

Whose city? Redevelopment and Governance in Boston

by

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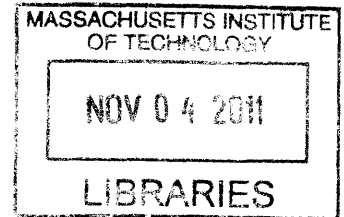
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the challenges and opportunities of the community-based redevelopment model in a neoliberal economic context. Drawing on a review of the history and theories of redevelopment and governance in the United States, it analyzes the particular case of Jackson Square, a community-led redevelopment process in a low-income neighborhood between Roxbury and Jamaica Plain, in Boston. In an area that was razed for the construction of a failed highway project in the late 1960s, a partnership of community development corporations (CDCs) and private developers are struggling to implement a plan that was defined through a public participation process.

The Jackson Square case is a paradigmatic example of a highly democratic decision-making process that resulted in a community vision for a distressed area. However, despite ideal community engagement and development by community-based nonprofit organizations, the project is being seriously delayed and downgraded due to an economic recession, while the community is not mobilizing to defend their vision and ask for much-needed public support.

Given the structural inequalities engendered by the neoliberal economic system, and the government's retreat from leading the revitalization of distressed neighborhoods, this research questions the present ability of community-led processes to achieve their goals. Through a critical analysis of the role that each group involved is playing, this thesis aims to contribute to the improvement of the community-led redevelopment model in a way that enhances the creation of a more just city.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. Introduction and Research Design.....	9
CHAPTER 2. A review of Urban Redevelopment in the U.S. and Boston.....	13
1. Introduction	13
2. Redevelopment and governance in the U.S.	14
2.1. Directive period (1950-64): the times of urban renewal	14
2.2. Concessionary period (1965-74): federal attention to neighborhoods	17
2.3. Conserving period (1975-1981): public action shrinks	20
2.4. Privatized period (1982-early nineties): the takeoff of public-private partnerships	25
2.5. Competitive period (from early-nineties)	27
3. The case of Boston	32
3.1. An Urban Renewal pioneer (1950-1967)	32
3.2. The neighborhood movement is born (1968-74)	36
3.3. Downtown boom (1975-1983)	38
3.4. The “progressive city” (1984-1992)	39
3.5. Menino’s era: A competitive “city of neighborhoods” (from 1992)	43
CHAPTER 3. Case study: Jackson Square	47
1. Introduction	47
2. Context and origins	47
2.1. The Southwest Corridor	51
2.2. The Egleston-Jackson Strategy	55
3. The community planning process	57
3.1. Stakeholders	57
3.2. The community planning process	60
3.3. The community vision	62
3.4. The Plan	69
3.5. Implementation	72
4. Evaluation: challenges and opportunities for community planning in Jackson Square	75
4.1. Process	75
4.2. Outcomes	79
CHAPTER 4. Conclusions: Challenges for a community-based redevelopment model in a neoliberal context	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY	93
APPENDIX: INTERVIEWS	101

CHAPTER 1. Introduction and Research Design

The city is constantly subject to change to accommodate new forms of economic production, social relationships, cultural expressions, immigrant populations, etc. Urban redevelopment is the process through which existing areas of the city are spatially, economically and/or socially reconfigured. In contrast with city growth through the development of greenfield areas, redevelopment “has been especially contested because of the interests already vested in the occupied space” (Fainstein, 2011: 1).

In capitalist societies, the process of change is shaped by the market forces affecting the city and the local balance of political power (Fainstein, 1982). The latter is defined by the complex interaction of three main groups: government (public sector), private sector and the local community. The distribution of power among these three groups strongly influences the character of urban redevelopment, as each of them represents a different set of interests and priorities. Among the many factors that define the political economy of urban redevelopment, this work focuses on the interaction of these three groups, with a particular emphasis on the role of the community in the planning process.

From the perspective of redevelopment governance, Boston is a very interesting example to examine. From its origins, Boston has been a remarkably democratic place, starting with the open town meetings of the 18th century (Kennedy, 1992). The balance in the role of the government, the private sector, and the community in planning the city has undergone different phases. From the aftermath of the reaction to urban renewal, city governments in Boston have increasingly incorporated community participation in planning decision-making, probably reaching its peak when Dudley Street residents were given the power of eminent domain to revitalize their run-down and neglected neighborhood (DiGaetano & Klemanski, 1999; Clavel, 2010).

This, however, has run parallel to the development of Boston as a global city in a neoliberal economy. Cities' need to balance the demands of the competitive market—which led to decisions such as creating an Innovation District in the waterfront—has to be balanced with the demands from the local community, highly organized and empowered.

Building on literature on redevelopment theory, community development and urban governance, this thesis examines the forces and actors, both internal and external, which have shaped redevelopment in Boston from 2000 to 2010, with a special focus on the role the community has played in shaping its urban environment. The research is based on the critical analysis of the process and outcomes of the Jackson Square plan, a case study that provides a meaningful example of a community-led process for a long-vacant area around a transit station between Jamaica Plain and Roxbury.

The first part of this work (Chapter 2) begins with a review of the history and theories of redevelopment in the U.S. since the 1950s, with a special emphasis on public policies, governance and community participation. Divided into five periods, its goal is to provide a framework for understanding how different economic, political and social forces have shaped redevelopment, and how its evolution helps to explain the present moment, providing an analysis of federal policies, economic changes, modes of governance, and the role of civic society in each phase. It then moves to analyze how those forces played out in Boston, following the same periods and using the same variables of study, in order to acknowledge the special characteristics of the city in relation to the national context. Chapter 3 is devoted to the analysis of the Jackson Square case—starting with the community opposition to a planned inner-city highway, and discussing recent efforts to implement a community-led plan—in order to evaluate the challenges that community-led neighborhood redevelopment faced in the last ten years.

The study relies on three main sources of information: related scientific literature, interviews with key actors, and analysis of secondary data. The interviewees were selected according to their involvement in the planning process: city planners, community development corporations' staff, private developers, and community members from the area.

Interest of the study

But why study redevelopment and governance in Boston? My interest is based on the firm belief that encouraging inner-city living is one of the paths towards a more sustainable way of life, and that cities should be spaces of equal opportunity for all. For that, redevelopment of older inner-city neighborhoods—as opposed to new development in greenfields—is a key aspect. However, since the late 1970s it has become clear that this redevelopment has incited a movement “back to the city” of high- and medium-income populations, which in many cases has meant rising housing and rent prices that have displaced the original lower-income populations. To counter that effect, known as gentrification, I believe that it is key to involve the current residents in the planning and implementation of redevelopment, to ensure that what is implemented responds to their needs and avoids their displacement.

Coming from Spain, where “public participation” in urban planning means a 30-day period to present individual “objections,” I came to Boston to understand how community engagement was shaping the city’s revitalization. Soon I was to learn that the city had a long history of community organizing against redevelopment, starting with the opposition to urban renewal and inner-city highway construction. For decades, governments relied on a trickle-down strategy according to which efforts to redevelop the downtown area would spill over into the neighborhoods. However, this strategy failed, and inner-city neighborhoods declined while luxury tower offices were built downtown. Residents started organizing and demanding more resources to be directed towards distressed neighborhoods, as well as greater community control on the decision-making process.

After years of oppositional relationship, the city government decided to adopt a more inclusive attitude, as planning culture evolved and the top-down approach was no longer socially accepted in the U.S. Decades of community organizing and government decentralization peaked in the mid-eighties in one of the most extreme examples of community empowerment—when the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative was given the power of eminent domain—which opened a path that has been further developed in other neighborhoods. At present, Jamaica Plain and Roxbury community development corporations (CDCs) are leading the redevelopment of an area at the crossroad of their neighborhoods, where vacant plots stand by a transit station in a low-income section of the city—heritage of a

failed top-down plan to build a highway through the area. The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) is facilitating the process, but the local CDCs are in charge of implementing the vision defined by the community.

The Jackson Square case tells us that neighborhood redevelopment in Boston cannot be analyzed anymore either with the framework of oppositional mobilization, or within the classic downtown vs. neighborhoods dichotomy. City government is willing to cooperate with highly organized communities, and has in fact transferred most of its responsibilities to community-based organizations, which are also eager to cooperate with the city. What is interesting about Jackson Square is that, even having the ideal conditions for neighborhood redevelopment—an engaged community that defined the vision, CDCs that are developing it, neighborhood institutions that support it—it is taking much more time than expected to become a reality, and the resulting project is being seriously downgraded by the recent economic crisis.

This work questions the extent to which highly democratic community-led processes are actually able to contribute to the development of a just city in a context of a neoliberal market economy. The Jackson Square case tells us that the state has rendered the responsibility for the revitalization of distressed neighborhoods to struggling nonprofit organizations whose survival depends on external funding. The economic crisis has forced these community developers to make some decisions that contradict the community vision for the area. However, the community has not mobilized to get further economic support from the public sector, as their voice is highly mediated through these CDCs. As a consequence, the community vision is not being fully and timely realized. The question that arises is what role the public sector should play in the revitalization of distressed neighborhoods given the apparent lack of capacity of community-based organizations to survive and the consequences that this whole model has on the capacity of the community to organize. Building on the lessons learned from the Jackson Square case, this work aims to provide some recommendations to further advance a feasible community-based neighborhood redevelopment model.

CHAPTER 2. A review of Urban Redevelopment in the U.S. and Boston

1. Introduction

Urban redevelopment has a long tradition in the U.S., and it has changed considerably over the last sixty years (1950-2010). Urban policies and stakeholders' roles in the process have played a big part in this change: from the downtown urban renewal era of the 1950s and early 1960s with little community input; to federal efforts to fund neighborhood-sponsored revitalization in the 1970s; across the 1980s, when community-based groups took more initiative as governments stepped back from directing efforts to address urban poverty; up to the times of public-private partnerships and the institutionalization of the nonprofit sector in neighborhood redevelopment. Fainstein (1983, 2011) labeled this four periods as "directive" (1950-1964), "concessionary" (1965-1974), "conserving" (1975-1981) and "privatized" (1982-2008). For the analysis that follows, I have used her structure, but dividing the latter phase into two, therefore adding a fifth period starting in the early 1990s which I have called "competitive." This last period, which is ongoing, is characterized by the need of cities to compete in order to attract investment and visitors in a globalized neoliberal market, and by a depolitization of community organizations.

Drawing particularly on work by Fainstein & Fainstein (1983, 2001, 2011, forthcoming), Mollenkopf (1983), Fogelson (2001), and Tigan (2005), below I review the history of redevelopment in the U.S. from the outset of urban renewal in order to understand the combination of forces that has shaped redevelopment over the years, with a special emphasis on the rise and evolution of community participation in the planning process. I also provide an overview of how the trends played out in Boston in each of the periods described, using as main sources the works of Kennedy (1992), Clavel (2010), Mollenkopf (1983), Keyes (1969, 1970), Gans (1962) and DiGaetano & Klemanski (1999).

2. Redevelopment and governance in the U.S.

2.1. Directive period (1950-64): the times of urban renewal

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, it was already clear that the outward movement of inner city residents to the suburbs was seriously affecting the vitality of downtowns. When the movement started at the beginning of the twentieth century—mainly promoted by general access to car ownership and the construction of freeways—many thought that no matter where people lived, they would still need to go downtown. It was assumed that the periphery would allocate the residential uses and downtown would be the central business district (CBD). However, residential dispersal had two unexpected outcomes: first, a large number of people who had moved to the suburbs were no longer going downtown, but instead they were patronizing new outlying business districts and shopping centers. Second, the movement outward had a strong class and race component: the middle and upper classes, mostly white, were moving to the periphery and the suburbs—in what was named the “white flight”—while the lower classes, mostly composed of ethnic and racial minorities, could not afford to move, or simply did not want to do so. With little money to spend in downtown, and little reason to use any of the services offered in the CBD, these populations were not the type of clients downtown needed to revive (Fogelson, 2001).

In view of this turn, planners realized that improving accessibility was not enough to stop decentralization. They thought it would also be necessary to attract the upper and middle classes back to the center. But these had left the inner city neighborhoods because of their bad conditions; many were regarded as slums and blighted areas. Therefore, for downtown business interests and their allies it seemed clear that to entice the well-off back, it would be necessary to replace the run-down neighborhoods surrounding the CBD with middle and upper-class residential areas (Fogelson, 2001).

For this reason, downtown business coalitions joined the slum clearance movement, which had emerged in the late 20s and early 30s as an alternative to tenement house reform. This movement sought to provide decent housing and neighborhoods for working people, through the demolition of the worst blocks in inner city neighborhoods, as they realized that the reformist movement initiated in the late nineteenth century was not having enough impact on

the living conditions of low-income groups. No matter how different their final goal was, the downtown coalition was able to join the slum clearance movement and transform it into “a program to rebuild the downtown” as some of the leaders of slum clearance later admitted (Fogelson, 2001).

In July 1949, as a result of persistent pressure from this coalition, the Housing Act was passed, providing for federal aid for urban redevelopment. Title I authorized the federal government to help cities acquire and clear slum and blighted property in designated redevelopment areas and to sell or lease it to private developers and public agencies at below market value. Federal funds could cover up to two-thirds of the cost, while the cities had to put up one-third, which could consist of land donation, infrastructure or facilities construction, and so forth. Title I also provided that families displaced by urban redevelopment should be rehoused by local governments, and that urban redevelopment funds should only be used in residential areas, or to transform blighted areas into residential uses.

However, Title I did not link the grant of redevelopment funds with the obligation to build affordable housing, nor did it specify which slums and blighted areas should be demolished. In addition, the federal agency in charge, the Housing and Home Finance Agency, never enforced the relocation of displaced families, and most local redevelopment agencies ignored it. It also failed in the provision of enough affordable housing to counterbalance the displacement of low-income populations. The reality is that the 1949’s Housing Act left almost all important decisions in the hands of local redevelopment agencies, who were “extremely responsive to pressure from downtown businessmen and elected officials” (Fogelson, 2001), as their boards were in fact dominated by business representatives¹. Therefore, they chose to clear areas located nearby downtown, and those which were in relatively bad state, but not enough so as to “scare off” developers. Title I in fact opened the door for developers to invest in downtown in order to attract the upper and middle classes back, but did not do much to protect the low income population who lived in the razed neighborhoods, producing a displacement of poverty and blight, but not a solution for it.

¹ These groups were called “growth machine” by Logan and Molotch (1987), and “pro-growth coalition” by Mollenkopf (1983).

In addition, in 1956 the Eisenhower administration created the interstate highway program, which included the construction of freeways through inner-city sections, and thus further contributed to the clearing and displacement of inner-city neighborhoods (Mollenkopf, 1983: 81).

By that time, an approach based on comprehensiveness and rationality dominated the urban planning profession (Althuser, 1965: 2) and planners were to make decisions in name of the public interest, which was conceived as “representing the unitary interest of the city as a whole” (Fainstein, 2011: 4). Physical planning dominated the profession, and physical restructuring was believed to be the solution for the ills of inner cities. However, it soon became clear that the social consequences of urban renewal were devastating for the communities displaced. Herbert Gans (1959, 1962), who had conducted an eight-month participant observation study of Boston’s West End residents², was one of the first voices who advocated for a change of perspective in planning towards a focus on the social consequences of urban renewal.

By the end of this period, urban renewal projects had demolished more than 250,000 low-rent central-city units, causing displacement of almost a million people. Moreover, only about 115,000 new units had been built in cleared areas, of which less than 40% were subsidized (Mollenkopf, 1983: 90). Urban renewal razed complete neighborhoods and displaced many low-income families of minority groups, especially African-American, but it was not very successful in bringing the well-to-do back into the city center. By the late 1960s, in light of this failure, planners and policy makers were under tremendous political pressure to move away from middle and upper-income housing as an urban redevelopment strategy (Birch, 2002), and rehabilitation emerged as an alternative to demolition³.

Governance: top-down decision-making

This period is characterized by a strong action from the public sector. Different government levels worked together to plan, assemble, and raze complete areas of the inner-city. The private

² The study was part of a five-year study about the effects of relocation in mental health conducted by the Center for Community Studies, affiliated with the Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, and the Massachusetts General Hospital.

³ In fact, the Housing Act of 1954 already authorized the use of federal funds for rehabilitating existing structures as well as clearing slums.

sector benefited from public action as developers built medium and high income residences in the cleared land.

At the outset of the program, plans were conceived and developed ignoring or taking little account of neighborhood interests (Wilson 1963: 247), and many were completed with little organized opposition, as happened in Boston's West End. Nevertheless, as communities started reacting to the plans, some mechanisms for public participation were required by federal policies. These consisted mainly of voluntary contributions of time and effort in the Urban Renewal boards (Tigan, 2005: 96). Moreover, participation and acceptance of the project were required to be city-wide, and it was relatively easy to obtain approval from civic leaders from non-affected areas. Citing an earlier study, Wilson (1963: 249) pointed out that residents from the affected areas were not represented in citizens' committees dealing with renewal. Given the social composition of the target areas, there was obviously a class dimension to this, as Wilson (1963: 247) clearly stated by the time: "middle-class persons who are beneficiaries of rehabilitation will be planned with, lower-class persons who are disadvantaged by rehabilitation are likely to be planned without."

2.2. Concessionary period (1965-74): federal attention to neighborhoods

From Jane Jacob's call for preserving diversity and her strong critique of urban renewal and highway programs (1961), to Herbert Gans (1962) denunciation of the destruction and displacement caused by Boston's West End urban renewal plan, many voices were publicly opposing this approach to redevelopment.

But not only intellectuals called for a change of direction. In many cities, communities that feared to be subject to such plans started organizing to oppose them. The movement against highway and renewal projects that threatened low-income neighborhoods grew and acquired enough strength so as to stop many of those projects, gaining ample public support and eventually leading to the dismissal of that approach:

The excluded groups— black and minority groups and liberal, young activist professionals—[...] sought to make radical reforms in the federal urban programs that had damaged central-city neighborhoods and advocated community control as a new basis for urban politics (Mollenkopf, 1983: 86).

By the mid-1960s, the success of the Civil Rights movement in the South, and President Lyndon Johnson's declaration of a War on Poverty⁴, helped protestors against redevelopment programs to be taken seriously by public officials, and instituted the mandate for "maximum feasible participation of the poor". By 1966, the Model Cities program "emphasized community preservation, coordination of physical and social planning, and rehabilitation" (Fainstein 2011: 9), focusing its attention on poor neighborhoods and requiring that residents had representation on planning bodies.

In this period, urban renewal moved away from complete clearance and incorporated the rehabilitation of existing buildings as part of the plans:

Reacting against the bulldozer and wrecking ball of the nineteen fifties and the impact of the total clearance approach, many recent urban renewal programs have been predicated on the assumptions that rehabilitation was the most politically, socially, and economically viable means of restoring life to the great stretches of residential neighborhoods in the nation's central cities. (Keyes, 1970: 7)

However, new federal investment in poor neighborhoods did not end the urban renewal programs aimed at downtown redevelopment. While Model Cities and poverty agencies were serving the neighborhoods, subsidies and zoning relief were provided for office and luxury housing construction. The provision of different programs for both spaces acknowledged that poverty in the neighborhoods would not be solved through trickle down policies focused in downtown (Fainstein 2011: 11).

Governance: "power to the people"

As explained above, the destruction and displacement created by the first generation of urban renewal projects provoked strong discontent and rejection among inner-city residents. Affected communities and intellectuals asked for a stronger participation of the residents in the plans that affected their neighborhoods. Davidoff's seminal article, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning" (1965) defended that planning, as a way of determining policy, should operate as a democratic process in which decision-making should include a plural range of voices, and encouraged planners to engage in the political process as advocates of the interests of disadvantaged groups. At the time, citizen participation was expected to help "overcome the

⁴ Formalized through the Economic Opportunity Act (1964)

injustices caused by lack of responsiveness and failures of empathy, as well as being valued in its own right through its furtherance of democracy” (Fainstein, 2010: 64)

President Johnson’s Great Society and War on Poverty included two new programs that would inaugurate the federal “power to the people” movement of the 1960s and 1970s: the Community Action Program (CAP) approved in 1964 as part of the Office of Economic Opportunity Act, and the Model Cities Program (MCP), implemented by the new Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) from 1966 (Tigan, 2005: 97).

As a pioneer program, CAP “ultimately became a method for advancing the political concerns of racial minorities, whose status as citizens remained so problematic” (Mollenkopf, 1983: 91). It funded the creation of over one thousand Community Action Agencies (CAAs), dedicated to achieve the mandated “maximum feasible participation” by the poor. Provided with a great degree of autonomy over the budget and governance of the program, CAAs offered social services through nonprofits operated by community organizations, and, unlike other programs, were not geographically targeted. In terms of community organizing, most CAAs adopted Alinsky-style methods, often resulting in confrontations with City Halls (Tigan, 2005: 97, 108). According to Mollenkopf (1983: 91), one of the lasting results of CAP was that it “provided training and legitimacy for a new stratum of political leadership within black, Hispanic, and white ethnic working-class big-city neighborhoods.”

After the early (controversial) CAP experience, the MCP was designed to “encourage citizen participation in cooperation with local government” (Tigan⁵, 2005: 97), rephrasing the mandate to one of “widespread participation”, which was more likely to include other interest groups such as business and non-activists associations. The new program was designed to allow for participation but minimize confrontation, establishing a more controlled process overseen by elected officials. It also tried to correct previous elements that had not proved effective in fighting poverty, targeting the money geographically—to the poorest neighborhoods—and combining social and physical development programs (Tigan, 2005: 108-110). Compared with CAP, which required the participation of certain percentage of citizens but did not specify a

⁵ Mark Tigan, who wrote his PhD dissertation about “Citizen Participation in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development programs: from the Great Society to the New Federalism” was a former Model Cities program director.

particular method of engagement, Model Cities Program established specific procedures and provided financial and technical support for the process. However, timing was problematic, as the federal government urged local authorities to allocate the funds, while citizen deliberation processes needed more time to reach consensus and make decisions.

During this period, community participation also meant jobs and training for many residents. Both MCP and CAP required participation, meaning hiring, of residents and the poor on the staff of the organizations that managed these programs at the local level. Recent examination has revealed how this community employment provided residents involved the opportunity to develop skills that they would later apply in other leadership roles (Tigan, 2005: 101)

It is also worth highlighting the strong connection that existed between the Great Society programs and the Civil Rights movement agenda. By the time, racial tensions were especially high at the local level, and both movements “reinforced each other through overlapping leadership and membership” (Tigan, 2005: 105). Part of the Civil Rights ideology was the achievement of greater autonomy, which in some cases translated into demands for neighborhood control of governmental institutions⁶.

Despite its initial objectives, later evaluation of the enduring impact of the MCP claimed that it promoted the co-optation of the mobilized leadership and therefore diminished pressure on local governments “by providing a ‘buffering’ mechanism”, while not achieving greater redistribution (Kerstein and Judd, 1980: 209).

2.3. Conserving period (1975-1981): public action shrinks

By 1973 the coalition that had made urban renewal possible (downtown interests and the slum clearance movement) was broken, and President Nixon called for a moratorium on all federal renewal programs (Fogelson, 2001). In 1974, the passage of the Housing and Economic Development Act terminated the federal urban renewal, Model Cities, and public housing programs, which were replaced by Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Section Eight housing programs. CDBG sought to give localities greater flexibility in the use of

⁶ As was the case in Boston. See section 3 in this same chapter.

federal grants (Teaford, 2000), which could be directed to fund local community development activities such as affordable housing, anti-poverty programs, and infrastructure development.

The effect of block grants, allocated through formula to all areas in substitution of the previous competitive system⁷, was that central cities stopped receiving large amounts of subsidies from the federal government, and “no longer could support large scale public land acquisitions and capital expenditure programs” (Fainstein 2011: 12). By the end of this period, city governments had shifted their focus from blight and slum removal towards promoting economic development, and federal emphasis on community revitalization had almost disappeared (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1983).

By the mid-1970s, the national economy underwent a major restructuring, as manufacturing industries started relocating overseas, leading to increasing unemployment. In a context of deep fiscal crisis, local governments had to face increasing expenses with less tax revenue—as high and medium income populations continued leaving the cities towards the suburbs—while federal support for urban programs almost disappeared. Inner-city neighborhoods faced abandonment, while areas that had been razed by urban renewal programs waited for investment. The ultimate goal of urban policies shifted from anti-poverty to economic development, and the path followed to achieve it was to attract private investment.

As the national economy was shifting towards services, and due to agglomeration needs in the advanced services sector, downtowns of old Frostbelt cities were becoming increasingly attractive as potential locations for corporate headquarters and offices, as well as housing, retail and entertainment facilities for the professionals that would be working in the new downtown offices (Levine, 1987). This led to a race among old central cities to attract private investment by offering substantial incentives through different mechanisms as tax increment financing districts (TIFs), through which the city would borrow against its expected increase in income and use the enhanced tax revenues in a designated TIF district to reimburse the cost of the public investment in the renewal project (Teaford, 2000). Other mechanisms included low-interest loans for developers, tax abatements, zoning relief and improvements in public infrastructure.

⁷ This shift was aimed at distributing funds to the Republican administration’s suburban and Southern constituencies (Mollenkopf, 1983: 127, and Fainstein 2011: 12).

Moreover, in 1977, Carter's federal government reinforced this trend by introducing the Urban Development Action Grants (UDAGs), aimed at providing public funding to leverage private investment in distressed cities. In contrast to previous renewal efforts, where government cleared land with the expectation that private business would redevelop it, UDAGs required private investors to make commitments prior to grant approval. One of the innovations of the UDAG program was the idea of public-private partnerships (James, 2007): public money was used to leverage larger sums of private investment (at least \$2.50 for each public dollar). However, even if UDAG funds could be used for neighborhood revitalization, the most significant projects were large and profitable commercial complexes such as Faneuil Hall in Boston, raising criticism for the use of tax dollars to subsidize private profits. The rationale behind the program was that, given that the private market was not investing in those cities, UDAG projects would help cities build up their tax bases and increase their level of employment. The UDAG approach became the template for future redevelopment projects and ended the comprehensive planning approach that had characterized previous decades, as investment was allocated in an "opportunistic, project-by-project basis" (Fainstein 2011: 13).

In some old cities, the shift of the economy towards the provision of high-level services started to attract highly-qualified, high-income workers back to the city center, which started a phenomenon labeled as gentrification⁸ that has since grown and spread, being the major cause of displacement of low-income communities in old American cities such as New York and Boston. As Fainstein (2011: 16) phrased it "the irony was that incremental, more democratic processes achieved the ends of urban renewal more efficiently than the demolition and new construction that planners had formerly believed necessary for upgrading urban housing."

On the other hand, cities with a strong manufacturing economic base suffered from disinvestment, witnessing abandonment rather than gentrification. In most Midwestern industrial cities this decline was followed by high unemployment and population decreases, with Detroit losing one third of its employment base between 1968 and 1977 (Fainstein, 2011: 16).

⁸ Gentrification can be defined as the increase in rents and housing prices that occurs when a more affluent population moves into a lower-income inner-city neighborhood. As a consequence, former residents and businesses that cannot afford to pay the increased rents are displaced. See Smith, Neil (1996): "The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City." London; New York: Routledge.

In order to reverse the decline, different strategies were pursued. By the early 1980s, Baltimore became a model of success for its strategy of attracting private investment to redevelop downtown into a modern “corporate center” through the creation of an attractive business environment and the provision of substantial public subsidies to private redevelopment (UDAG, among others). However, critics such as Levine (1987) raised the question of who was benefiting from this model, as studies showed that it was not increasing the aggregate levels of prosperity of the city as a whole.

The underlying assumption for the Baltimore model was that the physical and economic revitalization of downtown would spill over into surrounding neighborhoods, and that jobs created in the new offices, retailing and hotels, would be a good replacement for declining manufacturing employment. The plan was extremely successful in achieving its goals: extensive private investment flowed into the redeveloped area and many new services and tourism related projects were built⁹. Nevertheless, Baltimore was still one of the cities with higher poverty and unemployment rates among all Frostbelt cities of similar size. Moreover, several studies concluded that downtown redevelopment contributed to highly uneven growth in Baltimore between 1970 and 1985, giving way to the rise of “Two Baltimores” (Levine, 1987). While developers and suburban professionals benefitted from downtown investment, for Baltimore’s poorer, primarily black, neighborhoods, conditions worsened during that period, as little investment was made in the housing stock, and social programs and municipal services suffered severe cuts. In terms of employment, jobs created in downtown were mostly high-wage “knowledge-intensive” positions aimed mostly at suburban professionals, whereas the rest were low-paying jobs in the tourism-convention sector—such as cleaners, security guards, etc.—leaving very little opportunities for career ladder and middle-income jobs. Moreover, the replacement of entry-level manufacturing jobs with this kind of employment meant a significant loss of income for the lower classes (Levine, 1987).

In summary, this period was characterized by an increased reliance on the private sector to lead redevelopment, through the provision of subsidies and tax benefits. Reduced public provision

⁹ Among others, the Maryland Science Center, the World Trade Center, the Convention Center, the National Aquarium, and Harborplace, the most successful of all, a festival market place that attracted 18 million visitors in its first year (Levine, 1987).

paired up with increasing social unrest to encourage the development a nonprofit sector that operated in the most deprived neighborhoods.

Governance: the rise of community based organizations

In these years, public participation and community planning suffered a gradual metamorphosis that continued in subsequent periods. Community involvement in planning diminished substantially due to a combination of factors that includes: devolution of urban and poverty policy-making to state and local governments; decentralization of power; privatization of government functions; and increased reliance on community based organizations (CBOs) to deliver governmental services (Tigan, 2005).

With the advent of Nixon's "New Federalism" and its ideology of minimal government, the federal government began a series of measures aimed at the devolution of responsibility for urban and poverty issues to the state and the local levels.

Moreover, conservative governments embraced the private capitalist paradigm, in the belief that the system performs more efficiently when it is market-based and profit-driven. This led to the privatization of several government functions and services, placing redevelopment under the leadership of the private sector, thus taking away control from the elected officials and leaving communities with less power to press for demands and participation.

In addition, there was a parallel effort to decentralize government and its functions, which at the federal level resulted in the transmission of responsibility to the state and local level, while at the local level it meant the transfer of responsibility and funding to the community-based nonprofit sector. However, with very few exceptions, this transmission did not mean the granting of power to the grassroots-neighborhood level.

Moreover, when compared to the previous Model Cities' competitive system (where the quality of community participation influenced the allocation of funds), the formula system used for the allocation of CDBG funds relaxed local governments' efforts to enhance public participation, as they only had to meet minimum requirements to receive funding. In fact, research examining funding distributions under CDBG found that the formula system was less responsive to community needs (Tigan, 2005: 135).

In this period, as public funding for redevelopment shrunk, the number of community development corporations (CDCs) working in the neighborhoods expanded (Stoecker, 1997). Originated in the times of the Model Cities Program as spin-offs of community organizations that needed a legal structure in order to receive subsidies, CDCs tried to “rebuild communities devastated by capitalist disinvestment” (Stoecker, 1997), accomplishing bottom-up, comprehensive redevelopment. Their roots can be traced to funding provided by a Special Impact Amendment to the Economic Opportunity Act (Bratt, 1989). The first CDC, the Bed-Stuy Restoration Corporation, was founded following a visit by Robert Kennedy to the devastated Bedford-Stuyvesant section of New York’s Central Brooklyn in 1966. The first generation of CDCs was especially centered on economic development, while in the 1970s CDCs emerged from groups protesting redlining and displacement of communities due to urban renewal. By that time, they moved their focus towards housing development, and they started receiving funding from private philanthropy, from Title VII of the 1974 Community Services Act, as well as through tax benefits from private investors.

2.4. Privatized period (1982-early nineties): the takeoff of public-private partnerships

This period is characterized by the market-oriented, locally-controlled, *laissez-faire* urban policies of the Reagan and Bush conservative federal governments. Early in this period, UDAG funds were expanded to target also wealthier and smaller cities with “pockets of poverty” (James, 2007). However, Reagan’s belief that federal government should not be involved in redevelopment issues lessened the importance of the program, which was finally ended in 1988.

However, public-private partnerships were to be the most used mechanism for urban redevelopment. This approach, which relied on the provision of large local and state public expenditures through tax subsidies and infrastructure provision, “epitomize(d) top-down planning justified in the name of economic development” (Fainstein, 2011: 22). Highly dependent on its profitability, redevelopment of this kind was very susceptible to changes in the real-estate cycle (Fainstein, 2001), experiencing a big boom during the mid-eighties and strongly suffering the stagnation of the early 1990s.

In most cities, governments limited their action to the provision of incentives for private investment in downtown areas. Decades of social opposition had made clear that redevelopment through clearance and displacement would not be accepted anymore. Moreover, the restructuring of the economy had left behind abandoned manufacturing districts, old industrial waterfronts, abandoned rail yards, etc., creating areas of opportunity for redevelopment with the need to displace population or businesses.

However, as the Baltimore case had proved, the “conserving” approach to redevelopment produced an uneven distribution of benefits. Realizing the growing disparities between the fate of downtown and the neighborhoods, some “progressive” Mayors in cities like Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco started adopting proactive measures to link the benefits of downtown redevelopment to the neighborhoods, instead of assuming that they will trickle down in a natural way (Clavel, 2010). These linkage policies required downtown developers to provide low and moderate income housing or to contribute to funds for housing, job training, public transportation and other public services. In Chicago, such policy encouraged developers to increase purchasing from local suppliers, directly invest in neighborhoods or contribute to a trust fund earmarked for neighborhood economic development. However, only cities with a booming real estate market could afford to implement this type of policies, as they were not of much use if no investment was flowing into the city.

Governance: consolidation of CDCs

In terms of community involvement in the planning process, this period is a continuation of the previous, with privatization trends deepening in the Reagan era. CDBG continued to be the main formula to fund neighborhood redevelopment, and public participation was largely funneled through CBOs.

The CDC movement consolidated and oriented its activity towards a “bricks and mortar” approach to neighborhood revitalization. In fact, a study by Winkelman cited by Tigan (2005: 140) showed that by 1992 over 50% of CDBG funds were used in this way, even if the program did not require it.

Community mobilization declined, as redevelopment initiative was transferred to the private sector and conflict was not as apparent as in previous decades:

As the state ceased to be the direct agent of redevelopment, it became a less important target for class conflict over use of the city. This conflict was now played out in a disaggregated manner between landlords and tenants, working-class residents and gentrifiers, small shopkeepers and big developers (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1983: 268).

2.5. Competitive period (from early-nineties)

Because of the deepening of the currents already in place, this period could be characterized as a continuation of the previous one, as Fainstein does (2011: 3). However, I would argue that several distinctive characteristics allow for a differentiation in order to better understand the trends. During this period, the main formula for urban redevelopment continued to be the public-private partnership, and the main source of public funding was still CDBG. However, in the nineties, the Clinton administration approved some new federal programs aimed at funding redevelopment, such as the HOPE VI program for public housing redevelopment¹⁰, and the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Initiative, aimed at spurring economic development. Moreover, the economic crisis of the late 2000s forced the Obama administration to approve several Recovery Acts and to provide funding for programs aimed at stabilizing communities suffering from foreclosures and abandonment (the Neighborhood Stabilization Program).

What makes this period distinctive is not so much the particular policies or programs, but the context in which they were implemented. Although it is difficult to establish a break point for the beginning of globalization, it can be affirmed that after the early-nineties economic crisis, most central cities had already entered a new global competition to attract investment and visitors. Moreover, the new information and communication technologies (ICT) gave way to a new “network society” (Castells, 1996), in which instant flows of information completely changed economic transactions and social relationships.

In order to compete in a global market, cities needed to project their image internationally giving rise to a new trend of urban branding and marketing. Following the Barcelona example, many cities started bidding to organize Olympic Games and other international mega-events to promote their image internationally, while taking the opportunity to redevelop ample areas of

¹⁰ HOPE VI includes the substitution of public housing projects by mixed-income developments. Surprisingly, the demolition of the housing and the dispersion of former residents have not raised much opposition.

the city. Global tourism became a major force in shaping urban policies and redevelopment projects (Hoffman, Fainstein and Judd, 2003). In old cities, the focus was historical preservation and the accommodation of tourists in the center, resulting many times in gentrified inner-neighborhoods with little provision of services and retail for the daily life. In newer cities, efforts concentrated on creating attractive and entertaining environments for the visitors.

Local governments became explicitly entrepreneurial in their goals and actions. This shift, described by Harvey (1989) as “from Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism”, unfolded as an increased involvement of city governments in promoting economic development rather than providing social services, through entrepreneurial ventures in coalition with the private sector, where the public sector carried the major risks while the private sector collected the profits of the operation. In a deepening of the state retreat initiated in the 1970s, an increased number of formerly public services were transferred to the private and nonprofit sectors. In fact, the provision of social services and the construction of affordable housing were increasingly provided by nonprofit community-based corporations, thus “suffering from their usual lack of resources and capacity to fulfill the role of local governments” (DeFilippis, 2004).

The effort to attract private business pushed cities to invest in new infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the new economy: convention centers, hotels, expansion of airports, public transit, etc. Public-private partnerships continued to be the most used formula to manage and finance redevelopment, and the construction of megaprojects as a redevelopment strategy made a comeback. The tendency to redevelop former industrial areas continued, while inner-city redevelopment was usually accomplished in a parcel-by-parcel basis. However, the expansion of big inner-city institutions, such as universities and hospitals, still created tension in inner-city, occupied, areas, as the so-called “Eds and Meds” acquired and redeveloped surrounding parcels¹¹.

Some urban economists pointed out that for cities to succeed in a globalized economy they would need to attract creative people, the source of the much-invoked innovation (Florida, 2003; Glaeser, 2005). Cities that were able to restructure their economies became attractive

¹¹ For instance, the case of Columbia University in West Harlem, NYC, John Hopkins Hospital and University in East Baltimore, or Tufts New England Medical Center in Chinatown, Boston.

places to live for the new professionals that worked downtown (Bircher, 2003), intensifying the gentrification pressure and displacing the lower income populations further away from the city center, this time through rent increases¹².

In the 2000s, the growth coalition that characterized redevelopment in previous decades had fallen apart. Globalization had changed the character of companies, which were no longer invested in a single place, provoking a change in the composition of the business coalitions (Strom, 2008). Moreover, the traditional tension between development in downtown and in the neighborhoods diminished (Strom, 2008), especially if analyzed geographically (Fainstein, 2011: 18). However, the tendency of directing large amounts of investment into large “economic development” projects remained, while services and affordable housing received relatively smaller amounts of public funding, usually channeled through the nonprofit development sector, as we will see happening in the Jackson Square case.

In this period, redevelopment was not explicitly designed to be redistributive, but to promote widespread economic development through a trickle-down movement.

Governance: decline in citizen activism

From the 1980s there was a decline of citizen activism as well as of federal support for public participation (Tigan, 2005: 102). Most cities maintained a minimum level of grassroots neighborhood participation, but the apparent lack of social unrest, at least when compared with the time of racial riots, diminished interest in participation. Moreover, community-based organizations, in particular CDCs, became more prominent in the revitalization processes, gradually substituting for broader-based participation:

Since the Model Cities Program, citizen participation—viewed then as horizontally integrated in the function of “planning”—has extended vertically, with the expanded involvement of CBOs in program conceptualization, program budgeting and activity implementation, arguably in detriment of general pluralistic citizen empowerment, especially if the nonprofit boards have become more ‘elite’ in their composition and orientation (Tigan, 2005: vii)

¹² One collateral effect of this forced outward movement is that lower income populations, who greatly rely on public transportation, are now further away from the services they need to support their daily lives.

In the late 90s, Stoecker (1997) questioned the extent to which CDCs were having enough impact to reverse urban decline, and whether the task of developing was being put before community organizing. According to Stoecker (1997), CDCs had become conventional developers following the market rules rather than fighting for the necessary social change to support sustainable communities. He pointed at the main contradiction that CDCs faced: how to deal with the market forces in trying to be a developer and at the same time achieve objectives of social change while maintaining their grassroots mentality. In fact, several scholars have pointed out the risk of community-based organizations being co-opted by public officials and larger nonprofit organizations, with the result of grassroots advocacy being diminished (Stoecker, 1997; Silverman, 2009). Mayer (2003: 110) described how social movements have been co-opted by participatory institutions under neoliberal approaches:

What might appear as the fulfillment of earlier grassroots empowerment claims is actually part of a new mode of governance that has emerged in and for neglected and disadvantaged areas and communities.

Moreover, community development, as represented by CDCs, became depolitized and moved away from conflict, while some argue that an ideology of “neo-liberal communitarianism” dominated the field since the nineties (DeFilippis, 2004 and 2007). Three main trends characterized this approach according to DeFilippis (2004): first, it was market-based in its goals and programmatic features, as CDCs operated within the existing real estate framework without opposing it, and even worked with the corporate sector; second, it promoted nonconfrontational forms of engagement and organizing, mainly consensus building, assuming that low-income communities shared a set of interests with the society at large, and thus ignoring the influence of power relations; finally, they operated within a “powerful reassertion of the idea of *community*, and a particular version of *communitarianism*” (DeFilippis, 2004: 54), which assumed that relations within communities tend to be win-win, and that “*individual* gains and interests in the community are synonymous with *collective*, or community, gains and interests” (DeFilippis, 2004: 54).

Other macro trends that might explain diminished citizen participation are the general decline in social capital (Putnam, 2000), the recent trend to open government and make it more transparent to citizens, and changes in mechanisms of participation, with public hearings and citizen-based commissions being less conducive to meaningful participation (Tigan, 2005). But

at the same time, communities have become defensive of their territories, giving rise to a wave of NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) movements, especially against the siting of unwanted development and infrastructure. Moreover, given the state's increased retrenchment from development affairs, since the late 1990s communities across the U.S. started exercising their organizing power to negotiate community benefits agreements (CBA) with prospective developers. CBAs specified the benefits that a particular community would get from the developer in exchange for the community's support—or at least lack of opposition—of a proposed development (Salkin and Lavine, 2007/2008).

Social justice scholarship conceptualized the Right to the City movement (Harvey, 2008; Marcuse, 2009), an alliance of grassroots organizations—neighborhood based, tenants, labor unions—that united struggles for housing, health care, and public space against neoliberal forces to build an alternative model for cities. Fainstein (2010) conceptualized “The Just City” as one where equity, diversity and democracy were fully realized, noting that participatory planning—despite its democratic processes—is not a guarantee of just outcomes, critically reviewing the 40-year-long movement of communicative planning in the U.S. as not having achieved significant redistribution.

In conclusion, an overview of major redevelopment trends in the U.S. over the last sixty years shows the evolving role that government, the private sector and the community at large have played in shaping each of its stages. It also acknowledges the influence of federal policies on local spaces, as well as the different approaches attempted to overcome urban problems. These trends in federal policy, as well as economic restructuring since the 1970s, have resulted in very differing situations, with some cities experiencing economic and population growth while other agonize. The next section explores how these trends have played out in Boston, in order to set the context for the particular case study of this research.

3. The case of Boston

Boston is an interesting case to look at when researching redevelopment and governance. It was a pioneer and, for some time a model, in the urban renewal times, when the West End plan was accomplished. Later on, public pressure made the Boston Redevelopment Authority change direction, and attention was geared towards the neighborhoods, allowing for organized groups to start participating in the “rehabilitation” game (Keyes, 1969). In the 1970s, neighborhood and city-wide groups were even able to stop the construction of a highway planned to cross the city. In the 1980s Boston became again a pioneer, this time because of the power given by a progressive administration to a neighborhood group, no more no less than eminent domain. Ever since, Boston has become proud of being a “city of neighborhoods”, using linkage policies to ensure that the prosperity of the city’s downtown is shared by the less prosperous areas. Meanwhile, the neighborhood movement has consolidated and professionalized, as proved by the increasing number of CDCs operating in the city.

The objective of this chapter is to provide a framework for understanding the dynamics of the Jackson Square process in the context of the history of redevelopment and community participation in Boston, in order to relate back the findings from Jackson Square to the Boston example. Below I examine the city’s history of redevelopment and governance using the same framework as in the previous chapter. However, some of the periods defined are not exactly coincidental with those used for the national framework, as the breakpoints usually coincided with the election of a new mayor to office.

3.1. An Urban Renewal pioneer (1950-1967)

Boston started the second half of the twentieth century facing economic stagnation and an alarming decrease in population. From as soon as the 1920s, many of New England’s textile factories—controlled by Boston wealthy families—had moved to the South, but after a temporary revival during World War II, the decline intensified again in the 1950s and 1960s¹³.

¹³ In 1947, 280,000 people worked in New England’s textile plants; by 1964, this number had dropped to 99,000 (Kennedy, 1992: 158).

The city's business and political leadership sought to revitalize the central business district as a way of reversing the suburban expansion, aiming at attracting back the middle and high income classes through the redevelopment of "blighted" areas near downtown. In order to comply with the requirements of the 1949 Housing Act, Boston issued a General Plan in 1950, proposing redevelopment of 20 percent of the city's land area over a period of twenty-five years (Kennedy, 1992: 159). At first, Boston's Housing Authority was designated as the agency in charge of renewal, granted with the power to assemble land through eminent domain. In 1957, the state legislature created the Boston Redevelopment Authority, stripping the Housing Authority of its redevelopment capacities¹⁴.

The West End was the first and more infamous of the urban renewal projects in Boston, becoming a national reference, first for achieving the goals of the federal policy and later as a symbol of the disastrous consequences of urban renewal on the area's former residents. The whole neighborhood was razed and its population, mostly low-income Italian-American, displaced, in order to provide the land for a private developer to build middle- and high-income housing.

The area—one of the city's most densely populated and multiethnic neighborhoods—had been targeted for "renewal" early in the twentieth century, so when the federal government approved the financial support for redevelopment through the 1949 Housing Act, Boston quickly applied for it. The plan was announced in 1953, and approved in 1956 by the federal and state government. In 1957, the BRA, which had been transferred control of the project from the Boston Housing Authority, started holding informal meetings, facing strong opposition to the project. However, it was officially approved and residents received notice of demolition plans in the spring of 1958. By the summer of 1960, the neighborhood had been completely razed and some 2,700 households displaced (Kennedy, 1992: 164). The old neighborhood was replaced by the Charles River Park luxury residential development, built by

¹⁴ Ever since, the BRA is directed by a semi-autonomous, five-member board, with four members appointed by the Mayor and one by the state. In 1960 the City Planning Board was abolished and its powers were transferred to the BRA. Its broad development authorities include the power to buy and sell property, the power to acquire property through eminent domain, and the power to grant tax concession to encourage commercial and residential development. Over the years, many voices have pointed that the BRA's roles as both real estate owner/developer and approval authority are a conflict of interest.

a private developer who bought the cleared land at a much reduced price, as prescribed by urban renewal practices.

Another key project of the 1950s was the construction of the Central Artery highway, which ran from North to South Station, cutting off the North End and the waterfront from the rest of downtown. After many years of debate and planning, in the late 1990s the artery was torn down and replaced by a tunnel, an operation named the “Big Dig”.

After years of uneasy relationship under the previous Curley administration¹⁵, the private and public sectors had started cooperating again under Mayor John Hynes. Despite his efforts to revive the city through public-led redevelopment and highway construction, Boston remained depressed by the late 1950s. A general perception of the need to change direction led to the unexpected victory of Mayor Collins in 1959, who claimed that “Boston needed to limit its government and cut spending; municipal government relied too heavily upon the property tax; and the total clearance style of urban renewal was a failure” (Kennedy, 1992: 170).

Collins brought in Edward Logue, the director of the acclaimed New Haven renewal process, to lead the BRA and prepare a comprehensive development program for the city. Under Logue, the City Planning Board was merged into the BRA, expanding its power to both planning and implementation of redevelopment, and consolidating the independence of the agency. Asserting that Boston was lacking planning, the philosophy behind Logue’s ambitious plan¹⁶ was that the municipal government should have a vision and lead the whole effort to revitalize the city, from planning to development. According to Kennedy (1992: 176) “the Collins-Logue era was in a multitude of ways the most consequential in Boston’s planning history”, as Logue was able to revive the city economically after years of decline, with the firm support of the Mayor, and to obtain the necessary federal and state funding to do so.

Logue represents a transitional figure in the urban renewal history, moving away from the total clearance style and evolving the role of the public sector in the process to a more comprehensive one. In the process, he was able to engage both the “The Vault”—the

¹⁵ Curley was Mayor discontinuously between 1920 and 1950, pursuing redistribution through large-scale public projects and increasing taxes for businesses, contributing to an enduring hostility between Irish politicians and Yankee businessmen (Glaeser, 2005; Kennedy, 1992).

¹⁶ Named “Ninety Million Dollar Development Program for Boston.”

leadership of Boston's business community—as well as attending to the claims of an incipient neighborhood movement. His plan put almost one quarter of the city's land, and 50% of its population, under renewal areas, promoting big public-private partnership projects¹⁷ as well as the provision of better housing at affordable rents. Indeed, his legacy includes the complete razing of the Scollay Square area to make room for a new Government Center, as well as the introduction of rehabilitation in the renewal schemes.

In 1964 Logue changed the zoning code, eliminating building-height limitations to allow for the construction of new office towers (Kennedy, 1992: 1983). He also drew up a general plan for the city, published in 1965, which included measures of physical as well as social renewal throughout the city.

For some, Logue acknowledged the “importance of the social dimension in planning and was, in fact, a leader in incorporating community participation and social reform” in his redevelopment efforts (Kennedy, 1992: 188). However, his experience “planning with people”, as he called it, was mixed: if the Model Cities' Washington Park renewal project was well received by Roxbury's community leadership, in Charleston and Allston he faced strong opposition and had to substantially modify his plans. As part of an effort to spur citizen participation, in 1962—prior to Johnson's War on Poverty—he created a new agency, Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), which officially became Boston's antipoverty agency by the time Johnson's Economic Opportunity Act passed in 1964 (ABCD webpage, n.d.). ABCD initially worked closely with the BRA, but with time their two very different missions— neighborhood community organizing and visioning versus city-wide redevelopment—spurred hostility between them. In fact, critics claim that Logue was open to the private sector and community leadership's needs, but less sensitive to the unorganized residents of poor areas (Kennedy, 1992: 189).

Logue's strategy was later characterized as top-down and his legacy is controversial. However, many claim that he put in place the foundations that made Boston's prosperity possible in the 1970s and 1980s, with the mobilization of both the public and the private sectors (Kennedy, 1992: 192; Diamond *et al.*, n.d.). When compared with the national trends, Boston was not only

¹⁷ Among others, the redevelopment of the waterfront, the construction of the new aquarium, and the Prudential Center.

a pioneer in the clearance style of urban renewal, but was also one of the first to start amending the wrongs of that approach through the incorporation of rehabilitation in the plans, as well as through an incipient effort of community engagement.

3.2. The neighborhood movement is born (1968-74)

Despite Collins and Logue's efforts, the city was still declining in population and manufacturing in 1968, when Kevin White became mayor. He would be in office for sixteen years, starting his tenure with a very strong emphasis on community planning and then moving his attention to the redevelopment of downtown in his last years in office. Thus I have divided his tenure in two parts, corresponding to the "concessionary" and "conserving" periods described in the preceding section.

During his first mayoral campaign, White "resurrected the old conflict of neighborhood versus downtown as a means of gathering support" (Kennedy, 1992: 197). He blamed his predecessors for not attending to the needs of those who lived in the city, picking up the general hostility towards the BRA. There was nothing innovative in this approach: Johnson's War on Poverty had already been in place for several years, and strong social movements had been developing over the decade. In Boston, this atmosphere gave rise to a strong community activism, which took an increasingly important role in shaping the city.

Consequently, White started his tenure establishing the Little City Hall program using Model Cities funding. Inspired by Mayor Lindsay's similar program in New York, it consisted of satellite offices in Boston's neighborhoods, each of which had a manager that reported to the Mayor the community's major demands¹⁸.

In parallel, White established a system of district planning within the city government, despite objections from Little City Hall managers, who feared competition in dealing with the neighborhoods. Under Logue, the BRA had mainly focused on the South End, Roxbury, Charlestown and downtown, while White extended his attentions to all the neighborhoods. However, the Little City Hall program did not last long, but district planning did, although it

¹⁸ Some of these managers became real advocates for their community, as was Fred Salvucci's case in East Boston.

was later transferred from the BRA to the Neighborhood Development Administration (NDA) when critics charged that neighborhood planners had become over politicized (Kennedy, 1992: 200).

In terms of community mobilization, White had to deal with two major issues. The first was the proposed construction of the Inner Belt Highway and Southwest Expressway. As it constitutes a precedent for the Jackson Square process, it is further detailed in the next chapter. In summary, the BRA started acquiring and clearing the land through eminent domain in 1967, which spurred strong opposition in the affected neighborhoods. Community mobilization led the state's governor to declare a moratorium on further acquisitions of property by the BRA in 1972, and finally led to the total dismissal of the proposed highway and the launching of a national campaign to allow for federal highway funding to be diverted for mass transit projects (Luppo, 1971).

The other outstanding example of community mobilization in this period was "Tent City". In April 1968 a group of South End residents set up tents in a three-acre site nearby Copley Square that the city had cleared of homes and sold to a developer, who was using it as a parking lot. Led by community activist Mel King, they asked for affordable housing for lower-income residents to be built in the site. However, soon the community split in two factions "rendering the dispute more complicated than the straightforward community-versus-the-BRA argument it had originally been" (Kennedy, 1992: 201). This controversy delayed the resolution of the conflict by almost twenty years, when a mixed-income housing development was finally constructed in the site¹⁹.

At the end of this period, White had to deal with the consequences of the Boston school desegregation order of 1974, which resulted in the busing controversy, causing years of conflict and racial tension in Boston's neighborhoods.

¹⁹ For a detailed account of the origins of the Tent City movement see King, 1981.

3.3. Downtown boom (1975-1983)

After two terms and a tough reelection campaign in 1975, White “lost interest in providing attention and services to residents of the neighborhoods” (Kennedy, 1992: 202). In contrast, he concentrated his efforts—and by extension those of the BRA—on downtown development, leaving neighborhood planning to the NDA.

Coinciding with the “conserving period” in federal policy, he also pursued a strategy of economic development through incentives for private investment in the city. Instrumental to this objective was the use of Chapter 121A, first used in the development of the Prudential Center in the times of Collins and Logue. This state law, which applies only to areas designated as “blighted”, allowed the mayor to offer zoning waivers and reduced tax liability when negotiating with developers. Combined with extensive public investment, this legislation promoted a wave of construction in the city, deeply transforming Boston’s downtown. In the process, the Mayor took a leading role, becoming increasingly controversial as he intervened in the election of developers—in projects such as the acclaimed transformation of the Quincy Market into the Faneuil Hall Marketplace, or the Long Warf Hotel—or otherwise deciding the location of a new federal government building in the North Station area (Kennedy, 1992).

Another important example of private development enticement was Copley Place, a state-led operation over the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension, which in 1977 brought in the Chicago-based developer Urban Investment Development Corporation. The process included the participation of a Citizen’s Review Committee which defined a set of guidelines to be incorporated in the deal between the private developer and the state. After intense negotiations an agreement was reached in 1979. In 1980 Boston received federal UDAG funding for the project, raising criticism from the Tent City movement and others, which claimed that the city government was more interested in seeking funding for luxury downtown development than for affordable housing (Schweitzer, 1983).

During these years, Boston’s economy suffered from the oil crisis and national recession in the mid-1970s, but by the late 1970s the city was well positioned to take advantage of the changing trends towards a service-based economy. However, Boston’s budget suffered after the 1979 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decision to overturn Boston’s traditional practice of assessing commercial property at a higher rate than residential property, forcing the city to pay

back millions of dollars to commercial property owners (Kennedy, 1992: 209). Moreover, in 1980 the passage of Proposition 2 ½ set an upper limit on property taxes, further constraining the city's budget. For years, the level of city investment declined, and only after years of state and city efforts to restructure Boston's fiscal base and increase the state's contribution the city could resume investments.

This funding shortage led White to sell several city-owned parking lots, where huge buildings were erected²⁰, as well as to transfer the Hynes Convention Center to the state. The combination of an expanding services economy and the city's need of cash induced an unprecedented building boom in the early and mid-1980s, which completely transformed Boston's skyline.

No matter how prosperous the city might appear to investors, downtown success was not reaching the neighborhoods, which suffered from disinvestment, and lack of affordable housing and jobs²¹. The 1983 mayoral race, after White had completed his fourth and last term, focused on the criticism to the uneven development on White's last years, a view that many Bostonians shared.

3.4. The “progressive city” (1984-1992)

In contrast with the national trends, which were dominated by Reagan's campaign of limited government and privatization, a handful of cities emerged in this period as “progressive cities”²², developing policies and programs that addressed the claims of redistribution and participation that had their roots in social movements born in the neighborhoods (Clavel, 2010). Boston and Chicago were the biggest of the kind, which included other examples as San Francisco, Santa Monica, Berkeley, and Burlington.

²⁰ Such as the New England Life building and the International Place.

²¹ In fact, by 1980 only 41% of Boston's jobs were covered by residents. Many Bostonians were not qualified to work in the growing financial and managerial sectors, and still relied in the declining manufacturing jobs (Kennedy, 1992: 219).

²² Pierre Clavel (2010: 6) defines a “progressive city” as the intersect of two dimensions, redistributive and participatory reforms initiated by the city government, adding that a more nuanced conception of the progressive city would include the observation that all or most of the innovations characterizing these places had roots in a social movement that found a common cause in neighborhoods issues.

The 1983 final mayoral election was disputed between Mel King—an African American community activist that after being a leader in the South End had moved to the state legislature—and Ray Flynn—a South Bostonian of working-class Irish descendant who had been elected to the state legislature and city council being a champion of neighborhood causes. Building on the recent busing controversy, race conflict was a big challenge for Boston at the time, and thus “the role of organizers, politicians, and voters on the left [...] has to be seen as shaped by this background” (Clavel, 2010: 55). If both candidates shared a populist position and a focus on neighborhoods, their approach to the race issue was markedly different. While King represented a “rainbow coalition”—an alliance of blacks with other excluded constituencies—that wished to confront racism openly, Flynn’s message on race was to “focus on the issues (housing, class inequality) that unite us, not those that divide us” (Clavel, 2010: 56). Flynn won the election with an ample majority, and therefore was commissioned with the task to rebuild the neighborhoods with a limited municipal budget. Moreover, two nonbinding referenda proposed by the activist group Mass Fair Share, which called for the creation of a linkage program and “neighborhood councils” with veto power over development, passed with great majority in the elections (Clavel, 2010: 60). As described below, these issues would become central during Flynn’s mayoralty.

Despite the populist rhetoric of the campaign, Flynn had to manage an unprecedented downtown growth, which led him to conceive his mission as one of “both to nurture the real estate boom (the golden goose) and extract from it sufficient resources to help the neighborhoods” (Clavel 2010: 61). To deal with developers and businesspeople, Flynn appointed Stephen Coyle as head of the BRA, whose first task was to revise the projects originated in the White years. Only half of them were finally approved, and some were substantially scaled down in response to citizen’s opposition²³. In contrast to White’s project-by-project development review process, Coyle released new zoning guidelines, the Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD), which helped to control downtown development and make it more predictable.

²³ Still, Coyle was criticized for using development as a revenue-maker to alleviate the city’s fiscal problems, a criticism that reflects the contradiction on the BRA’s mission: to both plan the city to ensure the quality of its environment and to ensure development gets done and increases the city’s tax base.

To formulate plans and update the city's ordinance in the neighborhoods, Flynn created neighborhood councils in some areas²⁴, responding to the demand expressed at the referendum. The councils' mission was to advise city agencies involved with development, and at first its members were appointed by the Mayor. However, he did not grant them veto power over development, arguing that there were city-wide interests that might override neighborhood demands (Clavel, 2010: 69). In addition, he established the Planning and Zoning Advisory Committees (PZACs), which would cover the areas without neighborhood council.

According to Kennedy (1992: 232) "Flynn and Coyle worked strenuously to earn the trust of the neighborhoods and to use government power to advance neighborhood and community interests". Building in previous initiatives, such as White's Little City Halls, Flynn institutionalized community participation in planning in Boston.

In 1988 Flynn featured an outstanding example of decentralization from city government to the neighborhoods, when he was able to convince the BRA board to grant the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) the power of eminent domain over an area of thirty acres in Roxbury, which made it the first nonprofit organization in the country to receive such power. DSNI had started organizing against the trash dumping in the vacant lots of the area, and soon produced a plan for an "urban village" center using extensive resident input, which was to counter the plan that the city had for the area. In contrast with many staff-led community organizations, DSNI had a strong resident control, as well as being formally multiethnic (Clavel, 2010: 50). Through intensive organizing and pressure on Flynn, who was eager to get the support from the black community, they were able to get the power to acquire vacant lots in the plan area, create a land trust to keep the development affordable, and to build hundreds of units over the following decade (G. Watson, personal communication, 2001, April 6).

But to invest in the neighborhoods, they needed to get funding from places other than the diminished city's budget. In contrast with the 1970s, when the city tried to attract investment through tax incentives and other mechanisms, by the mid-1980s Boston was attractive enough so that the city government could even impose conditions on developers. Although defined at the very end of White's mayoralty, the linkage program came to full development under Flynn.

²⁴ Jamaica Plain, the North End, Chinatown, Dorchester-Codman Square, and West Roxbury.

For every square foot built over 100,000 square feet, the housing program required developers to contribute five dollars, either by directly developing affordable housing or by contributing to a Neighborhood Housing Trust, while the jobs training program required one additional dollar²⁵. In addition, Coyle established the parcel-to-parcel linkage program, which required developers planning to build in city-owned downtown parcels to also develop another site in an underserved neighborhood (Kennedy, 1992: 229)

Affordable housing provision was another major focus in this period. With the Boston Housing Authority under receivership by the time, the city could not rely on public housing construction²⁶, so Flynn's administration turned its efforts towards the two or three CDCs that were working on the production of affordable housing by 1984. With support of linkage money from the Neighborhood Housing Trust Fund, the disposition of city-owned parcels, and the support of the Boston Housing Partnership—which provided private funding for affordable housing—the number of CDCs operating in Boston dramatically grew. Combined with an increased CDC focus on housing development (the “bricks-and-mortar” approach to community development) this effort resulted in some 5,000 housing units built or rehabilitated by 1991 (Clavel, 2010: 66).

However, economic conditions changed drastically during the last years of Flynn's second term, when Massachusetts faced investment decline, rising unemployment and a cooling real estate market. The linkage program seemed no longer realistic, and Flynn decided to rely on government spending in capital projects, such as the depression of the Central Artery or the Boston Harbor cleanup, as a way to create jobs and improve the city services (Kennedy, 1992: 235). He increasingly focused on economic development strategies that created employment and promoted Boston in the “new economy”, founded on knowledge and technology-based industries.

In contrast with national trends, in this period the city could capitalize on a booming real estate market to explore redistributive policies, while working closely with neighborhood activism to decentralize government. However, towards the end of this period the tight economic conditions made the Mayor turn to more conventional forms of public-private partnership,

²⁵ The total linkage fee was established to be paid over a period of 7 years

²⁶ Anyway, public housing construction was minimal nationwide since the 1960s.

while community organizations took the way of professionalization, losing their activist character along the way.

3.5. Menino's era: A competitive "city of neighborhoods" (from 1992)

When Flynn left office in 1993, Thomas Menino became interim Mayor, just before being elected to his first of—so far—five terms in office. Through that period, the city recovered from recession and consolidated as a new hub in the global economy, with a focus on educational, health and biomedical industries, housed an increasingly diverse population²⁷, and experienced rising housing prices, just until the 2008 economic downturn changed the scenario.

In the 1990s, he continued the major infrastructure works started by Flynn, the most prominent of all being the "Big Dig"—the depression of the Central Artery—, as well as leading the planning and construction of a new Convention Center in the South Boston Waterfront. The redevelopment of that 1,000-acre area, in fact, became the major focus of his efforts during the 2000s, evolving into a main economic development strategy in his fifth term, when he announced that the area would become Boston's "Innovation District" to attract new investment. Other efforts targeted the revitalization of Downtown Crossing, which was in decline after major retailers had left the Central Business District.

In the neighborhoods, he promoted several Master Planning efforts (Roxbury, Hyde Park, Chinatown), a program to revitalize neighborhood commercial corridors, the planning along a proposed new transit route (the Fairmount Corridor), etc. Menino embraced Flynn's approach of Boston as a "city of neighborhoods" but did so in a more pragmatic and less ideological way, highly relying on a professionalized nonprofit sector and expanding his popular base to the middle class²⁸ (Clavel, 2010: 36, 197). By the early 2000, he was named Public Official of the Year and labeled "Main Street Maestro". By that time, the discourse for neighborhood development was widely established, but Menino was praised for not restricting his attention to providing affordable housing, but "also promot(ing) commerce revitalization through the

²⁷ The population of non-Hispanic whites decreased from 67 to 49.5% between 1980 and 2000 (Clavel, 2010: 94)

²⁸ As Clavel (2010: 197) points out, a focus on crime and schools, as well as in mixed-income development, was key for the expansion towards the middle class.

“Main Streets” program, as well as investment in parks, school refurbishment and safety”(U.S. Conference of Mayors website, November 12, 2001). In contrast with Flynn—who had maintained a distance with the business community—Menino “tended to stroke to both sides” (Clavel, 2010: 93). As one observer described, he relied in Kairos Shen, BRA’s Chief Planner, to work out the path:

The mayor won't give his support if the neighborhood where the building will sit is unhappy. So developers and communities do months of dances, meetings, and revisions to preliminary plans based on feedback [...] Shen's ability to work a room and reach consensus among feuding parties is one of his greatest assets for a mayor who prides himself on putting neighborhoods first (Frieswick, 2008, June 29).

Boston’s CDC movement had consolidated as one “that was better organized and wielded greater political clout than in most American cities” (Clavel, 2010: 77), moving from confrontation in the 1970s to strong cooperation with city government in the 1990s and 2000s. As it professionalized and grew, it sometimes lost contact with its base, even finding opposition from the grassroots they helped organize in past decades²⁹. As happened all around the country, their double role as developers and organizers started being perceived as a contradiction in objectives (Stoecker, 1997), while in Boston, critics claimed that CDCs were using their community planning capacity to secure a later designation as developers:

Several of the recent rows involving CDCs have centered on their role leading neighborhood planning efforts. Critics charge that such an arrangement gives the organizations license to chart a development road map that puts them in the driver's seat, positioned to carry out the very projects they help plan - and then reap the development fees associated with them. (Jonas, 2001, February 4).

Menino’s mayoralty had to deal with an increasing scarcity of affordable housing in the city. In 1994, the city lost rent control—which had been established in the early 1970s following tenants’ demonstrations—as decided through a statewide referendum. Consequently, rents within the city increased by almost 50% from 1995-1999, and over 2,500 rental units within Boston were lost to condominium development during the 1990s (Frug and Barron, 2007). In 2000, the Mayor promoted the “Leading the Way” housing strategy, which in 2009 released its third campaign. Affordable housing provision was mainly achieved through the linkage fund,

²⁹ As was the case of the Kmart conflict in Jackson Square, further detailed in the next chapter.

as well as through Inclusionary Zoning. This policy—approved as an executive order in February 2000 and later revised—required housing developments that asked for zoning relief or were developed on city-owned land, to contribute either financially or in-kind to the city’s affordable housing stock³⁰.

During the 2009 mayoral race, one of the main points raised by Menino’s challengers was, again, the controversial role of the BRA for being in charge of both planning and development in the city, as well as for a diminished community participation in the process:

Time has come to put community back into community input [...] and allow residents to have a voice, and one way we can do that is to eliminate the BRA, create a standalone planning department in the city of Boston, and also create a standalone economic development and workforce development department (Michael Flaherty, in Tarantino, 2009, September 17)

By the end of the 2000s Boston was uniquely characterized as both a globally branded city and a highly empowered community. It had managed to position itself in the global economy as a major hub for the health, biotech-related, and higher education sectors, receiving over 20 million tourism and business visitors in 2010³¹. Meanwhile, despite the trend towards depolitization of community issues and raising inequality, it could count on a long history of community empowerment to ensure certain mechanisms for bottom-up control of development.

The chapter that follows explores in detail an example of how redevelopment played out in a Boston neighborhood in the 2000s. Jackson Square is an example of a community-driven neighborhood redevelopment project that to date is struggling to become a reality ten years after being crafted, in an area that was razed for the construction of an inner-city highway in the late 1960s. The analysis of the community planning process and its outcomes can provide important clues about the challenges these processes face.

³⁰ Inclusionary zoning requires housing developers either to set aside 15% of the units within a new development for affordable housing or, at the discretion of the BRA, may create a 50% greater number of affordable housing units off-site or contribute \$97,000 per unit to the city’s affordable housing fund (Frug and Barron, 2007).

³¹ Total Domestic & Overseas Visitors to Boston & Cambridge in 2010, from <http://www.bostonusa.com/partner/press/pr/statistics>

CHAPTER 3. Case study: Jackson Square

“People have been waiting for a long time to see something happen. It’s kind of a hole in the heart of a neighborhood.” (Richard Thal, JPND, Executive Director, in Fox, J. C., 2010, April 8)

1. Introduction

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the process and outcomes of Jackson Square, a revitalization plan for an area at the border between Roxbury and Jamaica Plain that provides a meaningful example of a community-led process in a strongly empowered and organized community.

The planning process for the Jackson Square area emerged from a community-led effort to define the future of a long-reclaimed vacant area around a transit station. It is considered one of the most inclusive planning efforts in the history of Boston (Kriegman, 2004: 3), since local community actors have driven the planning and implementation processes.

This case is an interesting example of neighborhood planning in the 2000s. Spurring from an almost ideal community planning initiative, the actual implementation by a group of community development corporations is undergoing delays and modifications, further obstructed by an economic downturn. The analysis of how power dynamics and decision-making have unfolded in Jackson Square throughout more than ten years can inform our understanding of other settings in similar circumstances.

2. Context and origins

Jackson Square is a neighborhood between Roxbury and Jamaica Plain (JP), centered around the Jackson Square MBTA stop, at the crossroads of Center St. and Columbus Avenue. The area, characterized by a very diverse population mix, is located at the border of Roxbury and JP, two districts that are following seemingly different paths. While some areas of JP have undergone significant gentrification in the past ten years, Roxbury still houses some of the most deprived census tracts in Boston.

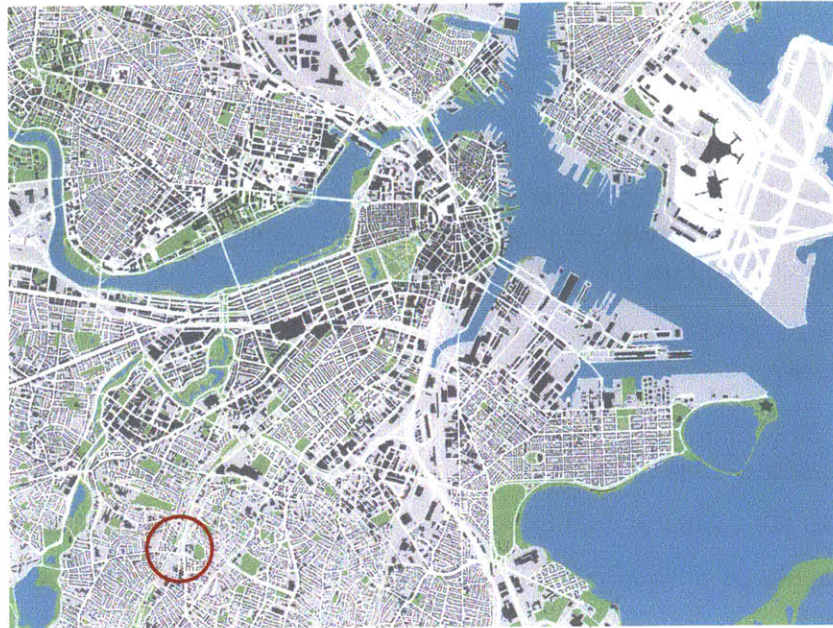


Fig.1: Location of Jackson Square in Boston

Three communities make up the area. The “Latino community” is centered in Hyde Square, with a vibrant small business hub in Center Street. The “Black community” is mainly located in the Bromley-Heath and Academy Homes I public housing developments, each located on one side of Columbus Avenue, although the Latino presence has recently increased there. Finally, the “White community”, associated with the gentrifying areas of JP, is located further up Center Street, further down the Southwest Corridor and nearer Jamaica Pond (Kriegman, 2004: 8).

Pop. 2010 census	2000			2010			change 2000-2010		
	JP	Roxbury	Jackson Square	JP	Roxbury	Jackson Square	JP	Roxbury	Jackson Square
Whites	19,039	11,233	975	20,070	15,817	1,456	5%	41%	49%
Blacks	5,900	34,263	3,333	5,038	32,659	3,206	-15%	-5%	-4%
Hispanics	10,505	14,296	4,799	9,464	19,634	5,176	-10%	37%	8%
Asians	1,521	2,991	131	1,665	4,314	185	9%	44%	41%

Table 1. Population by race and ethnicity in 2000, 2010, and population change between 2000-2010 (Data from BRA Research Division and Census 2010)³².

³² According to the BRA’s neighborhood boundaries, Roxbury includes Mission Hill and Longwood Medical Area

The 2010 Census data shows a sharp drop in the Hispanic and black populations in Jamaica Plain over the last decade, while the white population has slightly increased, as did the number of Asians. In Roxbury, there was a surge in both Hispanic and white residents, while the number of black/African American residents declined. Adding up the three census tracts that make up the Jackson Square area, we observe slightly different trends: there is a high increase in the number of white residents, as well as Asian and people of Hispanic origin, while blacks slightly decrease.

Pop. 2010 census	2000			2010		
	JP	Roxbury	Jackson Square	JP	Roxbury	Jackson Square
TOTAL	38,176	67,699	9,597	37,468	76,917	10,356
% Whites	50%	17%	10%	54%	21%	14%
% Blacks	15%	51%	35%	13%	42%	31%
% Hispanics	28%	21%	50%	25%	26%	50%
% Asians	4%	4%	1%	4%	6%	2%

Table 2. Population percentages by race and ethnicity in 2000 and 2010 (Data from BRA Research Division and Census 2010).

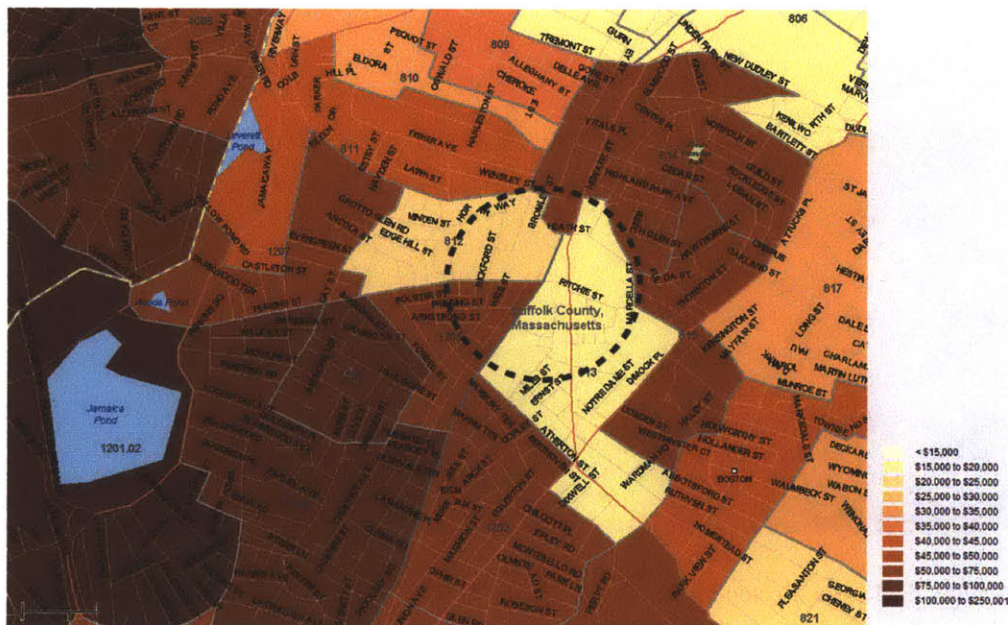


Fig. 2: Median Household Income (Data from American Community Survey 2005-2009, Census Tracts)

In terms of income, most of the Jackson Square area stands out as an island of low-income census tracts in an upper income area, with a median household income of less than \$23,000 and a 33% of families living below the poverty level³³. There is a big difference between renters, who make up 80% of the residents and earn a median income of \$16,481, and the 20% of homeowners, who earn a median of \$92,876.

The area was first settled by Puritan immigrants in the seventeenth century, along the road from Meetinghouse Hill to Dedham, when in Jackson Square there was a bridge over the Stony Brook. The presence of the brook and the construction of the Boston and Providence Railroad in 1835 made the area suitable for industrial development, and by 1870 the area was filled with breweries, textile mills, tanning and leather works, malt houses, rubber works and a collection of iron, chemical, starch and silk factories (Gail Sullivan Associates, 2001).



Fig. 3: Detail of the JS area. Boston Highlands. Wards 19, 20, 21 & 22. O.H. Bailey & Co. Publishers, 1888.

³³ American Community Survey 2005-2009, in 2009 Inflation Adjusted Dollars.

By the turn of the century, the construction of the electric trolley lines spurred the construction of residential areas to the east and west of the line, the so-called “streetcar suburbs” (Warner, 1978), which were inhabited by a variety of socioeconomic and ethnic groups. In the 1950s the neighboring Egleston and Hyde Squares consolidated as vital commercial and social centers, with Jackson Square serving a subsidiary commercial function. During the post-war period, however, the area began to suffer from disinvestment: like many inner-city neighborhoods, it experienced a prolonged period of white flight beginning in the 1950s as middle-class residents moved out to the suburbs. Moreover, many working-class families that were being displaced from Boston’s city center by urban renewal projects started moving to the deteriorating housing stock of Roxbury and Jamaica Plain in search of affordable housing.

In the late 1960s the city government started assembling land to make room for the construction of a planned expressway. The widespread demolition of houses along the right-of-way, together with the threat of eminent domain and redlining practices made for a further decline in investment, and most commercial uses left the area. As explained in the next section, the highway project was stopped by a coalition of community groups, and a mass transit line accompanied by a linear park was constructed in its place.

In the 1980s the decline continued as empty storefronts lined the streets, arson spread over the housing stock and rates of drug use and violence surged. New immigrants started moving into the area as white population and property values plummeted. However, community groups and nonprofits sprang from the opposition to the highway and started working to improve the area. In 1987, the city signed an agreement with local community groups to start a revitalization effort for the industrially zoned area located around the Jackson Square station. During the 1990s, the combined effort of local CDCs and public investment led the revitalization of surrounding areas in Jamaica Plain. But the razed area around the Jackson Square station remained a scar of past planning errors.

2.1. The Southwest Corridor

Officially, the Jackson Square planning process began in 1999 with the formation of the Jackson Coordinating Group (JCG). However, it sprang from the community’s demands over

an area that was razed for the construction of the I-95 highway, which was stopped in 1972 due to the opposition of a coalition of neighborhood groups.

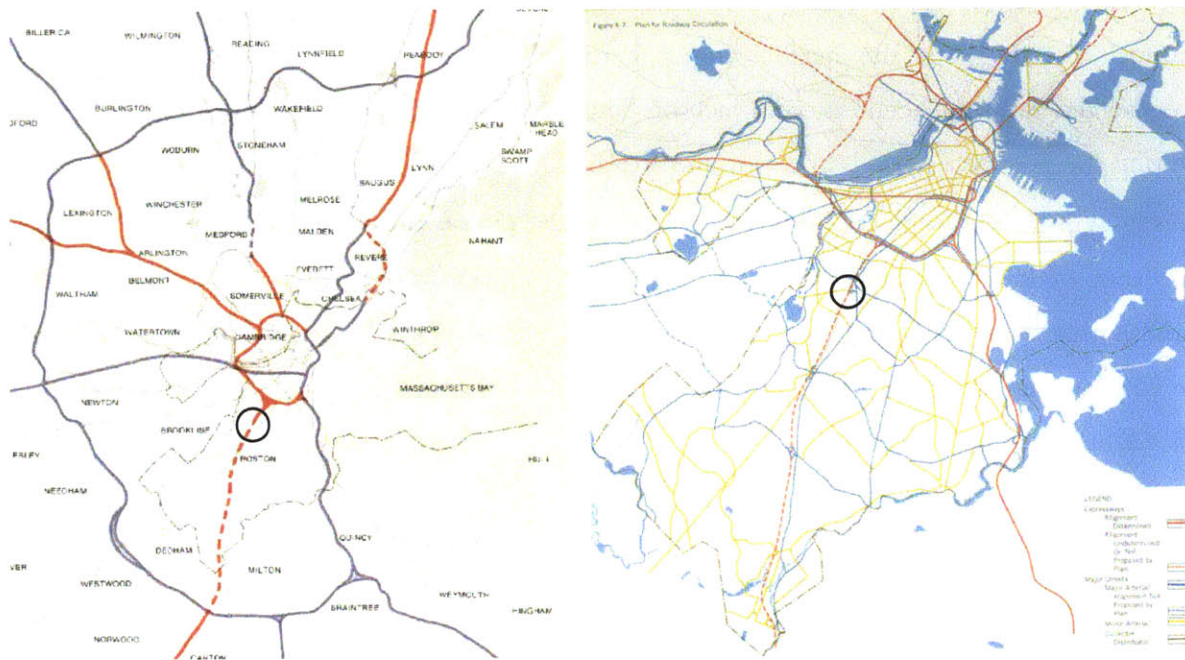


Fig.4: Plan for Regional Expressways³⁴ and Plan for Roadway circulation, showing the proposed I-95 Expressway. Jackson Square circled (Boston General Plan, BRA, 1966)

It is worth pausing to understand the importance that the community’s success in stopping the highway has for the Jackson Square case. In the words of historian Robert J. Allison (2004: 105), residents stopped the project by engaging in "some of the most creative acts of civil disobedience since the Stamp Act." As early as 1948 the City of Boston released a plan for an inner highway belt to run through lower Roxbury, where it would connect up with an Interstate highway (I-95), which would run through Hyde Park, Roslindale and Jamaica Plain to exit Boston towards the South. In 1966 the Department of Public Works published the design for an eight lane highway, called the Southwest Corridor, which in Jamaica Plain would run along the railroad embankment from Jackson Square to Forest Hills. In 1967 the BRA started clearing the land, resulting in more than 300 businesses and 700 households abutting the tracks being displaced (Jamaica Plain Historical Society, n.d.). The result for the surrounding areas was devastating, as many houses stood abandoned or semi-demolished,

³⁴ The dashed red line corresponds to “Proposed Expressways Alignment Not Proposed by Plan” in the legend.

extending the feeling of blight to the whole area. Moreover, many in JP saw the highway as a barrier that would split the community in two, bringing noise and pollution.

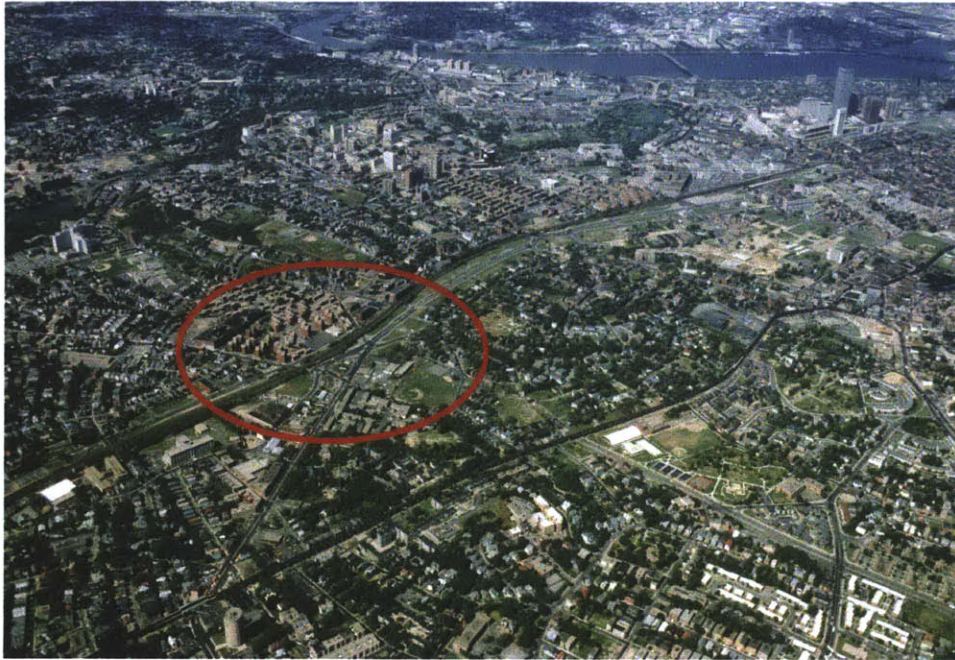


Fig. 5: Southwest Corridor ("American British", 1975, MIT Library digital archive)

Those who opposed the highway joined a group that was already organized in Cambridge against the Inner Belt, and soon other neighborhoods affected by the project joined the protestors, forming the Greater Boston Committee on the Transportation Crisis (GBC). From 1967 to 1972, this alliance of diverse groups fought a battle that involved the three levels of government—local, state and federal—undergoing changing leadership and positions. They pushed for the construction of mass transit instead of new highways that would only serve suburbanites. Through demonstrations, professional advocacy, lobbying, negotiation, and other political tactics, they were able to first get a moratorium and then the total dismissal of the highways plan (Luppo, 1971).

Getting Governor Sargent to admit that “four years ago [...] nearly everyone was sure highways were the only answer to transportation problems for years to come. But we were wrong” (Luppo, 1971: 106) was a great success for a community that had felt powerless at the beginning of the fight. Even if the huge organizing effort was lead and supported by many outside advocates, the success reinforced the sense of power among community members and allowed many of them to connect, contributing to the emergence of several community

development corporations (“Wake Up The Earth” organizer, personal communication, May 7, 2011). It was the seed of future community organizing efforts, and certainly explains much of what later happened in Jackson Square.



Fig. 6: “U.S. Senators Kennedy and Brooke announce \$ 547 million Federal grant”, from the Southwest Corridor Development Plan. MBTA, 1979.

Instead of the highway, the state decided to build a depressed transit line—the MBTA Orange Line, completed in 1987—working with the abutting communities to develop the Southwest Corridor Development Plan, which resulted in the Southwest Corridor Park to be built on top and beside the transit line. However, many parcels that had been taken by eminent domain to clear for the highway remained vacant. That same year, the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation of Boston (EDIC), later absorbed by the BRA, signed an agreement with the Jackson Square Station Area Task Force (SATF) to jointly plan for the development of the industrially-zoned MBTA-owned parcels located near the station (Gail Sullivan Associates, 2001). An EDIC report recommended the development of an industrial sub district between Amory Street and the Orange Line, with a buffer of commercial, office, and residential uses between Amory St. and Columbus Avenue. Though the plan released in 1992 included a variety of uses, many in the community feared that its focal point was a proposed recycling plant, and the plan was never implemented.

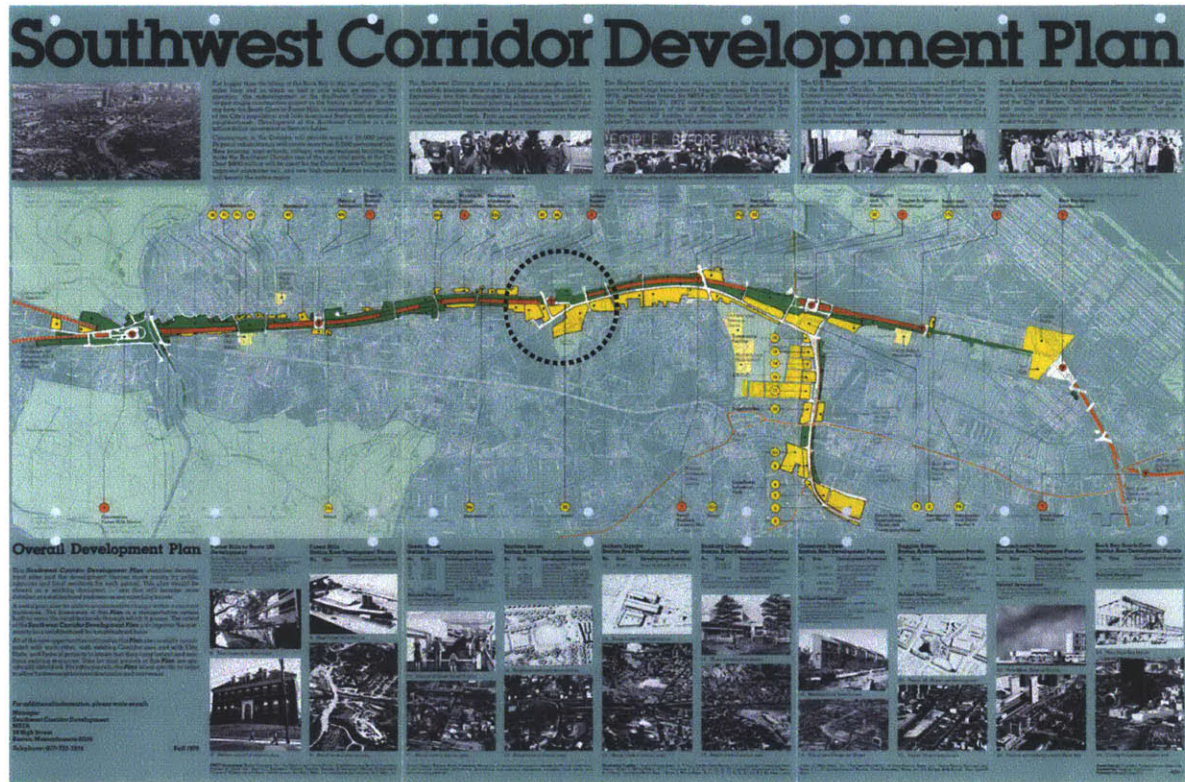


Fig. 7: Southwest Corridor Development Plan (JS circled). MBTA, 1979.

2.2. The Egleston-Jackson Strategy

In 1995, Urban Edge, a local community development corporation founded in 1974, initiated the Egleston-Jackson Strategy, a comprehensive process for community development in the area. At that point, the BRA was “understaffed and faced with an abundance of big-ticket development proposals” (Lupo, 1999, March 7), so Urban Edge took the lead and sustained and financed a 5-year process that involved more than 300 people (Kriegman, 2004: 13). Unlike the EDIC’s plan, which was focused on industry, this strategy made increased emphasis on housing and services, covered a larger area, and was aimed at creating a process that would increase community participation and advance equity.

Urban Edge organized several meetings and surveys to start collecting data, and was also meeting with potential developers and tenants to ensure the success of the process (Gail Sullivan Associates, 2001). In 1998 Kmart approached the BRA about the possibility of locating a store in the Jackson Square area as part of its national inner-city initiative, and the

BRA referred them to Urban Edge. When Urban Edge presented a drawing with a Kmart store in the parcel just across the T-station, local business and community members, lead by a group of youth leaders from the Hyde Square Task Force, voiced many objections, including the threat that a large chain would represent for their small business, the part-time low wage jobs it would provide, and the increased traffic congestion and air pollution it would generate.



Fig. 8: Jackson Square, with Bromley Heath at the right, rail yards not depressed yet (Alex S. McLean, 1976)

Many saw the proposal as a symptom of Urban Edge’s failure to truly involve the community in its planning process (Lupo, 1999, March 7). Urban Edge was even accused by some community members of having a conflict of interest for “running the planning process and hoping to be the nonprofit developer that would work in tandem with Kmart” (Lupo, 1999, February 7). Some community members were concerned that the planning process was not as inclusive as it could be (C. Martinez, personal communication, July 15, 2011). Trying to address community concerns about its role in the development of the area, Urban Edge hired an external consultant to facilitate the process. Some months later, the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council dedicated its monthly meeting to Jackson Square, resulting in a unanimous vote to oppose Kmart. Soon after, the Jackson-Egleston Coordinating Committee dissolved and community members asked a City Councilor to hold a public meeting about the issue, which was followed by three neighborhood meetings aimed at establishing a new process.

Soon after, the BRA stepped in to mediate in the neighborhood infighting, and in June 1999 the Mayor appointed the Jackson Coordinating Group (JCG), composed of one representative of each of the 30 organizations involved in the area. As stated by its Director Tom O'Brien, the role of BRA was to "staff it, provide direction, make sure plans are workable, but not to impose ideas" (Lupo, 1999, March 7).

From the summer of 1999 to the fall of 2001, the JCG led a community planning process that was aimed at establishing the development priorities for the Jackson Square area. Through focus groups, design charrettes and several meetings, the community developed a vision that was released in 2001 as "Putting the Pieces Together." Endorsed by Mayor Menino, the City Councilors, and State Representatives in a public ceremony, the report was developed by the JCG into a document called "Development Priorities", which was incorporated into the Request For Proposals released by the BRA in July 2004.

3. The community planning process

When the BRA appointed the JCG to lead the planning process it established four conditions that had to be met: 1) the community needed to reach an agreement on a set of guidelines for developers to work within, 2) the development had to be transit oriented, 3) the community had to be united in its request for disposition of land, and 4) the process should include all the groups that formed the community (Gail Sullivan Associates, 2001). Therefore, recent tensions among different groups would have to be overcome in order to see Jackson Square developed. Below I examine the participatory process deployed by the JCG and the vision that resulted from it. But before moving ahead, it should be useful to briefly overview the different stakeholders involved in the process.

3.1. Stakeholders

The main protagonists in this case are the three community-based organizations that joined efforts to bid as developers for Jackson Square: Urban Edge, the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation and Hyde Square Task Force. **Urban Edge** is a CDC founded in 1974 with a mission to "work in partnership with residents, businesses and government

institutions committed to developing and sustaining stable, healthy, and diverse communities in Jamaica Plain, Roxbury and surrounding communities in Massachusetts” (Urban Edge, n.d.). It develops affordable rental and owner housing, as well as educational facilities for youth and families, and provides assistance to small businesses, homeownership education, and lending. It has been involved in the Jackson Square area since the mid-1990s, when it started the Egleston-Jackson revitalization effort that ended with the controversial proposal of building a Kmart in the parcel across from the MBTA station. As part of the Jackson Square development team (Jackson Square Partners LLC), it is in charge of the parcels on the Roxbury side of Columbus Avenue, some of which they owned prior to the public disposition of land. The other CDC involved is the **Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation** (JPNDC), founded in 1977 with a mission “to promote equitable development and equal opportunity in Jamaica Plain and adjacent neighborhoods through affordable housing, organizing, and economic opportunity initiatives that improve the lives of low- and moderate-income people and create a better community for all” (JPNDC, n.d.). It opposed the Kmart, confronting Urban Edge’s strategy, and became an active member during the community planning process, to finally partner with UE to bid as developers. It is responsible for the development of housing and retail on the JP side, as well as a Youth and Family Center (YFC) to be developed in collaboration with the Hyde Square Task Force.

The **Hyde Square Task Force** is a nonprofit community service organization that provides programs to engage youth from Jamaica Plain, Roxbury and across Boston, through leadership development, college preparation, youth-led community organizing and community-building events. It was founded in the 1980s and began as an effort to reverse the trend of youth violence in the Hyde-Jackson Square area, known by the time as the “cocaine capital of Boston” (HSTF, n.d.). In 1999, its youth members led the mobilization to stop the proposed Kmart in the Jackson Square area, getting deeply involved in the resulting community planning process. They are part of the development team and are in charge, together with JPNDC, of the development of a Youth and Family Center (YFC). Finally, the **Friends of the Kelly Rink** (FKR) is a group of volunteers dedicated to bringing ice skating back to Jamaica Plain, who had advocated for years for a new facility to be constructed to replace the original Kelly Rink, torn down by the State in 1997. Ever since, they have managed a temporary rink located behind the Stony Brook T-station, while working with Jackson Square Partners to integrate

such a facility in their development plan. These two groups (HSTF and FKR) have had competing interests in the project, the first advocating for a Youth Center with an educational component while the second supported an indoor recreational facility.

Other community-based organizations were involved in the process, holding different roles. The **Jackson Coordinating Group (JCG)** was formed by the Mayor's office and the BRA in 1999 to oversee the Jackson Square Planning Initiative, by identifying 30 organizations with interest in the project and asking each to appoint an official representative. According to Kriegman (2004: 21), this group was characterized by a "last-man standing" type of decision-making, and therefore tended to be dominated by professional staff from the agencies. A second community organization was the **Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (JPNC)**, a "volunteer organization that offers the people of Jamaica Plain the opportunity to participate directly and fully in governing neighborhood affairs" (Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council, n.d.). It was formed in 1986 as part of a city-wide initiative to increase community engagement. The 20-member council advises the city on issues of zoning, public service, business, parks, and human services. Similarly, the **Roxbury Neighborhood Council (RNC)** pursues the same function in that neighborhood. Finally, the **Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)** is a group of community members that oversees the development process and reports to the BRA. CACs are appointed by Mayor Menino, who typically meets with members in a private "orientation" session. The BRA organizes the member nomination process, and the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services reportedly notifies members of their selection. (Taber, D., 2009, December 18).

Another set of stakeholders are Mitchell Properties and Gravestar, Inc., the **private developers** that partnered with the CDCs to develop the plan, who will build residential and commercial projects respectively. Bart Mitchell (personal communication, May 2, 2011) pointed out that not many private developers dare to work in this area, as it is still perceived as dangerous, but he has successfully worked in collaboration with CDCs before.

Finally, the public sector group is led by the **Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)**, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is the agency in charge of planning and development in the city of Boston. In this process, they were brought in to mediate in a conflict within the community, and ever since they have overseen the process. Given its past

history—as they were involved in the clearance of the area for the failed highway—many feared its intervention, but in this case the agency only fulfilled a coordination and supervision role, appointing the CAC and convening the community meetings necessary for the development review process. The **City of Boston** and the **State of Massachusetts** have also been involved, providing some funding for several projects but, as I will explain, not committing enough resources so as to make the project a reality.

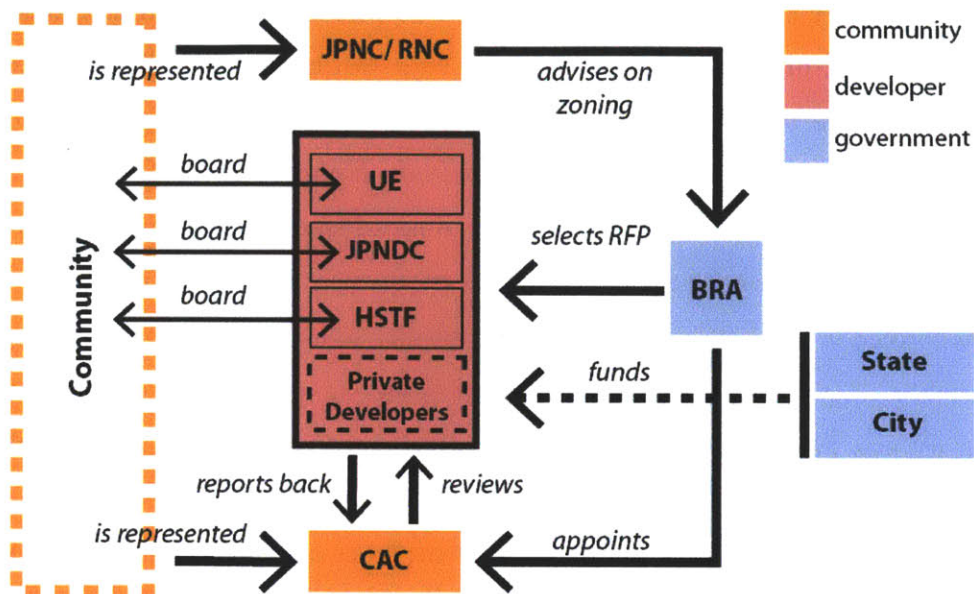


Fig. 9: Jackson Square development stakeholders' map.

3.2. The community planning process

This section describes the series of meetings and events that were held in order to define a community vision for the area. During the fall of 1999, the JCG met several times to define the terms of the process, establishing the focus area as that included within a quarter-mile radius of Jackson Square, and the impact area as defined by a half-mile radius. They also decided to use a consensus decision-making model, given the broad range of perspectives that were likely to arise due to the area's diverse social texture and the previous tensions.

From February to May of 2000, more than 800 residents participated in nearly 80 neighborhood focus groups organized by JCG members, 50 of which were lead by the youth from the Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF) (Kriegman, 2004). Discussion was framed around

the following questions: 1) what do you think are the biggest issues in the neighborhood? 2) what kinds of development or changes would you like/not like to see in JS? The results, later compiled by the facilitators and presented at a large community meeting, showed a strong opposition to a “big box” Kmart-style development, and favored a development that played a role in “*preserving* the existing community and its resources”³⁵ (Gail Sullivan Associates, 2001: 2-1). As part of the community building process, residents were also involved in a photo-documentation project, PhotoSlam 2000, where they were asked to illustrate their thoughts and feelings about the neighborhood through photos and captions.

In January 2001, over 250 members of the 30 organizations that formed the JCG participated in a community design charrette, where they started identifying common visions and goals for the area. Organized in ten teams, three of which were conducted in Spanish, they worked with architects and facilitators to create a site plan, proposing new uses for large parcels of undeveloped land, infill sites, and existing buildings. The results of PhotoSlam were displayed during the charrette to help generate group discussions. After several hours, they reconvened and presented their ideas to the rest of the groups, trying to identify potential consensus items that were consistent among all ten groups (detailed below).

During a follow-up charrette held in February 2001, a group of 75 that included two representatives of each of the ten teams—many of whom were youths—and one or two representatives of each member organization in the JSCG, refined the community’s vision by focusing on the specific elements that had been identified by consensus in the first charrette.

An independent consultant who had been hired to manage the process summarized it in a document called “Putting the Pieces Together”, which was released by the BRA in July 2001. Then, the JCG Site Planning Committee held more than forty meetings to prioritize the development goals, and in October 2003 the “Jackson Square Development Priorities” were released³⁶.

³⁵ Emphasis added.

³⁶ Several detailed studies were conducted to inform the process: a Traffic Impact on Air Quality in JS (developed by the Harvard School of Public Health, the Boston Public Health Commission and Roxbury Community College students); the JS Transit-Oriented Improvement Recommendations; and the JS Urban Design Vision and Guidelines. Together with the JS Development Priorities they formed the JS Contextual Development Plan approved by the JS community in October 2003 and presented to the BRA for zoning revision approval.

The results of the community visioning called for a change in the industrial zoning of the area towards residential and commercial uses. The JCG worked with the Zoning Committee of the JPNC to develop zoning recommendations that were presented to the BRA, whose “backstreets” staff argued for the necessity to preserve local industrial areas in the city. However, in August 2004 the BRA voted to support the JCG zoning recommendations, “especially as related to the goals set out for the development of affordable housing” (BRA, 2004, August 19).

The BRA acted as the disposition agent for the publicly owned parcels of land in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the BRA, the MBTA and the State Department of Capital Asset Management. In 2004 the BRA issued a Request for Proposals which included the “Development Priorities” established through the community visioning process. Before moving ahead to the implementation phase, it is important to revise the main features that emerged from the community process, in order to later compare them with what the developers proposed and what the current situation of the plan is.

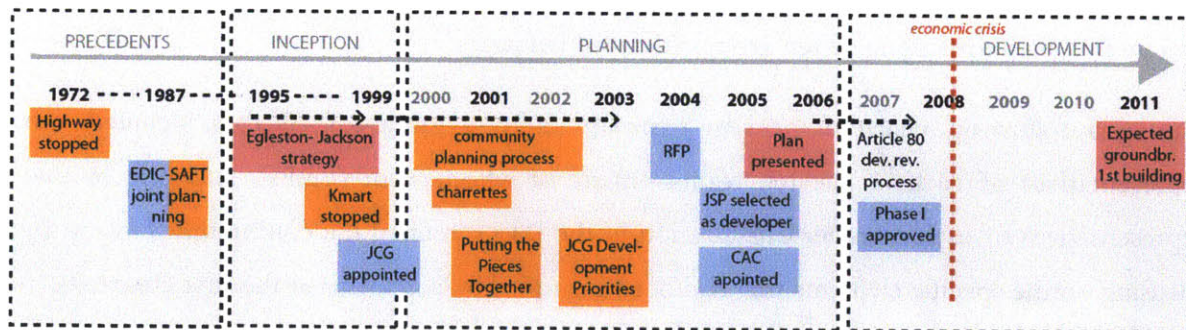


Fig. 10: The community planning and development process: timeline

3.3. The community vision

The community vision that emerged from the process expressed both the concerns and ideas of the participants and the limitations of the process itself. Below I describe and comment on the results of each stage of the process, with the goal of establishing the framework to analyze how the community voice was constructed and to what extent it has informed latter steps in Jackson Square’s redevelopment.

Right at the beginning, the BRA presented the physical constraints that participants needed to consider throughout the process, including the Southwest Corridor tracks, MBTA's easement for access to the tracks, Stony Brook culvert, Boston Edison (later N-Star) substation, traffic circulation, and the Boston Public Works Department (PWD) salt shed and facility.

According to the report "Putting the Pieces Together" (Gail Sullivan Associates, 2001), participants in the **neighborhood focus groups** expressed support for three major development priorities: 1) youth and community educational, recreational, and cultural facilities; 2) affordable housing; 3) small-scale, locally-owned businesses. Moreover, they expressed a preference for development that would not increase car traffic, but instead encouraged alternatives such as walking and public transportation.

At the **first community design charrette**, in January 2001, participants agreed on several elements of consensus after generating a vision and a site design in ten separate groups. Those elements were the following:

a) Educational and Recreational Community Facility

All teams identified the need for a major educational and recreational facility nearby Jackson Square that would provide indoor as well as outdoor facilities for the large number of children and youth that live in the surrounding areas. All teams agreed that this facility was "of the highest priority for the redevelopment of the Jackson Square area" (Gail Sullivan Associates, 2001: 3-3), while noting the importance of locating it as close as possible to the MBTA station, in a "neutral territory" to assure that youth from both JP and Roxbury would feel welcome. This pointed to one of the main problems in the area, the longstanding turf war between gangs from the Academy Homes I and the Bromley-Heath developments.

b) Permanently Affordable Housing

The rising cost of housing in the area was one of the main issues identified by the teams, which proposed to develop permanently affordable housing to allow low- and moderate-

income families to stay in the neighborhood³⁷. This started a conversation about the amount of housing needed, and what would be the most adequate density for the area. Most of the housing proposed was either low or medium density, with low density suggested predominantly as infill development on vacant buildable lots sprinkled throughout the planning area, while medium density housing was located along major and secondary streets with retail at the ground floor. Three teams also proposed to either maintain the existing artists' studios in Amory St. or provide new live/work space for artists.

c) Small Scale Commercial

As mentioned, there was a consensus against any big box development within the planning area, supporting small-scale locally-owned commercial development instead. While there had been some support for larger scale retail uses in the neighborhood groups, the charrette groups did not include it in their proposals. Some of the uses mentioned included a cinema, a movie theater, a post office, commercial and nonprofit office space, a farmer's market, a bakery, a café and other small retail uses. Most teams supported the mixed-use housing/retail model.

d) Expand Green Space

Every team included some kind of open or green space for pedestrians, including plazas, gardens, fountains, public art, trees and other planting along the roads, benches, bike racks, etc. All teams proposed the possibility of bridging or decking over the rail tracks to gain more space for park or new development.

e) Connect Jamaica Plain and Roxbury

Another concern that arose from the proposals was the need to reestablish the physical connection between Jamaica Plain and Roxbury that had been separated by the failed highway project in the 1970s. It was also seen as a way to overcome the problem of

³⁷ Gentrification is a big concern especially in Jamaica Plain, where many of the originally working class triple-deckers have been and continue to be converted to expensive condominiums.

violence and crime in the area, by generating pedestrian activity during day and evening, and developing well-lit spaces to promote a safer and more inclusive environment.

f) Calm Traffic

Calming traffic in the residential areas rose as another main concern of neighbors in the Jackson Square area, with a particular focus on Columbus Avenue, whose intense traffic acts as a barrier that contributes to the separation between both neighborhoods. Proposals for traffic calming included reducing the avenue's width, adding a planted median strip, establishing a parking lane on one or both sides, and necking down the road at certain locations, as well as some other more elaborated proposals such as installing pedestrian foot bridges or depressing Columbus Avenue.



Fig. 11: Jackson Square: Columbus Avenue and Center Street crossroad. April 2011.

Apart from these consensus proposals, other issues arose in the discussion. For instance, many mentioned that the development should be transit oriented. Moreover, some groups proposed creative solutions and uses for the area³⁸, but usually those were so particular that did not get the support of the whole group, who seemed to prefer more conventional and general solutions. It is interesting that a group claimed that “the city/ state owes money to the community from the highway project” (Gail Sullivan Associates, 2001: 3-12). It is noticeable that the base map provided to the teams did not reflect the presence of the PWD salt shed, and therefore none of the plans presented by the teams took it into account, even if it had been listed as one of the constraints to take into account in the planning process. In fact, this would become one of the controversial elements of the plan, as it was never clear who would

³⁸ For instance “multi-use/ listening spaces”, call boxes, a greenhouse, a cultural center for visual and performance arts, an economic incubator for local entrepreneurs, a mediation center, new parking built underground.

pay for its relocation and the City finally decided to leave it where it is, making some of the initial proposals unfeasible.

The follow-up charrette held in February 2001 was meant to build upon the six priority uses identified in the first meeting, to develop a more specific development plan representing community consensus. With the help of team architects, 75-plus participants divided into four groups began to give visual form to the development ideas, identifying the location, size, density and image of the proposed developments.

People were asked to be pragmatic when considering the use of privately owned property, while they were encouraged to think freely about the use of the public ones. They were also asked to think carefully about how feasible their proposals were in terms of relying on major infrastructural changes—for instance, the decking of the rail yards—not only in terms of funding but also in terms of time. At the introductory session, participants were asked to concentrate on defining the “highest and best use” for each piece of land in accordance with the identified needs of the community, as other important issues, such as land control and zoning, infrastructure feasibility or the definition of affordability were considered to be outside of the scope of the charrette.

According to the “Putting the Pieces Together” report on the charrette, there was a great deal of debate in each of the teams, due mainly to the diversity of organizational affiliations and personal interests. Nevertheless, “consensus was easily arrived at for a large number of elements, and the conclusion of the charrette showed a remarkable degree of unanimity about the desired development” (Gail Sullivan Associates, 2001: 4-2). The ideas were consistent with those uses identified in the first charrette, as was the approximate location of most of the uses.

The Educational and Recreational Community Facility was placed on either Parcel C or F by the different teams, with no consensus regarding its final location but unanimity in that it should be located close to the MBTA station. The group strongly emphasized that the facility should be inclusive, “maintain a sense of neutrality” and help unite the two neighborhoods, and that it should be built as soon as possible, with the highest priority.

Regarding the amount and location of housing, the group did not define levels of density, and there were therefore “inconsistencies from team to team regarding that issue” (Gail Sullivan

Associates, 2001: 4-3). Participants decided to include a minimum of 200 units— with a mix of homeownership, cooperatives, rental housing and elderly units—in medium/low density structures that should be permanently affordable, and be energy efficient. It was agreed to locate housing near public transportation, while avoiding the areas near the train tracks or industry. The rehabilitation of underutilized buildings for housing was considered an option.

In terms of retail, it was decided not to replace existing housing with commercial uses, and not to use public land to subsidize commercial development. The most discussed model was the ground floor commercial with housing above, but it was also considered the possibility of a commercial facility with stores on the ground and office space above. The group decided to reserve space for nonprofit organizations (10-20%) and to integrate the area with the Egleston and Hyde Squares commercial districts. There was also discussion about the need to control parking so as to make it a pedestrian oriented environment.

The discussion about green space highlighted the need to provide varied outdoor recreational space for the large number of children and youth that live in the immediate area, with a landscape design that would help to unite the two neighborhoods. The group decided that Columbus Avenue should be redesigned as a boulevard with trees, be made more pedestrian friendly and that the connection between the two sides should be improved.

The idea of building connections between JP and Roxbury was at the heart of the community process, and it was interrelated with other elements of the project. The group defined the connections to be made both physically and functionally. The reconfiguration of the landscape around the station should generate a sense of place, and could be achieved by decking over the rail yards to connect Lamartine and Amory streets, narrowing some parts of Columbus Avenue, making the area pedestrian-oriented and creating a gateway by developing three or four corners. Functionally, the idea was to fill the intersection of Columbus and Center with commercial and other uses to draw people from both neighborhoods.

Finally, the traffic calming element was further defined as the need to reduce the width of Columbus Avenue, changing the texture of the street to decrease speed at crossings, increase pedestrian crossings and improve them by adjusting traffic light timing.

Despite the general consensus, several issues were not agreed upon, such as whether to keep or relocate an existing Department of Youth Services facility on Parcel C. Some additional uses were mentioned, but not further defined, such as a function hall, an outdoor amphitheatre, light industry, parking on top of the MBTA station and preserving the space for artists.

As a result of the visioning process, the community, which began in discord, had achieved the initial goal of being able to reach a consensus about what they wanted to see in Jackson Square. However, that idea was still very broad and needed to be further defined and prioritized.

From 2001-2003, the JCG led a process to develop those ideas. The resulting “Development Priorities” detailed the requirements for a Youth and Families Center (YFC), affordable housing and small scale development, as well as certain development issues that the potential developer would have to address, and a set of criteria to select the developing team. That document described the YFC as a multigenerational educational and recreational facility that should be affordable and accessible. For the housing component, it precisely established the definition of affordability³⁹ as “100% targeted to families making less than 80% of median income, with 30% of units targeted to families making less than 30% of median income, and 45% of units targeted to families making between 30% and 60% of median income” (JCG, September 2003:20). However, it admitted the possibility of including higher-income housing in order to make the plan feasible, but marked a maximum of 30% of the total housing to be targeted to those over 80% of median income⁴⁰. It also established the condition that affordable housing would have to be permanently deed restricted, in order to remain affordable “in perpetuity”. Regarding the retail piece of the proposal, emphasis was given to the need to reflect the existing cultures in Jackson Square, with a preference for a diversity of locally owned and/or start-up business, and a clear statement against national chains and big box retail. The potential developer was asked to establish rent structures that would target local, minority and women-led business, as well encourage the hiring of Roxbury and JP residents. As general development issues to be resolved, the Development Priorities report pointed to the relocation of the N-Star substation and the reconfiguration or re-use of the DPW salt shed.

³⁹ Following the Boston Tenant Coalition targeting goals.

⁴⁰ These goals were to be met in the publicly owned parcels.

These priorities were integrated into the Request for Proposals that the BRA issued in July 2004, which led to the selection of the developer for the plan and started the implementation phase. The process and vision described above reflect an enormous and sustained effort on the part of the community to realize a desire for a revitalized Jackson Square, after decades of neglect and decline. It was certainly an ambitious and complex vision that represented the “ideal vision” of the community, but it did not fully acknowledge the constraints in which the project would have to be developed, while calling for several public facilities without securing that they would get financial support from the city or the state. As I will explain, this disconnection would have important consequences in the implementation phase. What follows is a description of the actual steps taken to make that vision a reality.

3.4. The Plan

After issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the parcels, the BRA received submissions from two development teams, one composed by the CDCs that had been involved in the community planning process, and the other composed of private developers. In June 2005, Mayor Menino announced that the two development teams were joining forces and would combine their proposals, probably realizing that none of them could pursue such a complex project on their own. For the CDCs, it might have been too big a project for their technical and financial resources. For the private developers, it might have been difficult to deal with such a complex proposal coming from such an empowered and demanding community. The announcement concluded the developer selection process and launched the BRA governed Article 80 development review process.



Fig. 12: Proposal submitted by Jackson Square Partners to the RFP, 2005.

In 2006, the Mayor appointed the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) (Taber, D., 2009, December 18), which was charged with the mission to control the implementation process and hold the development team accountable. According to the CAC chair (R. Singleton, personal communication, 2011, June 8), members are a “group of citizens appointed by elected officials and the Mayor, proposed by folks in the community, that recognize the active engagement and leadership of someone.” It is comprised of 25 people, “but not that many people go to the meetings”, with a balanced number of members from Roxbury and JP.

The development team is a partnership of three community organizations that had been involved in the initial community process⁴¹ (JPNDC, Urban Edge, HSTF), two private developers (Mitchell Properties LLC and Gravestar Inc.) and The Friends of the Kelly Rink. In their proposal, the team acknowledged as an asset the fact that Urban Edge already owned several parcels included in the planed area, as well as the unique aspect that HSTF brought to the partnership, as a social capital development association (not real estate developer) (personal communications: C. Martinez, , 2011, July 7, and C. Kornegay, 2011, May 25).

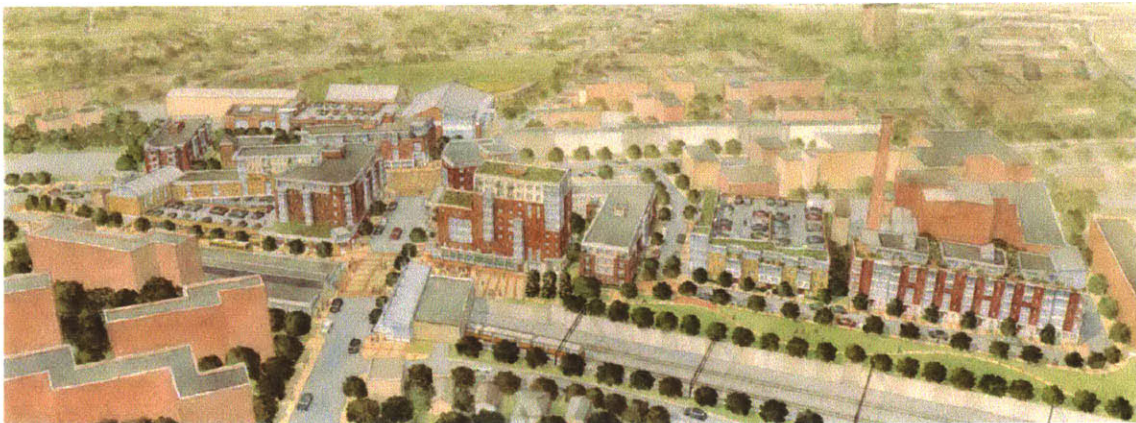


Fig. 13: Jackson Square aerial view, PNF 2006.

The project, presented in 2006, proposed the redevelopment of the 11.2 acres site to a mixed-income, mixed-use and transit oriented development that included: 429 residential units (68% affordable to low- and medium-income households), 67,700 square feet of ground floor retail space, 13,500 square feet of local non-profit office space, a 19,800 square-foot Youth and

⁴¹ In fact, they had to leave the JCG in order to bid as developers, because of the “potential perception of conflict of interest” (C. Martinez, personal communication, 2011, July 15).

Family Center and 30,750 square feet of additional multipurpose indoor recreational space. It also included a new 1.5-acre open space with a plaza, and improvements in the streetscape to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists (Jackson Partners, 2006, October 31).



Fig. 14: Jackson Square Site Plan, PNF 2006.

The project was to be developed in stages. Phase 1 included two housing buildings with ground floor retail (136 units), the Youth and Family Center and the recreational facility, a refurbished office building and a small retail building, representing 30% of the total development on both sides of Columbus Avenue (Buildings A, B, C, D and J in Fig.14). It was intended to move ahead quickly to give a message of hope to the community, getting BRA Board approval in November 2007.

3.5. Implementation

Construction of the first phase had been initially expected to break ground in 2008, but the economic downturn stalled it, forcing the developers to modify the plan, and no building has yet been initiated as of July 2011. Recent changes in the project include the reduction of housing units in the first buildings that will be constructed, the conversion of all units to rental due to the current lack of funding for ownership, the decision not to relocate the DPW salt shed, the decision not to rebuild a Department of Youth Services facility, and the indefinite delay of the Youth Center. Moreover, as it is difficult to keep the momentum when nothing is happening, the community process has also been affected.

In 2008, the state awarded the development team a \$3.1 million MassWorks Infrastructure grant for infrastructure improvements to support future development of the Jackson Square initiative, which are expected to finish in 2011. Meanwhile, several projects have been modified and approved by the BRA Board:

- a) **225 Centre Street**, developed by Mitchell Properties, is a market-rate housing and retail building across from the T-station (building A). It was approved in November 2007 and is expected to break ground in September 2011, after several delays. The project will use \$2.3 million in state issued low-income housing tax credits, \$2 million in the state's Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) program subsidies and another \$504,000 in federal low-income housing tax credits, with an overall project cost estimated at \$50 million. It will feature 103 (increasing from the 94 initially planned) rental units, including 35 affordable units, over 16,000 square feet of commercial/retail space, an underground parking structure and landscape improvements (The Community Builders, March 3, 2011).
- b) **Jackson Commons**, an affordable rental housing developed by Urban Edge in the Roxbury side of Columbus, was approved in April 2010 after several changes, but UE is still trying to assemble funding to start construction. The original project, approved in 2007, included the development of 1542 Columbus Avenue/Webb Building into 13,500 square feet of office space and a 13,400 square foot Department of Youth Services (DYS) residential youth treatment facility. Moreover, the site was meant to include a residential building featuring 42 homeownership units. The project had to be

revised when in 2008 DYS informed that—due to budget cutbacks—it could not participate in funding a new building specifically designed for use by DYS. Since that time, Urban Edge has worked with neighborhood residents and the Jackson Square Citizens Advisory Committee to explore alternative development programs for the site. The revised project will consist of a new 58,000 square foot mixed-use, mixed-income development that will integrate the existing three-story Webb Building with a four-story addition along Columbus Avenue. The project will include 38 affordable residential rental units, with 12,000 square feet of ground floor space that will function as a neighborhood learning center and include the Urban Edge offices, classrooms, computer room, food pantry, and space for other non-profit led programs (BRA press release, 2010).



Fig. 15: Phase I changes: 2007 BRA Approved (left) and 2011 BRA Approved (right)⁴².

- c) Urban Edge has also moved along with the **Ice Rink/ Turf Field Indoor Recreation Center**, finally relocated at the corner of Columbus Avenue and Ritchie Street, which received approval in June 2011, and also needs further fundraising for construction to start. As further detailed in the following section, in 2008 the development team decided to put the Youth and Family Center on hold, while moving ahead with the

⁴² Notice that in 2007 the salt shed was removed from the Plan area (compared to the PNF presented in 2006) and in 2011 the Department of Youth Services facility had been removed from the proposal. Legend: A: 225 Centre Street (residential), B: Youth and Family Center, C: condo units, D: rehab-Webb building (offices), F: DYS facility, H: Indoor Recreation Center.

Recreational Center, that had received \$5.5 million in funding from a state bond in 2008 (Urban Edge NPC, 2011 April 11).



Fig. 16: Ice Rink/ Turf Field Indoor Recreation Center (Urban Edge, 2011)

- d) Moreover, JPNDC recently presented at a CAC meeting the first scheme for Building K, part of Phase 2, which was meant to feature 55 units with 35% in ownership, but is planning to scale it down to less units and 100% rental (CAC meeting, 2011, June 8) .

In retrospect, despite huge efforts to move the project forward, nothing has been built ten years after the community defined a vision for the area, and many important features have been lost in the way. In the next section, I provide an evaluation of the community plan and implementation processes.



Fig. 17: Residential projects: 225 Centre Street (Mitchell Properties, 2011) and Jackson Commons (Urban Edge, 2010)

4. Evaluation: challenges and opportunities for community planning in Jackson Square

As stated in the introduction, Jackson Square provides useful insights regarding neighborhood planning and community development in the 2000s. The analysis of the process and outcomes can shed some light on the kind of challenges and opportunities that neighborhood revitalization poses these days.

4.1. Process

This evaluation of the process is intended to analyze the decision making in the different stages of the project. It is important here to acknowledge how different stakeholders were involved, who was included and who was left out, as well as how the dynamics of the process might have influenced the outcomes. Given the socioeconomic characteristics of this area, important aspects of this evaluation also include how race/diversity and equity issues have been addressed.

a) Involvement

After a first failed attempt (the Egleston-Jackson Strategy), the community planning process seems to have been highly inclusive, with some 30 local organizations represented in the Jackson Coordinating Group, more than 800 residents involved in the different sessions, and a strong youth representation. However, I have not been able to find any account of the demographics of the community planning process participants.

The extreme length of the process—eleven or twelve years at least—poses an important challenge in terms of community involvement. As Kyle Robidoux, Associate Director of Community Organizing at JPNDC, pointed out, it is difficult to keep the momentum when things are moving so slowly and people do not see their efforts translated into something built. CAC meetings are attended by a handful of people (six to eight people), while community meetings have also diminished their initial success. A natural burnout or loss of interest might have occurred, but other factors might help explain the low participation as well. As the

Executive Director of HSTF recalled, once the CDCs decided to bid as developers, they had to step back from the community engagement process:

However also these organizations (the CDCs) are probably the ones with the most capacity to reengage large numbers of community members, given that the other representatives of the CAC are mostly individuals that not necessarily have the organizational resources to outreach in a large way the community members. So I doubt that you would see hundreds of people getting involved like 10 years ago. (C. Martinez, personal communication, 2011, July 15).

In fact, the CAC chairman acknowledged the difficulty of engaging the community as the main challenge throughout the process:

Getting people engaged has always been a huge challenge, particularly if you are not a CDC. The city, the CDCs, they have planners, architects, etc. We don't have that capacity, and we do this part time, voluntarily...we are outgunned, so it's very hard, almost impossible, to hold the people around the table accountable [...] So the engaging piece, actually keeping the community folks at the table, it's being tough. (R. Singleton, personal communication, 2011, June 8)

However, it seems to be not only a matter of quantity of participants, but also of diversity:

(CDCs) do their very best to reach out to as many people as they can to engage folks. They are particularly good at engaging people who actually live in their properties. So sometimes the deck is stacked [...] We are having a difficult time getting folks engaged outside the usual attendees. You are always going to have BRA folks who come, developers, architects, but this are not really the people that you always want to show up, you want the community to show up. The email blast that I put up has about 600 people, and we didn't get one community member to actually show up, so... There is probably a lot more work that I could do, but I have another job! (R. Singleton, personal communication, 2011, June 8)

Changing demographics also contribute to make engagement more difficult. Areas in the Roxbury side that were primarily low-income African American are now experiencing gentrification, and the incoming residents have different priorities. That also makes it difficult to maintain a CAC that really represents the community:

Part of what happens is over time you sort of lose people, it's been a while! [...] So that's part of why they [the CAC] are trying to make sure that we actually are getting to a wider group, because they know they are not completely representative, and because there is not as many of them participating today as it was three years ago (C. Kornegay, personal communication, 2011, May 25).

But not only is the community disengaged, even the CAC members are losing interest, many of them not attending meetings. This used to make it hard to make any decision, as it was impossible to reach the required quorum with less than half of the CAC present, so midway they decided to change the quorum rules so as to make the meetings operative (Taber 2009, December 18).



Fig. 18: Ice Rink PNC community meeting, May 2011, and CAC meeting, June 2011.

b) Decision-making

This weaker interest on the part of the community also means less control and public debate over the recent decisions that affect, and to some extent distort, the decisions that came out of the community planning process.

During the planning process, efforts were made in terms of opening the decision making process to all participants in the meetings, focus groups and charrettes. However, after the RFP was put out and the development team was selected, the degree of community input in the decision making process diminished, despite the efforts of the development team to report back to the community. Part of this disengagement might be due to a sense of accomplishment when the RFP included the Development Priorities dictated through the community process, as well as a certain burnout after the lengthy process. However, as Claudio Martinez (personal communication, 2011, July 15) admitted, part of it is due to the transfer of responsibility to the developers, who carry the financial risk for the development and therefore feel entitled to make certain decisions. When asked if the community was consulted about the decision to put the Youth and Family Center on hold, he replied:

Usually it is the developer that announces the decision to the community or the CAC, I think our announcement was more public. So at the point when you are already in the development business a lot of decisions are made by the developers embedded in the community and adjusted accordingly. However, the financial risk is on the developer's side right now, so decision making lies on the developers.

Another issue regarding the decision making is how the terms set as a base for the community planning process have changed along the way, invalidating certain decisions. This is the case with the DPW salt shed, which was supposed to be relocated, or at least reconfigured, and which will finally stay in place as neither the city nor the developers are willing to pay for its relocation. As it is today, the facility communicates a message of blight, negatively contributing to the revitalization of the area.

c) Equity and race

According to Urban Edge's Executive Director, no particular effort was made to address race issues, apart from trying to be inclusive and to make sure the design would be welcoming for communities of both sides. However, there is a clear race component in the rivalry between the Roxbury and JP sides. Moreover, the hiring policy for the project has raised race-related concerns, as CAC members pointed out in a meeting in June 2011. It requires construction workers to be unionized, but according to some observers, there is a history of ethnocentric labor unions in Boston, historically dominated by Irish and Italian workers, while African Americans have not have access, or desire, to enter the unions. When asked if the project has addressed violence and/or race issues, the CAC chairman replied:

Not at all. The union discussion is a perfect example [...] 85-90% of the people who live in Roxbury are people of color. And to say that we are going to comply with the Boston Jobs Policy, which says that 50% of the people have to come from Boston, 40% have to be minority, and 10% have to be women, in this neighborhood is just wrong [...] the fact is that when you say that, you've literally excluded everyone who lives in this neighborhood, so I think that's a slap in the face, and that really hasn't addressed the race issue at all. Because since most of us are people of color, and in need of jobs, our life really hasn't improved (R. Singleton, personal communication, 2011, June 8).

The hiring procedures were not specifically discussed in the community process, although participants agreed that the project should provide economic opportunities for low-income residents, and mentioned some hiring criteria for the retail component. However, this seems to

be a hard battle to fight, as it is an express desire of Mayor Menino, who according to Singleton (personal communication, 2011, June 8) told him: “This is union job. You got a get folks into the union. But you also have to stay engaged. That’s your job.”

In this case, equity is directly related with the question of who will benefit from this redevelopment, and who will be able to live there. For that reason it is important to acknowledge that the definition of affordability levels was not part of the discussion during the community planning process, but was later defined as part of the Development Priorities. As explained in the next section, those levels went down from 100% affordable (targeted to below 80% AMI households in the Development Priorities) to 60% in the RFP proposal. Also important are the divergent views of the appropriate tenure mix that have arisen along the way, which are also further discussed in the next section.

4.2. Outcomes

To date, it is not possible to evaluate the final outcomes of the Jackson Square plan, as it is an ongoing process. However, it is interesting to compare the results of the community planning process as they were stated in the “Putting the Pieces Together” report, with the present state of the plan. As I have explained above, the economic crisis has significantly affected the initial project. As expressed by Rodney Singleton (2010, November 23), chair of the CAC:

No doubt a developed Jackson Square is a plus. We’ll have traffic and activity in places that were dark with no activity. But we need to also consider if development plans equitably serve all of us, particularly when some of our neighbors struggle to find a way out of poverty, crime and despair.

Several issues are at the center of the debate: the hold on the construction of the Youth Center, the change in the form of tenure in the first buildings to be developed, and the hiring conditions being the most controversial ones. Table 3 summarizes the evolution along the process of the six priorities identified in the community planning vision:

Project elements	Community Planning process (2001)	RFP- selected project (2005)	Implementation (2011)
Community Center	Highest priority	Decision to include a Recreation Center as well as a Youth Center	- Rec. Center approved, assembling funding - Youth Center on hold
Housing	- All permanently affordable (100% affordable for below 80% AMI) ⁴³ - Mix of tenures	- 60% for below 80% AMI - 10% btw 80-110% AMI - 30% market rate - 63% Rental	- Mix of affordable and market rate - 100% rental ⁴⁴
Retail	Small, locally-owned, in both sides of Columbus Ave.	- Diverse mix of business, sizes and rents on ground floor - Office nonprofit space on upper floors - Retail Incubator	- In conversation with major national pharmacy + small retail - Ground floor retail removed from Roxbury side
Green Space	Landscaping to encourage connection	Landscaping to encourage connection	No progress
Connection JP-Roxbury	Physically and functionally	Not specifically addressed	No progress
Calm Traffic	- Reduce Columbus Ave's width - Increase pedestrian crossing	- Transit Oriented Design - Planted median	No progress

Table 3. Evolution of Jackson Square project-defining elements

a) Youth Center

One of the main concerns regarding the evolution of the plan as it starts to become a reality is the lack of progress on the Youth and Family Center, one of the main priorities that emerged from the community planning process.

A planned Department of Youth Services facility had to be scrapped when the agency backed out, and a Youth and Families Center to be built on the west side of Columbus Avenue between Heath and Centre Streets and operated by the

⁴³ Precise levels were actually defined in the document that followed the community planning process, the Development Priorities.

⁴⁴ In the three projects that are moving ahead as of July 2011.

HSTF has been delayed due to financing difficulties, leading to frustration among some community leaders. (Jeremy C. Fox, J.C., 2010, April 8)

Indeed, some community leaders have expressed concern that the delay will hurt efforts to build bridges among neighborhood residents:

The Youth and Family Center was one of the things that the community said really needed to be built in the first phase, because that was what was going to hold the whole development project together. (David Worrell, deputy director of the Bromley-Heath Tenant Management Corporation, in Fox, 2010, April 8).

After unsuccessfully approaching several potential investors in Boston over the last few years to conduct a \$10 million capital campaign for the new center, HSTF and JPNDC decided to undertake a \$5 million capital campaign for improvements to the Cheverus building in Hyde Square. HSTF currently runs most of its programs—including its youth leadership, job training and arts programs—out of that JPNDC-owned building on the campus of the former Blessed Sacrament Church. According to Claudio Martinez, HSTF head, despite short-term refocusing on Hyde Square, JPNDC and HSTF are still committed to the Jackson Square community center, but it will probably have to wait another three or four years.

b) Housing tenure: homeownership vs. rental

As pointed out above, the question of tenure is an important one in JS. The presence of the Bromley-Heath public housing complex, which accounts for 1,000 units and 3,000 residents (Bromley-Heath Tenant Management Corporation, n.d.), and the Academy Homes I multifamily complex⁴⁵, which accommodates 202 units and 550 residents (Weber, 2005), already makes up a great deal of rental housing. During the planning process, participants expressed a desire for homeownership to play a role in the redevelopment.

However, as both Chrystal Kornegay (Urban Edge) and Kyle Robidoux (JPNDC) confirmed, the economic downturn has made funding for homeownership projects scarce, and both the Jackson Commons Project and the future Parcel K development have changed from 63% to 100% rental from the initial plan.

⁴⁵ Owned by Urban Edge and the Academy Homes I Tenant Council.

In e-mail communications, a majority of CAC members voiced their belief that affordable homeownership that was originally part of the Jackson Commons plan and now is not, should still be part of the plan, backed by real commitment. (Singleton, 2010, March 19).

Some voices claim that rental will ensure that the housing stays affordable; others consider that the area already has an excessive percentage of rental and subsidized housing, while some demand more ownership as a way to build assets and escape from the poverty circle:

You can't just build rental housing everywhere. Because you limit the opportunity of the people who you are trying to serve, you limit their options to be a bit more economically mobile [...] It wouldn't be so bad if you told me that we are having all these services that really address the sustainability of the occupants. Because it's not only about their sustainability, it's about their growth. Ultimately, are we talking about a path out of poverty? Because that's the thing that's going to make the biggest difference in their lives (R. Singleton, personal communication, 2011, June 8)

In fact, this seems to be one of the main sources of tensions with the abutting community of Fort Hill/ Highland Park, a residential area to the north where single family home sales are appreciating at some of the highest rates in the Boston area:

That's part of the challenge, that really people who show up to these meetings are homeowners, and they are getting to have a say on whether it is rental housing or not, because people want people who act like them [...] So they would prefer [the development] to be homeownership. But they understand what the market is, they just want to make sure that even if it's rental, that there is an income mix (C. Kornegay, personal communication, 2011, May 25).

c) Retail

While the Development Priorities document stated that “the project will not be a success if regional or national retailers only fill the space” (JCG, 2003 September: 25), a CDC staff member mentioned conversations with CVS for the retail part of the first building to start construction.

The other main concern that has been raised is the fact that, due to changes related to the salt shed not moving, the retail piece of the Roxbury side of Columbus Avenue has been eliminated, despite having been identified as one of the features that would help bridge the two communities functionally.

d) Connection between Jamaica Plain and Roxbury

Several features that were part of the strategy to bridge the two communities have been lost. The most important of all is the Youth and Families Center, but there are others, such as the retail piece mentioned above. CAC chair expressed the risk entailed in the loss of such an important goal for the project:

This financial downturn has actually really marginalized a lot of the things that were critical to bridging the two communities, like the loss of the YFC. If I recall correctly, that was supposed to be the glue, to really hold this turf war between Bromley and Academy, which has been a real problem, and so the idea of actually introducing any kind of development without a way to really make a cohesive neighborhood will be problematic. So, will it be a bridge? I think it's going to be really tough, just because we've lost much. It's one thing to build buildings, and have people occupy them, but if the people who live there don't have a sense that things are going to be better, we'll end up with something no different than what we already have (R. Singleton, personal communication, 2011, June 8).

e) Scale and scope of the project. Density of the redevelopment

One important consequence of the economic crisis on the JS project is the downscaling in the number of units built in both the Jackson Commons and Parcel K developments. Lack of sufficient funding is the main cause of this change. However, the whole concept of JS as a transit oriented development (TOD) calls for including the maximum possible density, and as such it was conceived at the community planning process.

Finally, as CAC chairman pointed out, it is a big challenge to actually deliver what was promised, the vision of the community. Although the process might be completed fulfilling all the contractual obligations, that might not mean that it realizes the vision:

Because we said it was going to be funky and vibrant and you would be able to walk late at night, and we wouldn't have gentrification, or there would be homeowners who would be interested in buying property, there would be fewer cars in the square because people would be taking the T. We said it would be very green, and open, and beautiful, and people were going to love to come by, and the retail shops...it's tough (R. Singleton, personal communication, 2011, June 8).

In conclusion, this evaluation points out several issues that are at the center of the debate about the challenges of a community-based revitalization model: the actual capacity of CDCs to implement an ambitious and maybe unrealistic community-vision, the disengagement of the

community after a lengthy process, the influence of the economic crisis in the final outcome, etc. The chapter that follows relates the findings from the Jackson Square case to the literature about redevelopment and governance, in order to derive conclusions that could apply to similar cases.

CHAPTER 4. Conclusions: challenges for a community-based redevelopment model in a neoliberal context

1. Introduction

The case presented provides many insights about the challenges and opportunities of the community-led approach to neighborhood redevelopment. It can be characterized as a model example, as it presented the ideal conditions for community-based revitalization as described in 1999:

[...] well-organized networks of community organizations will develop comprehensive neighborhood plans. They will then utilize a combination of governmental social service and redevelopment programs at all levels, corporate contributions, and philanthropic grants to make improvements. [...] The tactics of these organizations may be collaborative or confrontational (Keating and Krumholz, 1999: 200).

As we saw in Chapter 2, since the 1980s, greater levels of government decentralization have transferred the initiative and responsibility for rebuilding declining areas to nonprofit agencies and their supporting community bases. In this sense, the Jackson Square redevelopment was a paradigmatic example of a process that was entirely led by the community, from the initial mobilization for a neighborhood-driven vision for a devastated area, through the community-led planning process that defined that vision, to the attempt of a group of community development corporations to implement it during the 2000s. Such community control can be praised as an extraordinary achievement and distinguished for its reliance on a highly open and democratic decision-making process.

However, the Jackson Square example also tells us that this approach to redevelopment has its limits. First, community control of planning does not necessarily mean that the community's vision can be directly or rapidly realized. Acknowledging those limits in the particular circumstances of each case should be useful for advancing solutions that help community-led planning move forward. As I explain in the next section, CDCs have limited resources to deal with the planning and implementation of comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment within

a neoliberal real estate industry, and therefore the public sector should get further involved in supporting those efforts. Below I analyze the main challenges facing the Jackson Square model, and provide some ideas as to how some of these challenges might be overcome.

2. Challenges for a community-based redevelopment model in a neoliberal context.

As stated in the introduction, redevelopment is shaped by economic, political and social forces that are in a constant process of change. The interaction and distribution of power among community, private sector and government is critical in shaping the outcomes of redevelopment processes, and therefore it is useful to examine how each of these groups contributed to shaping redevelopment in the Jackson Square case.

a) The community

First, the local community, highly engaged and organized, played a decisive role since the times of opposition to the highway, fighting for decades to see the area revived. However, it was an internal dispute about the future uses they would like to see in Jackson Square that became the spark that lit the fire for redevelopment. Seeking to resolve the conflict, they asked the city government to facilitate a community process to define a vision for the area, but—given the remaining fear of public action from the times of urban renewal—they made very clear that it should be a decision-making process entirely led by the community. Strong efforts were made to develop an open and democratic decision-making process, involving a large number of residents in many meetings, to make sure that consensus was reached. Given the chance to define their ideal vision for the area, even if they acknowledged certain constraints, the community laid out an ambitious development plan, which included as one of its main priorities a community facility to help solve the violence between rival gangs in the area.

However, ten years after the crafting of that vision, and despite the high expectations raised, no construction has broken ground in the area. The levels of engagement have declined over the years, and even though the project has been downgraded over time, no further community mobilization has happened. After defining the vision, the leadership was left to the development team, composed by the CDCs that had started organizing the mobilizations. The

community control was left to a Mayor-appointed group of citizens, which also began to disengage after some time, and that, anyway, did not have enough mobilization capacity to articulate any potential community demands.

It is to be questioned to what extent the community was realistic about the kind of development they asked for, given the privatized redevelopment context in which they had to operate. Their idea asked for a strong public investment—to ensure the provision of 100% affordable housing and community facilities— or at least for a powerful developer from whom to extract benefits in exchange for the use of publicly owned parcels. But in contrast, the plan was developed by local CDCs in partnership with a private developer to ensure “community control,” even at the expense of important features of the initial vision. As I explain below, CDCs struggle to survive as real estate developers in a market-based business, and are having great difficulty to fulfill the community vision, while the public sector is not committing the necessary funding to realize the promised plan. However, the community has not organized to press the government for support, maybe still fearful of past interventions in the area, or simply unable to articulate its demands. Moreover, it is also important to acknowledge the risk of frustration that a process of this magnitude can entail if the community vision is not fully realized. The CAC chairman was referring to this question when he alluded to the expectations raised and the difficulty of meeting them, and JPNDC Community Organizing Associate Director also pointed at this issue when he mentioned that people were getting disengaged because nothing was being built after so many years.

b) The community-based developers

As explained in Chapter 2, CDCs were born more than forty years ago as a community response to the lack of public action in highly distressed neighborhoods. At first mobilized to reclaim more public investment in affordable housing and service provision, they gradually evolved into actually providing what those low-income and minority residents needed. This move was motivated by the federal government’s retreat from urban issues and by the local government’s gradual decentralization and externalization of this type of services. Since the 1980s, in Boston, a growing and professionalized nonprofit sector took the lead in affordable housing development and management, funded and supported by an extended network of philanthropic institutions, as well as tax credits from corporations, and public block grants.

This led to a gradual growth of CDCs' real estate branches, which demanded highly skilled professionals and required growing resources, contributing to their specialization. It also made CDCs highly dependent on external funders—not only private, but also public—a fact that certainly diminished their autonomy and influenced their move from confrontational to collaborative political strategies⁴⁶. This move also affected their community organizing branch, which is certainly contributing to building positive networks of support and asset-building, but has mostly depoliticized its discourse and action.

In Jackson Square, CDCs are bearing the burden of redeveloping highly distressed neighborhoods where public action is mostly absent. Not only are they in charge of assembling the necessary financing, but they also have to make sure that the projects correspond to what the community needs and wants. Moreover, the community vision might be extremely complex to realize in a neoliberal development context, especially under the constraints of a financial crisis. Therefore, CDCs are doubly trapped: on the one hand, between advocacy and real estate financial realities; on the other, between the city government—that controls them through the review process and the Mayor-appointed CAC—, and the community. In this sense, though, it is not clear how the community is keeping CDCs accountable, as they are still perceived as community representatives but, as explained in the previous chapter, once they bid as developers they have to step back as organizers, as they might have a conflict of interests.

However, as exemplified by the Youth and Family Center case, it is sometimes hard, if not impossible, to follow the community vision when it is at odds with the financial situation and it is the CDCs that are bearing the risks. In fact, many CDCs struggle financially to survive, depending on loans and grants that carry multiple conditions to be met. Ultimately, it is the market—in this case in the form of an economic crisis—that is shaping the conditions in which these redevelopment efforts are being implemented⁴⁷ making it difficult for the community to even articulate its demands or to hold anyone responsible for the fate of the project.

⁴⁶ Moreover, their reliance on city funding – mainly through CDBG, HOME and the Neighborhood Housing Trust Fund- and permitting makes them less likely to advocate for community's demands in front of the city government.

⁴⁷ In Jackson Square, see the tenure and density changes, or the delay of the whole project because of lack of funding.

If CDCs were instrumental in advancing the demands of excluded populations in the 1960s and 1970s, it can be said that they have now evolved into a sort of buffer between the community and the government, providing the former with part of what it needs—supported in formally democratic processes—, and protecting the latter from the demands of previously activist populations. Thus the voice and demands of the community are being greatly mediated through the “CDC machine”, while the local government has deferred its responsibilities to it.

c) The government

Lastly, the Jackson Square process is a clear example of decentralization and privatization of city government functions in Boston, and its high reliance on the private and nonprofit sectors to provide social services and affordable housing. In relation to neighborhood redevelopment, the city—through the BRA—has limited its functions to those of supervising and approving the process, providing scarce financial support to ensure that the community vision is realized. Still apologizing for the errors of urban renewal and the top-down planning style that characterized those days, the public sector has stepped back to give the community greater control and responsibility over the redevelopment of distressed neighborhoods. Even if this decentralization might fulfill the demands for community-based decision-making, it is questionable whether the government should not also ensure that the community vision is realized in a complete and timely manner. Moreover, it might be necessary that BRA planners overcome the urban renewal trauma and reengage in the process, not to impose their ideas but to contribute with their expertise and knowledge of similar experiences to achieve more creative solutions that overcome the great difficulties this processes face.

Other challenges are not specifically related to one of these groups, but are related to the outcomes of community-based redevelopment processes, the most prominent being the question of how equitable its outcomes are. As pointed out by Fainstein (2010), even the most democratic of planning processes does not directly imply that the resulting plan will contribute to advance equity. In Jackson Square, this is exemplified in the debate around the affordability and tenure mix for the housing developments. First, while the community vision asked for 100% housing affordable for low-income households⁴⁸, the project presented by the selected

⁴⁸ Those earning less than 80% AMI

development team—and the one to be implemented—called for only 60% of this type, a change justified by the need to make the whole project feasible.

The tenure debate is even more complex. From the beginning, participant residents asked for the project to have a homeownership component, claiming that the area already houses a disproportionately high percentage of renters. For some, homeownership is a way of helping low income residents escape the poverty cycle. For others, the solution is to have a diverse income mix to avoid the problems associated with poverty concentration. However, lower-income homeownership projects are difficult to fund—and actually difficult to keep affordable—and thus the project would be more likely to target low-income populations if it was 100% rental. The project selected in the RFP proposed a 30% of ownership units, but lately, plans have been changed in Phase I buildings to 100% rental units. The change has been provoked by the lack of funding for ownership projects, that is, again, due to the financial crisis, not by a debate within the community.

The question of affordability is especially important in an area that is undergoing increasing gentrification. Moreover, recent studies have pointed out the risk of transit-rich developments to induce rising housing costs and price out lower income residents, who are actually the ones that mostly use transit (Pollack et al, 2010). In a city like Boston, where housing prices have been increasing for a long time—and are actually already starting to recover from the 2008 economic downturn—keeping and creating affordable housing is key to ensure equity, and thus, in this case, citywide interest should overcome local interests. A further twist in this sense would be to question whether residential and commercial uses—chosen in the community process—are better than the original small-industrial ones, which might have provided much needed stable jobs matching the skills of low income residents already living in the area.

It is hard to argue that CDCs might be failing in their mission. In fact, they are the major agents of positive revitalization in low-income and minority neighborhoods in many cities in the U.S., taking the lead where public action is absent, and doing so in close collaboration with local communities. Nonetheless, it can be affirmed that their evolution towards a professionalized industry in order to compete in a neoliberal real estate market has resulted in some losses. Mainly, it has contributed to a depolitization of community activism and a release of responsibility from the public sector to the CDCs with regards to the provision of services

and housing for the poor. In the meantime, they have taken a burden—redeveloping highly distressed areas—that they might not be fully capable to pursue on their own.

3. Recommendations

The challenges described above are complex enough to induce dejection. However, in the spirit of contributing, even minimally, to imagining paths to improve the living conditions of distressed-neighborhood residents in a way that meets their needs and desires, I will attempt here to provide some recommendations based on what can be learned from the case I have examined and its relation to the broader context of urban redevelopment in the U.S.

First, it would be necessary that the community stayed engaged and kept mobilizing to control community-based organizations—especially those involved in real estate development—to make sure that the decision-making process was open at all stages of the project and that the community vision helped advance equity. However, it would be even more important that the community realized the need to demand public support for distressed and low-income neighborhoods for redistributive purposes. That support should come in the form of greater investment for public facilities, affordable housing and social services provision, but also in the form of public land. In the Jackson Square case, it seems clear that this support would entail providing enough funding for the construction of the Youth and Family Center—key to improve the social conditions and violence issues of the area—and even making efforts to relocate or restructure the salt shed. Moreover, this would be a chance to close the circle, getting the government to repair the problems it unleashed in the times of urban renewal and inner-city highway plans.

Regarding the CDCs, the question is whether they can maintain their two apparently contradictory missions: organize the community and develop real estate. Some critics have long called for a separation of both functions (Stoecker, 1997), therefore giving way to local community organizing and service provision organizations on the one hand, and city-wide nonprofit developers on the other, which would allow the latter to come to scale and perform better in a hard real estate market. This option would probably raise concerns about a possible disconnection from neighborhood needs and desires, and thus further mechanisms of control—beyond CACs—should be explored. As an alternative path, instead of advocating for

public support, or in addition to it, communities could direct their efforts to acquiring further economic autonomy, through the creation of cooperative models of business and housing, land trusts, community banks, etc., in order to overcome the dependence on external support.

Lastly, it is to be questioned how the government could be reengaged in order to provide support for community-based efforts given the present political economy of redevelopment under neoliberalism. The question of what the role of government should be is at the center of this debate. It is important to highlight the contradictions and constraints of neoliberal capitalism to understand that, even in the best case scenario—as the Jackson Square case could have been defined when it began—, low-income communities and their allies cannot overcome the structural inequalities engendered by the system without determined support from the public sector.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS

Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC):

- Kyle Robidoux, Associate Director of Community Organizing.

Urban Edge:

- Christal Kornegay, CEO and President.
- Katie Provencher, Director of Community Engagement.

Hyde Square Task Force:

- Claudio Martinez, Executive Director.
- Jackie Kay, Board member.

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

- Gregory Watson, former Executive Director.

PRIVATE DEVELOPERS

- Bart J. Mitchell, President of Mitchell Properties LLC.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Rodney Singleton, Jackson Square Community Advisory Committee (CAC), Chairman.
- Orion Kriegman, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council, member.
- “Wake Up The Earth” festival organizer.

CITY-LEVEL AGENCIES

Boston Redevelopment Authority:

- Kairos Shen, Chief Planner.
- Ines Soto-Palmarin, Senior Planner for the Jackson Square Redevelopment.
- John Fitzgerald, Development Review Department, Project Manager for the Jackson Square project.