institutional policing environment in and around the development further exacerbates poor resident/police communication. At least six different police forces operate in and around the Charlestown development -- the FBI, the State Police, the BPD, the BMP, the BHA Police, and Charles Newtown security. Rivalries persist among these different police forces and communication and coordination is poor to non-

existent. Moreover, the uncoordinated police forces operating in and around the development have helped generate an overall suspicion of police and made it difficult for any of the police forces, particularly the BHA police, to make inroads with Charlestown residents. Finally, although a plethora of police forces operate in the area, the development does not receive sufficient or consistent police coverage. During the afternoon shift, the BHA assigns one lone officer to cover the development and no one is on duty on the 12 p.m. to 8 a.m. shift. Consequently, when dusk falls, the development becomes a playground for drug dealers.

### ***Bromley Heath***

The policing environment in and around Bromley Heath has a number of advantages and disadvantages. First, individual police forces have established channels of communication with their respective resident populations, in most instances. Little effective communication exists across the vertical lines that connect residents to their particular police forces, however. For instance, the BPD is not involved in Bromley Heath issues, and the Bromley Heath police do not have the legal powers to address drug-related issues in the surrounding neighborhood. Second, the main obstacle to effective policing in and around Bromley Heath is coordinating the numerous police forces that patrol the neighborhood. At least eight different police forces operate in and around the development which necessitates enormous feats of coordination to address specific problems. Communication across boundaries and police departments, therefore, frequently breaks down, and consequently, police forces help carve up and fragment different communities within the larger area.

Third, Bromley Heath clearly has stronger police coverage than the other two developments. Strong police presence in Bromley Heath pushes some drug dealing and crime outside of the development forcing the surrounding neighborhood to deal with these problems. On the negative side, the Bromley Heath police have bounded the development off from the surrounding neighborhood. This isolation makes it more difficult for capable neighborhood institutions to address crime issues jointly with the development, and creates an “us vs. them” mentality.

## DYNAMICS ACROSS VARIABLES

Thus far, I have compared the three cases across four variables (see Table 5.5). This comparison helps indicate where particular strengths and weaknesses lie in each neighborhood's capacity to deal with its crime and drug dealing problem. Now I shall examine the dynamic and interplay among these strengths and weaknesses in each case.

**Table 5.5 Comparison of the Four Variables Among Developments**

	<i>South Street</i>	<i>Charlestown</i>	<i>Bromley Heath</i>
Drug Market	Small Monopoly	Large Monopoly	Free Market
Institutional Capacity in Neighborhood	Good	Poor	Good
Tenant Capacity	Poor	Poor	Good
Effectiveness of Police	Good	Poor	Fair

### *South Street*

The dynamic across the four variables in South Street produces an effective but precarious overall drug-fighting strategy. Positive synergies among three variables -- the drug market, the institutional capacity of the surrounding neighborhood, and the effectiveness of police -- have made it possible to contain drug problems in the area with extremely limited public housing tenants participation.

A competent group of individual activists from the surrounding neighborhood have mobilized effectively external institutions to focus relentlessly on a small monopolistic drug market. The physical proximity of neighborhood residents to the development and the small scale of the drug market have also allowed neighborhood residents to keep close tabs on drug dealers for police, and thus, compensate for what has been at times a withdrawn and taciturn tenant population. The physical proximity of neighborhood residents to such a small development tenant population have also allowed neighborhood residents to know personally all youth in the development, which has served an effective preventative function.

The institutional simplicity of the policing environment in the area also has created positive synergies among variables. The small size of the tenant population combined with police coverage from the same officers has allowed police to establish good individual relationships with tenants and understand safety issues at a detailed level.

Regardless of how strong a dynamic a neighborhood has with respect to these three variables, a minimal degree of participation and energy from within the development is necessary. Recently, the minimal baseline of tenant participation has worn dangerously thin and threatens the hard-fought achievements of the neighborhood. Individual activists around South Street have been unable to institutionalize a group of residents from the development and the neighborhood to dedicate itself to addressing crime in the neighborhood. Drug-fighting efforts continue to be reactive, ad hoc, and dependent on the extraordinary dedication and commitment of a core group of neighborhood activists. This leaves the positive dynamic among neighborhood activists, the police, and the drug market extremely vulnerable. Should the strength of individual neighborhood activists falter or the limited participation of development tenants extinguish, the neighborhood is likely to degenerate rapidly.

#### *Charlestown*

Taken as a whole, the dynamic across the four variables creates a number of negative synergies that result in overwhelming drug-related problems in the Charlestown development. Underlying these negative dynamics is a badly torn social fabric within and between development and neighborhood. Upper-income residents with little interest in local civic issues have replaced many working-class Townies from the neighborhood who had been intimately involved in community affairs. A poor minority population fearful of entering civic life because of the long and violent history of racism in Charlestown has replaced working-class residents from the development. Townies who do remain feel threatened from above and below, and they tend to dominate neighborhood institutions. These disturbing class and racial relationships leave little institutional capacity in the development and surrounding neighborhood to reverse the troubling dynamics around drugs in the development.

The large monopolistic drug market in Charlestown generates destructive synergies with withdrawn development tenants and upper-income neighbors, impoverished neighborhood institutions, and ineffective police forces. First, Charlestown High School magnifies the drug problem in and around the development. Second, the scale and type of drug market also has facilitated the retreat of surrounding neighbors with financial and political clout from issues regarding the development. Because the monopolistic drug market concentrates drugs in the development and produces violence that does not touch directly residents of the surrounding neighborhood, they have little incentive to address such issues. Third, the drug market really has taken its toll on development tenants. The broad reach of the drug market has created a large amount of substance dependency among development tenants. Furthermore, the code of silence discourages resident organizing around crime and severs communication between police and tenants. Confronted with these negative and self-reinforcing dynamics, it is little wonder that neighborhood organizations of limited political clout have been impotent in reducing drugs in and around the development.

The policing environment also has reinforced the intractability of the drug problems in the area. The paucity of police coverage in the development has made the place a haven for drug dealing. Moreover, the undercover policing style of multiple police agencies has fed resident suspicion and withdrawal from police and from each other.

Charlestown, then, suffers serious problems on all four fronts important to drug fighting efforts, and the litany of negative synergies this produces goes on and on. Given the depth of these problems in Charlestown, and the negative effect these problems produce together, the cycle will be difficult to untangle.

#### ***Bromley Heath***

The dynamic among the four variables in and around Bromley Heath create advantages and disadvantages to drug fighting strategies. Most important, however, the synergy between displacement of drugs and related problems into surrounding areas operated by institutions with vested market interests translates into a will and capacity to address these problems.

The strong organizational capacity of the TMC and the presence of the Bromley Heath Police have created both positive and negative dynamics between the development and the neighborhood. On the positive side, the Bromley Heath Police have forced competent institutions in the neighborhood to address crime displaced from the development. Moreover, the involvement of such institutions has been contagious. After institutions like the NDC and the Hyde Square Task Force have initiated organizing efforts around crime, neighborhood and Bromley Heath tenants have begun to join these efforts.

On the negative side, the combination of TMC management and Bromley Heath policing produces an inward focus on crime in the development that frequently precludes overtures from neighborhood organizations to confront issues in a coordinated fashion. The complexity of the institutional policing environment in the area works against addressing the free market dealing structure in a coordinated fashion. The numerous police forces in the area have helped create turf boundaries between rival groups in the area. Also, police forces understandably have had difficulty coordinating different police agencies to address crimes that occur on borders of police jurisdictions.

The proliferation of gangs in the area means that TMC and Bromley Heath Police have limited control over the larger drug dealing situation in their midst and makes it difficult for them to deal with these problems on their own. These parallel and disjointed efforts of the development and neighborhood, then, are an ineffective strategy to combat the free market drug dealing structure in the area.

### ***Conclusion***

Wide differences among the three developments and surrounding neighborhoods require that strategists understand the strengths and weakness of the most important factors that bear on the drug dealing and crime in these neighborhoods. Strategists also must understand how these variables relate to create an overall dynamic in order to design strategic interventions.



## **CHAPTER 6 -- STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

In this final section, I discuss what the framework I have developed in the previous section implies about how the BHA as an institution should rethink its role in drug-fighting efforts. Then I speculate about what strategic interventions the BHA could employ to improve the respective drug situations in and around the three developments under study.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE BHA**

The BHA neither has the manpower nor the institutional capacity to eliminate drugs from its developments. Drugs and related problems always will beset BHA developments. Given the magnitude of drug-related problems and the scarce public housing authority resources, the objective of the BHA needs to become how to harness all available resources in the most effective way to marginally impact drugs in and around its properties. This task over-simplifies the institutional environment in which the BHA operates and removes drug-fighting efforts from difficult political realities, but it remains a sound organizing principle for the agency.

One reason I looked at the development/neighborhood dynamic was to determine the extent to which drug-fighting resources in the neighborhood could augment development resources. The BHA's hierarchical structure often encourages its employees to adopt a tunnel vision that ignores important resources outside the agency's vertical lines. The South Street and Bromley Heath case studies demonstrate the powerful resources that individuals and institutions in the surrounding neighborhoods offer the developments. These two case studies suggest that management at BHA developments needs to undertake a rigorous analysis of the dynamics in the larger neighborhood to find out what additional resources or problems it has with respect to drugs. Chapter 5 provides a framework that site managers can employ to understand the relationship of the development/neighborhood dynamic to drug problems. Neighborhood/development analysis, however, would only constitute one component of a larger BHA central office

strategy to understand drug problems in its developments and to best utilize its resources. The BHA needs to conduct the same analysis in other areas that impact on drug problems, such as drug treatment and prevention.

In order to develop and implement a strategy that considers the dynamic produced by the four factors that impact drugs at the development level, the BHA needs to undertake changes at the central office and development levels as well as develop links between the two. The BHA has made important organizational strides in this direction, but work remains.

### *Central Office Changes*

To recognize and respond to drug problems at the development/neighborhood level, the BHA needs to initiate organizational changes at the central office level. Drug-fighting strategies need to cut across departmental lines of the central office. The BHA has begun broader institutional efforts breakdown rigid departmental lines and central office/development division through a new system that organizes developments into clusters of three and assigns development and central office level staff to plan operational issues of those developments. Changes need to occur, however, to join more directly the different central office departments involved in public safety issues.

Sharp organizational barriers exist between Public Safety and the Community Initiatives Department (CID), the two central-office departments most directly involved in drug-fighting efforts. Both departments are funded through HUD's Public Housing Drug Elimination Program (PHDEP). Currently, the energies of the two departments are moving in opposite directions. Although change is occurring, the Public Safety department still maintains its focus on hardware approaches that most highly value making arrests, and the community initiatives department concentrates on resident organizing, drug treatment, and drug prevention. These two worlds rarely meet, and there is little thought given to how the different drug-fighting approaches of these two departments could be self-reinforcing at the local level. Operating in isolation, the efforts of the public safety and community initiatives departments ignore the complex dynamic

that exists in and around developments and consequently render much weaker overall results.

There has been little thinking about under which circumstances preventative, software approaches could reinforce hardware approaches and vice versa. For instance, the public safety department and CID need to consider which developments have the largest population of 7-13 year olds when developing their drug-fighting strategies and deciding what kinds of policing approaches to employ. A large percentage of 7-13 year olds in a development implies a preventative policing approach that involves conferencing with youth, parents, and managers, recreational activities and mentoring programs. CID drug prevention programs would reinforce this type of policing approach. Coordination of hardware and software approaches are especially necessary after the police manage to dislodge an entrenched drug dealing structure in a development. A continued police presence is required, however, there must be aggressive outreach efforts to youth to prevent them from filling the new drug-dealing vacuum. The timing and coordination of such approaches is critical, and currently, little planning of this type exists.

Disjointed efforts between public safety and community initiatives need to be reversed, and the energy of both departments must be coordinated and channeled against drug-related problems at the development level. The BHA needs to undertake structural changes at the central office to facilitate the change. There needs to be a person in the central office responsible for coordinating the activities of the public safety and community initiatives departments. This job could charge the individual with managing the BHA's Public Housing Drug Elimination Program Grant that funds both of these departments. HUD requires that grantees implement a multifaceted drug-fighting strategy that coordinates different hardware and software approaches. The directors of the community initiatives and the public safety departments would report to this "facilitator" on progress toward coordinating drug-fighting strategies according to the terms of the grant application. Given the tensions between these two departments, however, it is critical that this position remain independent of these two departments.

### *Development-level Changes*

The BHA also needs to change the way it does business at the development level. The three case studies show how different the dynamics of the drug market and development/neighborhood relations are in each place. These differences require distinct interventions. The development manager is in the best position to understand the dynamics among the four major factors that impact drugs and development/neighborhood relations. Moreover, the manager is the actor that can best link the development-level agents of the public safety and community initiatives departments -- police officers and youth workers -- and coordinate other local players.

The BHA is trying to place the manager at the forefront of the public safety agenda by decentralizing operations through the cluster structure and initiating regular development public safety meetings. Public safety meetings were first organized to establish communication between management and police officers. Subsequent rounds of meetings attempted to bring youth workers into the loop. Managers have begun to communicate effectively with police officers, but they have not been able to facilitate interchange between police and youth workers. Communication between these two positions is difficult to establish because interests of youth workers and police often are at direct odds. Many officers still measure job success as the number of arrests they make. Youth workers, on the other hand, are often placed in the position of trying to keep youth out of trouble. Some youth workers also fear reprisal from hard core gang members should they communicate with police. These conflicting interests create substantial and real barriers to effective police/youth worker communication. Although youth workers have the most grounded information about who is involved in drugs, these barriers may necessitate that youth workers play a reinforcement rather than a central role in drug-fighting efforts.

Managers also need to become involved in resident capacity-building initiatives in order to develop relations of mutual trust with residents. Management/resident “shared vision” is essential to drug-fighting efforts at the local level. (Keyes, Strategies and

Saints) CID currently is charged with resident capacity building initiatives. The central office needs to institutionalize a way to weave management into this capacity building process. Currently, tenants have not been introduced into the public safety meetings, but when they are, it will be essential that management and residents work together. Management also will play a critical role in facilitating effective relations between officers and residents. Ultimately, the manager will be the point person for coordinating the youth worker, the police officer and the tenant task force to address safety efforts.

To round out the manager's role in the four point framework I have recommended, the manager also needs to consider the resources and drug problems in the surrounding neighborhood and decide whether it is worthwhile to involve actors from the surrounding community. Depending on whether the right resources exist in the neighborhood and on the dynamics of the drug market, managers should either focus their efforts inward or outward.

### *Linking the Central Office with Developments*

Finally, the BHA needs to link development-based strategies to drug-related problems with a larger central-office strategy. The central office has tried to create a structure for this to occur through monthly public safety cluster meetings. The manager, police officer, and youth workers assigned as cluster representatives meet with the central office staff to discuss progress in implementing community policing. It is important to use these meetings as a way of adjusting central office strategies to meet development needs.

What is missing is a way to link the development and central office on a day-to-day basis. The coordinator of public safety and community initiatives could serve as this link. The coordinator would help relay information about public safety needs from the development to the directors of CID and public safety and help the two departments devise balanced responses according to the changing dynamics in each development. The purpose would be to employ the coordinator as a facilitator, not to add an additional bureaucratic layer between the development and central office levels.

## STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR THREE CASE STUDIES

Were this system to be in place at the central office, here is what might be done to alleviate the drug situation at the development level in the three cases under study. The challenge in all three places is to coordinate a set interventions tailored to the unique circumstances in each place to reverse negative dynamics and set in motion a series of positive reactions. This will require that the BHA implement different types and degrees of measures in each development.

### *South Street*

There are few if any proactive efforts to sustain the drug-fighting efforts in and around South Street. The BHA appears to view the situation there in static fashion -- its drug problems are minor in comparison with other developments, and South Street has a youth center, which is a significant resource given its small size. There is little effort to understand how factors affecting drugs interact and whether the positive dynamic between development and neighborhood could be sustained or enhanced. With minimal investment, the BHA could implement preventative measures to solidify currently effective but precarious drug-fighting efforts in and around the development. Four strategic implications arise from the South Street case.

First, a marginal investment in building the capacity of the South Street tenant task force could go a long way. Were there an involved group of tenants inside the development, neighborhood activists could solidify neighborhood responses to drug dealing in and around the development and expand the scope of their advocacy efforts on behalf of development tenants. Moreover, neighborhood activists could teach an involved group of development tenants how to get attention from the city when they need it. Activists have made strong efforts on this front, but they have achieved little success because tenant participation has been ephemeral. Consequently, the rare industry and resourcefulness of neighborhood residents are being squandered.

CID needs to make building the capacity of the South Street Tenants Task Force a priority, particularly in light of the resident apathy demonstrated in recent task force

elections. The manager of the development also is in a good position to support resident building efforts as shown through his successful track record at previous developments.

Second, the neighborhood could decrease its dependence on individual efforts and help insure the sustainability of its achievements were it to institutionalize a neighborhood structure. This would require a paid community organizer position, however, and currently such funds are scarce. Because the environment around South Street is activist and contacts to municipal and state levels are established, a community organizer most likely would be well received and positively impact drug-related problems. Again, it is important to emphasize how critical it is for the development manager to be outward looking to take full advantage of the plentiful drug-fighting resources outside the development.

Third, limited involvement of merchants along South Street constitutes another weakness in the neighborhood drug-fighting strategy that drug dealers have begun to exploit. South Street management and neighborhood activists need to organize and engage this group in order to address the drug market forming around these businesses.

Finally, the BHA central office could recognize and support the sparse organizing efforts from within the development, principally the South Street Survivors. This group plays an important drug-prevention role among teenagers in the development. Currently, this group has no space to operate and could benefit from use of a vacant apartment or other resources such as old BHA computers.<sup>158</sup>

In short, the BHA would have to make only a limited investment to solidify an effective development/neighborhood drug fighting strategy in and around South Street.

### *Charlestown*

Although the Bunker Hill development faces formidable obstacles in all four elements important to addressing drugs, there are ways of reorganizing energy that could help reverse the negative dynamic among these elements. The BHA would have to exert a large amount of energy and resources to begin to address these drug problems, however.

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<sup>158</sup> Swan.

Since neighborhood resources are limited and the drug dealing monopoly has concentrated dealing in the development and along its borders, a development-based approach to the drug problems could prove effective. Because rival gangs are not scattered around the surrounding neighborhood, the BHA has the opportunity to impact drugs in and around the development in a way that it does not in Bromley Heath.<sup>159</sup> Here is one set of interventions the BHA may want to consider.

First, a core group of white males between the ages of 24 and 40 appear to conduct a substantial part of the drug dealing in the development. Since many of these individuals live in the development or have family there, the BHA could make a concerted effort to convict these individuals and other known dealers and evict their families from the development. Such a strategy first would require that the central office address bureaucratic obstacles to evictions, such as backlogged grievances. Second, the police could conduct another drug sweep to remove this population from the development.

Removing this core group within the development may help tenants feel more comfortable communicating with police officers. Unfortunately, the upper echelons of the monopoly still would exert influence on the development. The only way to forge communication between police and residents may be a concerted effort to break up the monopolistic drug structure, but such an initiative would have to come from higher police agencies. The BHA has an officer assigned to the Drug Enforcement Agency and should use this person as a point from which to coordinate, to the extent possible, efforts to dismantle the upper echelons and those initiatives to clear out development-level dealing.

The hierarchical structure in Charlestown seems to be showing signs of vulnerability, however. Police may want to continue chipping away at the hierarchical structure by widening these openings, but the consequences should be well understood. The power vacuum after breaking-up the drug monopoly would most likely increase bloodshed as individuals reshuffle to establish new turf lines and mark the end of the days of silence but security.

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<sup>159</sup> For the sake of comparison, I assume that the BHA manages Bromley Heath.



If undercover drug investigations and a sweep were to knock out this core group of dealers for a period, a sustained police presence at the development would be necessary for two reasons. First, police would need to insure that drug dealers stay out of the development while awaiting sentencing.<sup>160</sup> Second, police would have to be aggressive about insuring that new dealers, either from the development or outside, not spring up to fill the vacuum. An incipient group of Dominican drug dealers in the development make this task critical.

Sustained police presence in the development also could disperse drug dealing into the surrounding neighborhood and force the upper-income residents to become involved in safety efforts. Drug dealing in the upper-income area most likely would draw immediate attention from the City of Boston. Displacement of Bunker Hill dealing into upper-income areas only would occur if Charles Newtown and Mishawam coordinated to block relocation of dealing into their areas. Displacing crime from the development up along Bunker Hill Street and Main Street could force withdrawn merchants to start to address drug issues of the development, as well. Bunker Hill management could invite neighbors concerned about displacement to partake in development public safety meetings. This strategy has proven effective under similar circumstances in the Washington Beech development.

The BHA would need to coordinate increased police presence with aggressive youth outreach to prevent the younger population from filling the dealing vacuum. Almost a quarter of Bunker Hill development residents are between the ages of 5-13, and efforts to target this population could pay large future dividends. To pursue this goal, the BHA could rely on resources for youth in the surrounding neighborhood -- the Charlestown Community Center, St. Catherine's, and the Boys and Girls Club. Moreover, Father Coyne's rapport with minorities from the development could provide an important resource for outreach to minority youth and their parents. Management of the Bunker Hill development would need to link the police and neighborhood institutions in order to get the timing of hardware and software interventions right.

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<sup>160</sup> According to the officer who took me on the ride-along, two of the dealers we met in the development were trying to sell as much as possible before entering prison to serve their time.

Management also needs to address problems within the Bunker Hill Tenant Task Force to insure that the greater resident population is represented and residents feel comfortable sharing information without fear of reprisal. This would mean changing the current composition of the task force. More representation of minorities on the task force may help break the current isolation among minority residents in the development and encourage them to participate in drug-fighting strategies.

The BHA could make efforts to support the few positive trends currently occurring around the development. Management and the high school administrator must coordinate a workable plan to deal with the high school issue.

Given the magnitude of drug-related problems in and around Charlestown, however, significant interventions will need to come from outside the BHA. These major external interventions will need to be coordinated in a tight fashion if they are to reverse to deeply entrenched negative synergies in and around the development.

### ***Bromley Heath***

The free market drug situation in and around Bromley Heath necessitates a planned and coordinated approach between development and neighborhood. The dynamics among the four variables that affect drug dealing in and around Bromley Heath suggest that the TMC should reorient the direction of their organizing energy outward. The inward focus of the TMC and the Bromley Heath police fails to take advantage of important institutional resources that have developed in the surrounding neighborhood. The TMC inward focus was appropriate when individuals and institutions in the surrounding neighborhood were either underdeveloped or had shunned the development. Now, however, the energy and capacity of institutions in the surrounding neighborhood offer the TMC the opportunity to work cooperatively to impact drugs in the larger neighborhood.

Although the BHA does not manage Bromley Heath, it can apply lessons learned there to developments with similar circumstances. In developments located in a complex gang network, the most critical component to an effective drug-fighting strategy is an outward-looking manager who can network with neighborhood institutions and other

subsidized developments in the area. An outward-looking manager is particularly important when capable individuals and institutions exist in the surrounding neighborhood. If the institutional landscape of the surrounding neighborhood is barren and the area is at a crossroads of many gangs, the manager may want to opt for a defensible space approach. There are few if any instances when a defensible space approach would be appropriate for Boston public housing developments, however, because most are located in neighborhoods with some viable organizations.

### *Conclusion*

The BHA will need to make difficult choices about which of these cases to tackle first. It is more convenient and less costly to address problems in South Street and Bromley Heath than in Charlestown. The BHA should take advantage of the opportunities in the neighborhoods surrounding South Street and Bromley Heath while they exist. Failure of the BHA to support these efforts potentially could destroy the positive dynamics and opportunities in these neighborhoods.<sup>161</sup> The BHA, therefore, most probably should tackle these two developments first.

In regards to the Charlestown development, the BHA needs to make sure that when it takes on the problem, it does so in a relentless and focused way. A one-time intervention will simply squander money and resources for short-lived improvements. The BHA, however, should not let the situation continue much longer in Charlestown, because the problem will be more entrenched and difficult for the BHA to address later, not to mention the moral imperatives.

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<sup>161</sup> For the purposes of comparison, I am assuming that the BHA is managing Bromley Heath.

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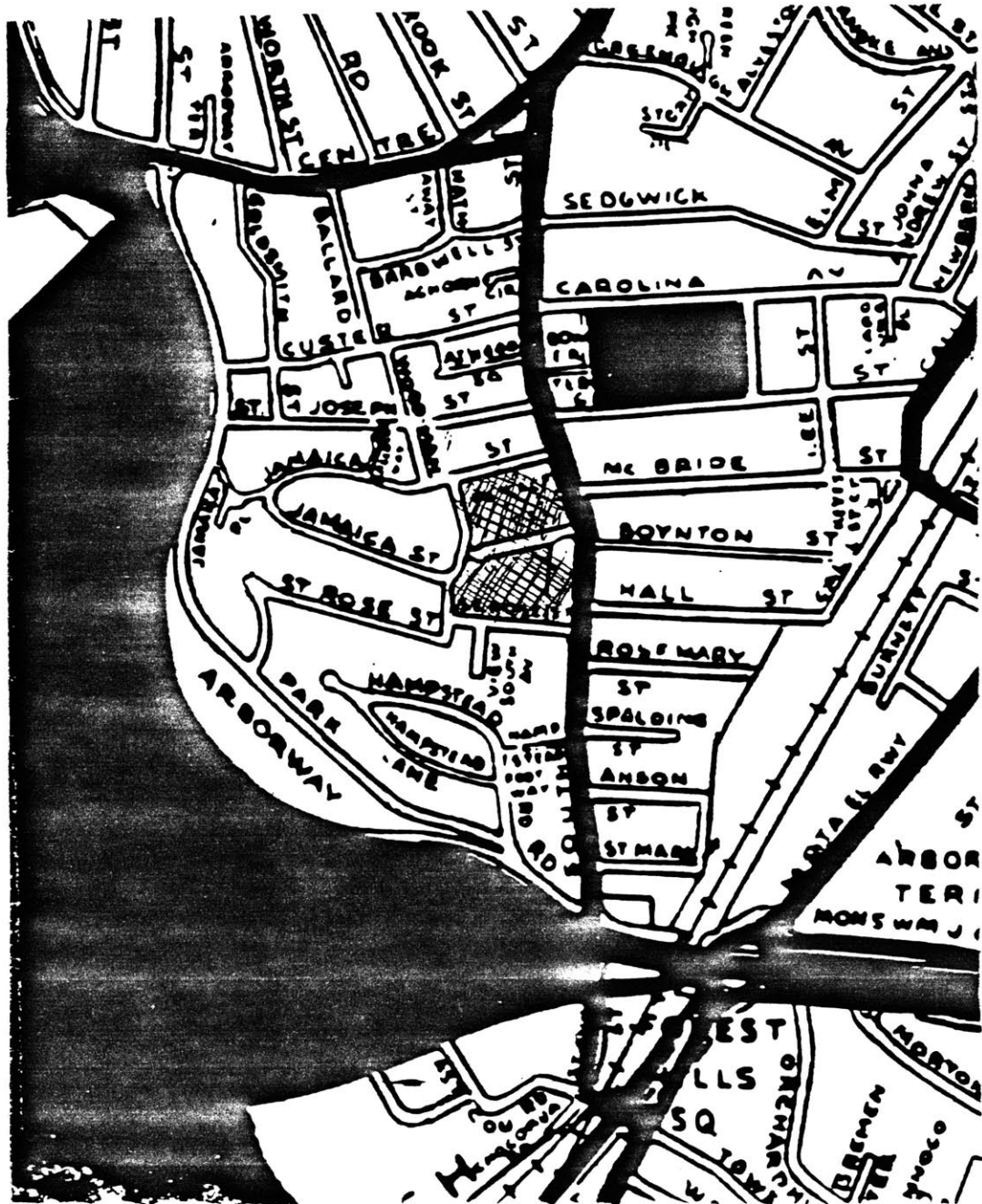
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Bromley Heath Candle-light Vigil	3/22/96

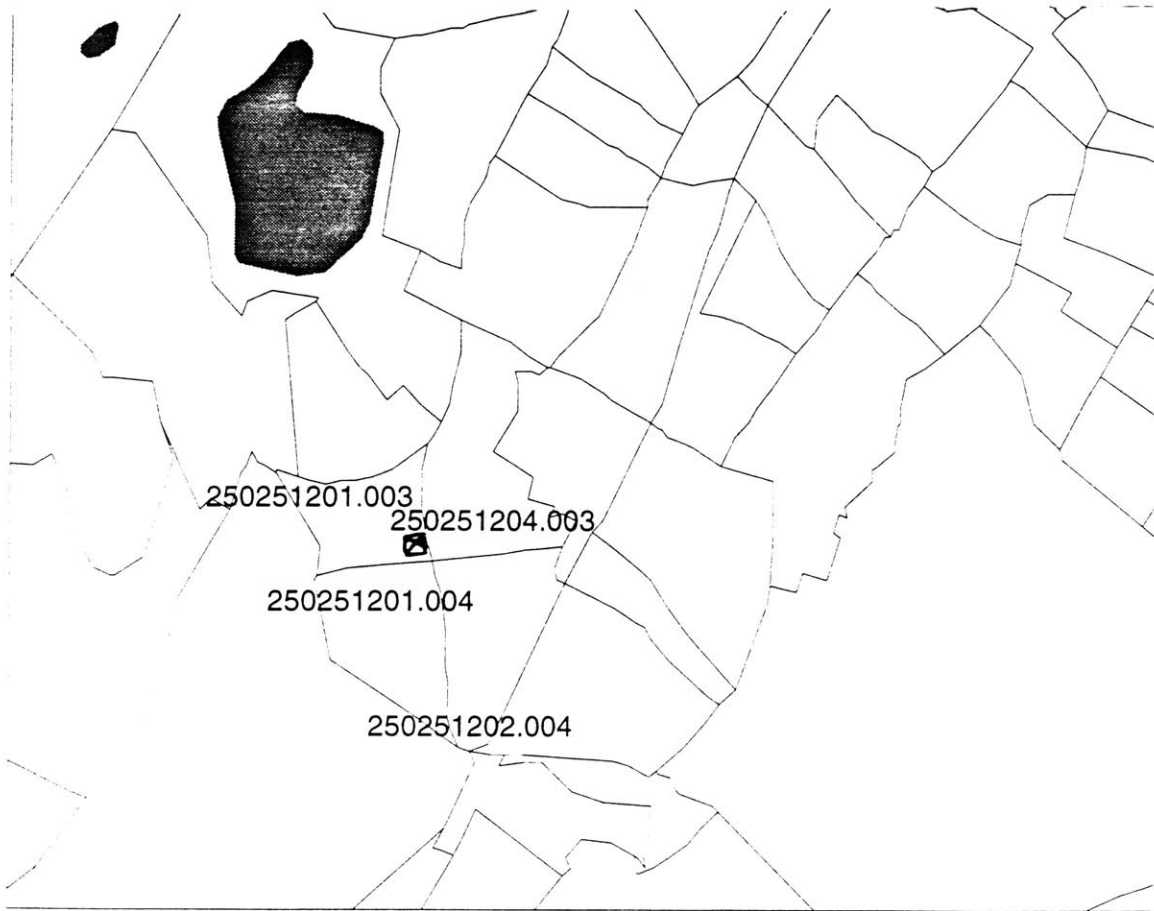
MAPS

MAP 1: SOUTH STREET NEIGHBORHOOD



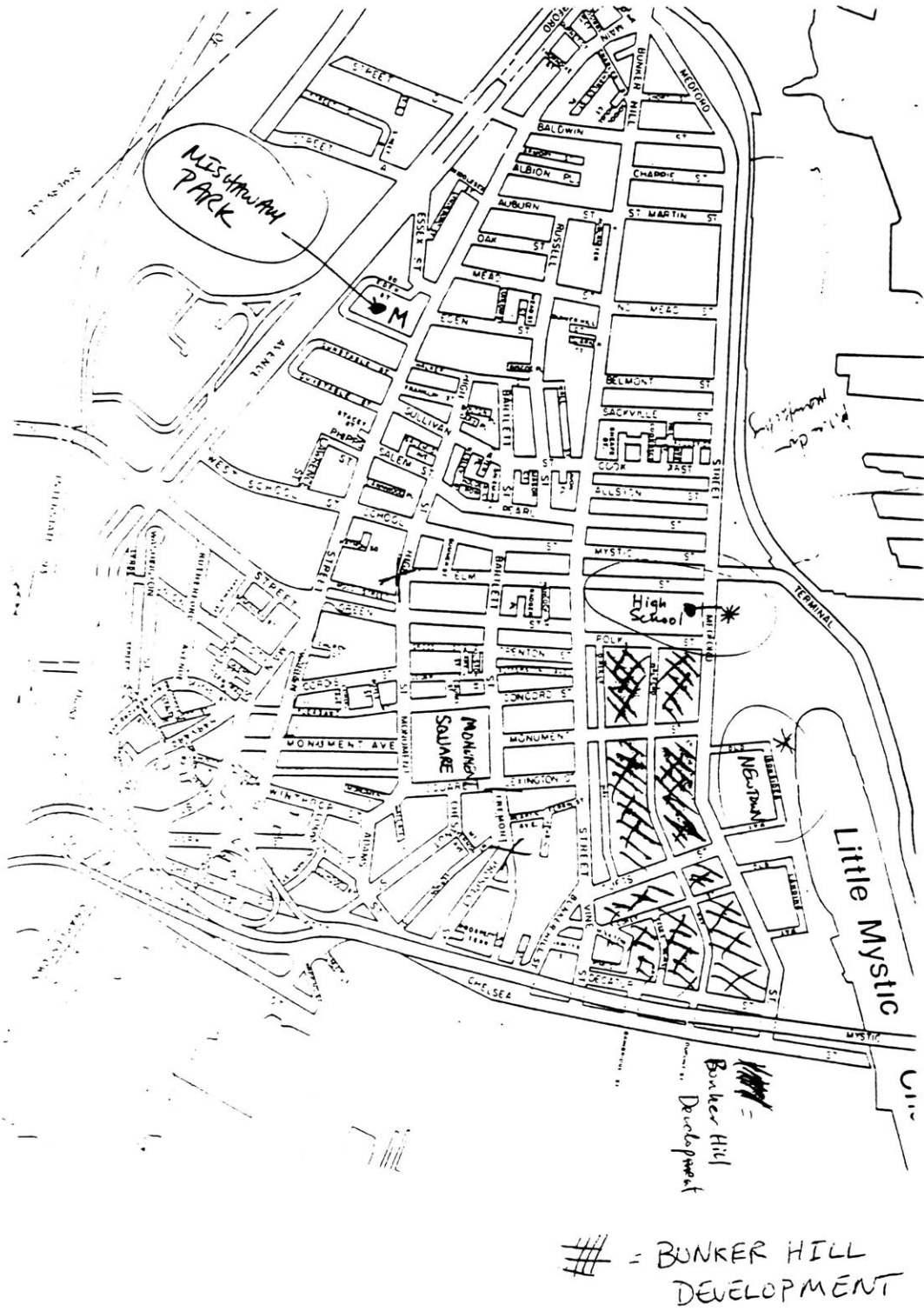
 = SOUTH STREET

**MAP 2: SOUTH STREET CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS**

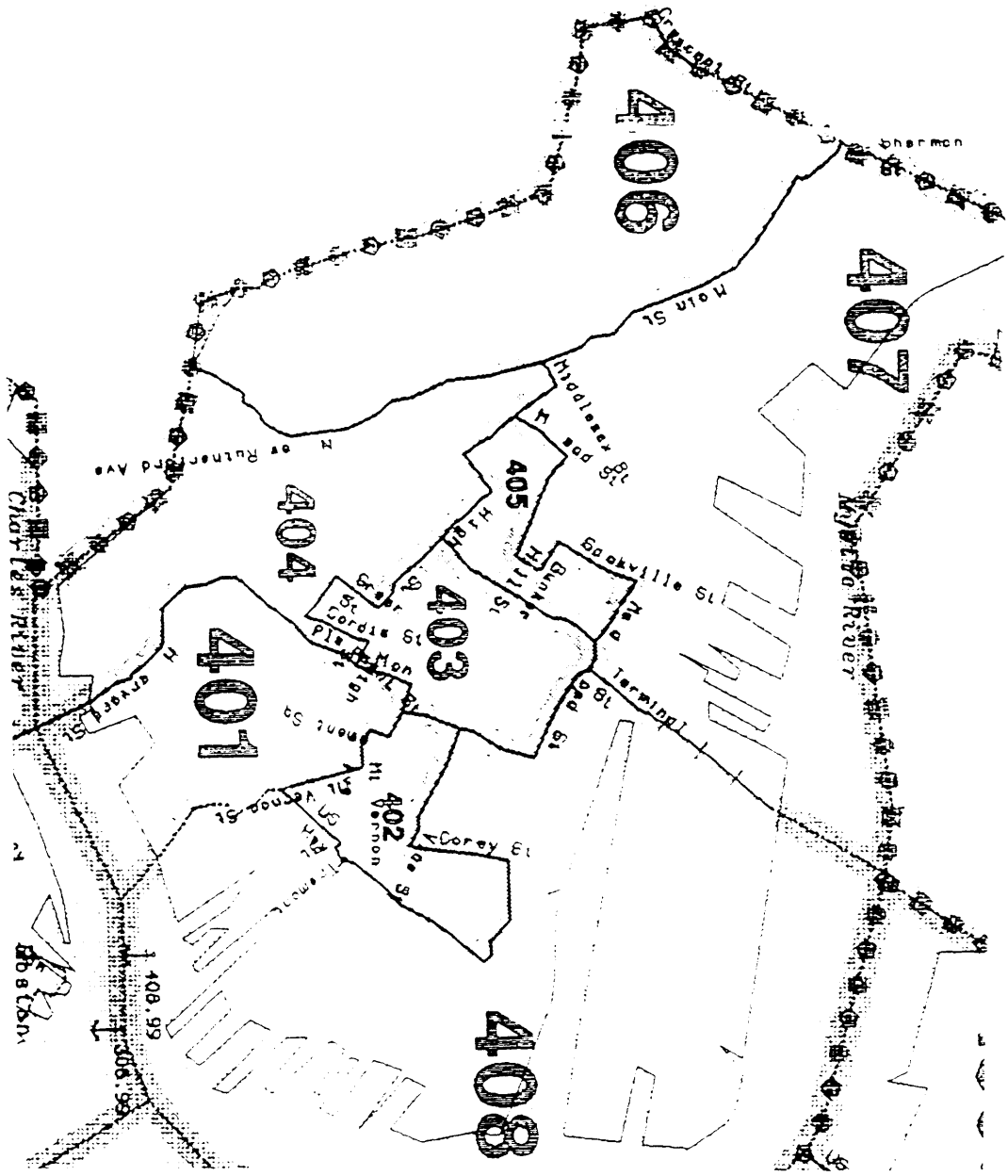


☒ SOUTH STREET

**MAP 3: CHARLESTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD**

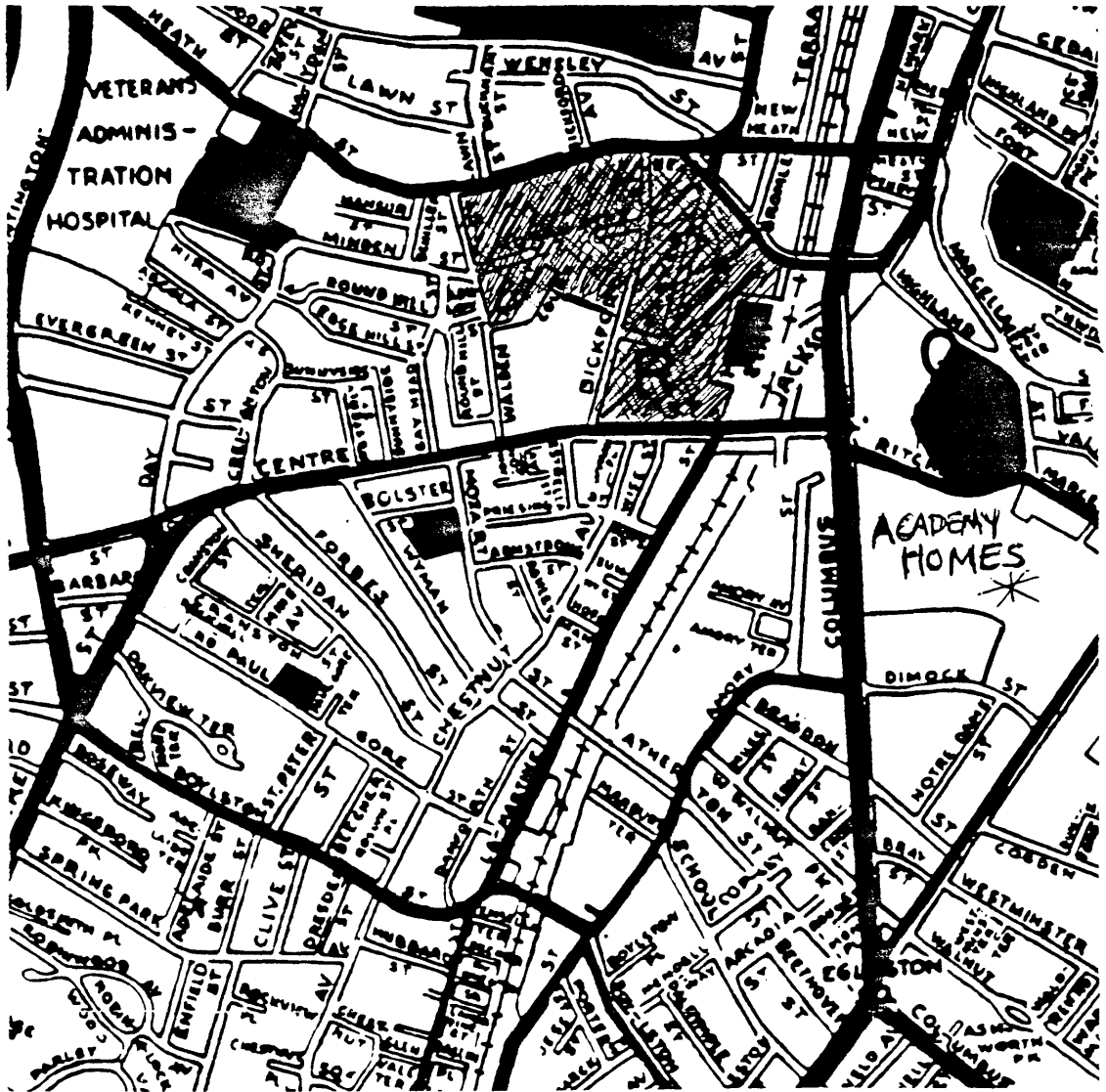


**MAP 4: CHARLESTOWN CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS**



MAP 5: HYDE SQUARE/JACKSON SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD

BROMLEY HEATH






**MAP 6: HYDE SQUARE/JACKSON SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD**



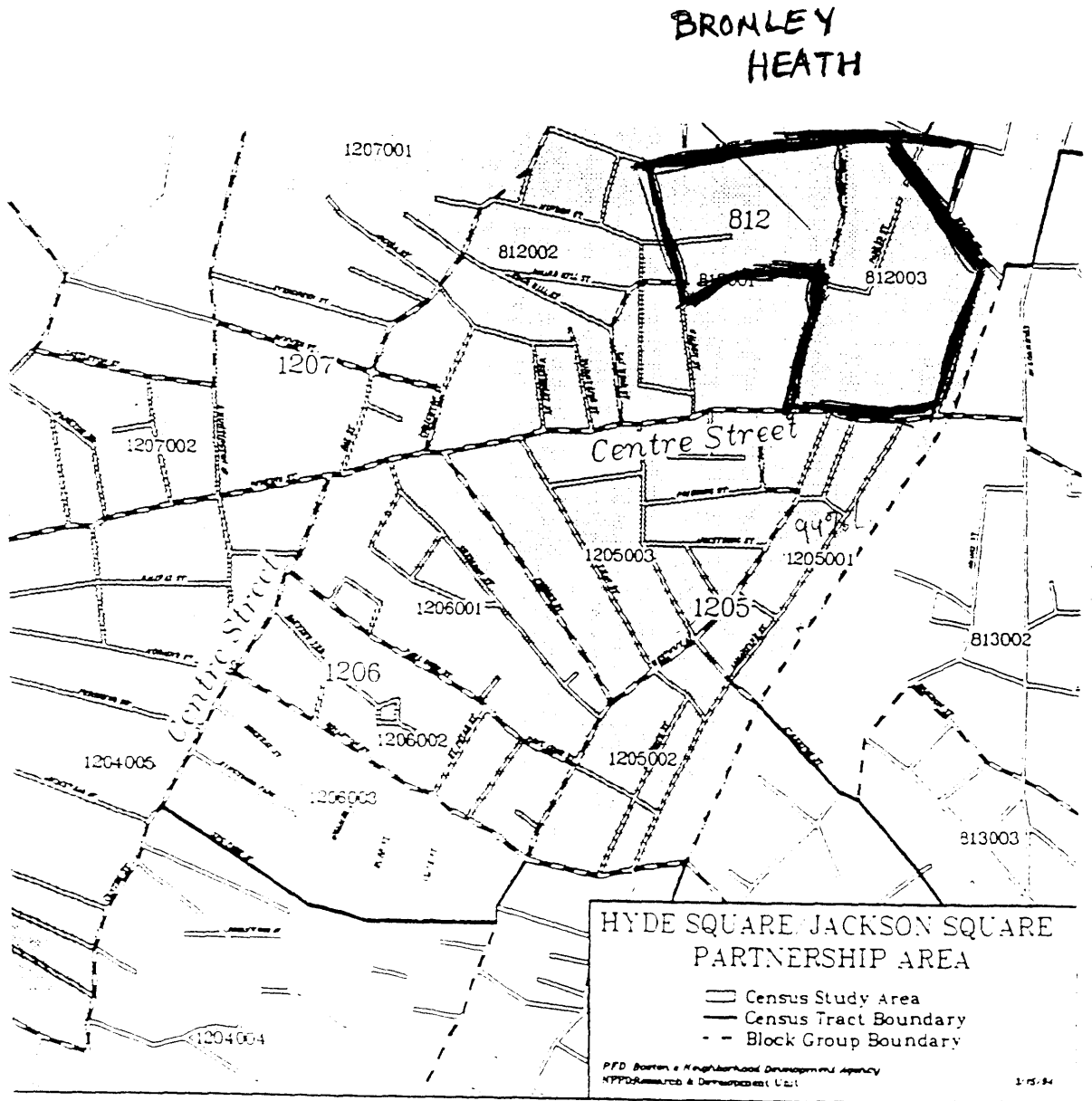
**HYDE SQUARE/JACKSON SQUARE**

Local Development Agency  
 Program Development Unit  
 MA 02108

-  Neighborhood Partnership Boundary
-  Commercial District Boundary
-  Commercial District Subareas

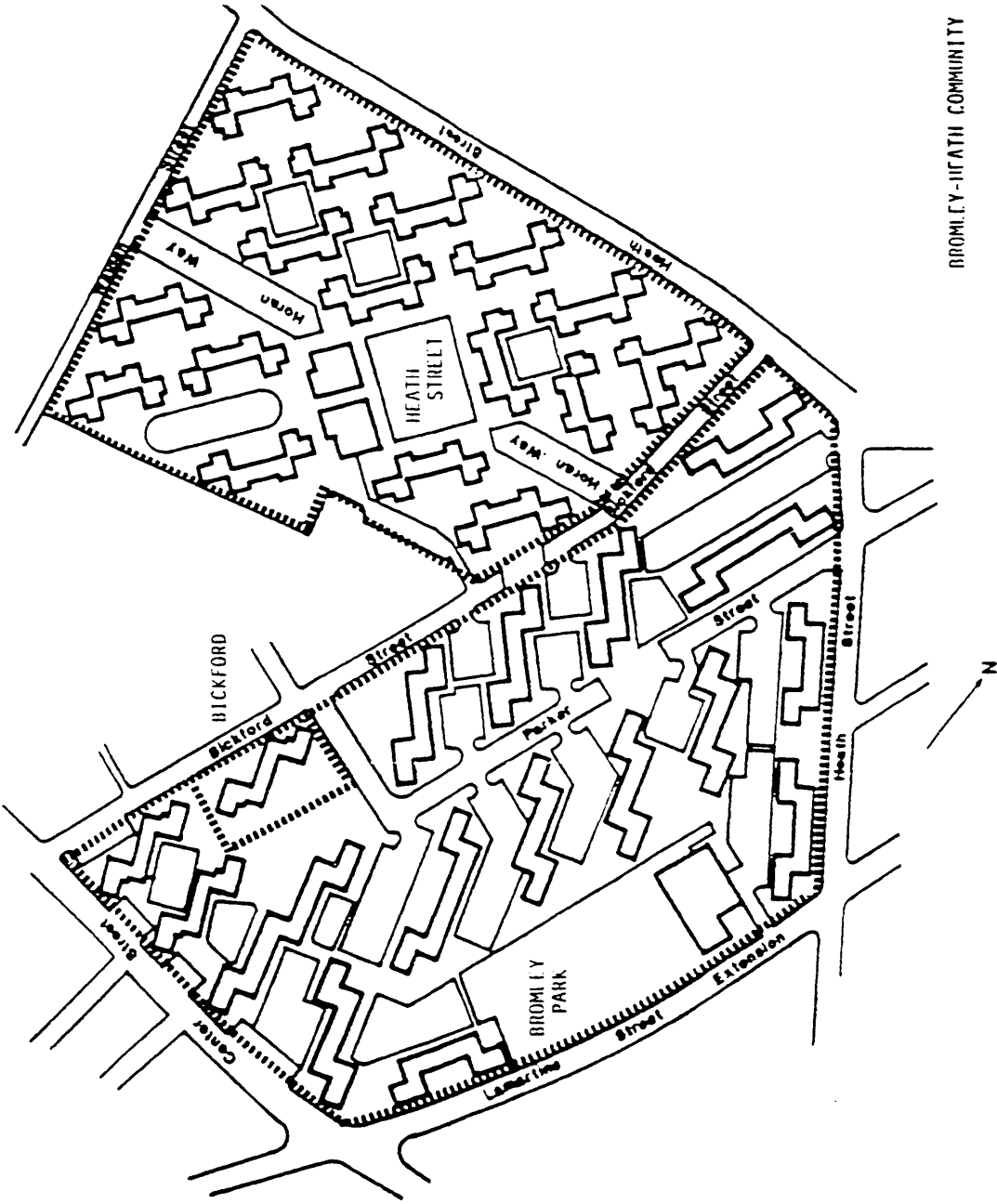


**MAP 7: HYDE SQUARE/JACKSON SQUARE CENSUS BLOCK GROUPS**





MAP 8: BROMLEY HEATH DEVELOPMENT



BROMLEY-HEATH COMMUNITY