Reinforcing Social Infrastructure:
The Role of Physical Interventions in Revitalizing Hyde Square in Jamaica Plain

by

Geraldine Campos

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Signature of Author

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 20, 1999

Certified by

John de Monchaux
Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning
Thesis Supervisor
Department of Urban Studies and Planning

Accepted by

Associate Professor Paul Smoke
Chair, MCP Committee
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
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ABSTRACT

Hyde Square is an example of an inner city neighborhood turnaround that linked physical to social changes. In the past, planners, architects, and government have tried to transform distressed urban neighborhoods unsuccessfully through either social or physical agendas. Hyde Square is an important case study in that it shows a successful approach to linking physical to social changes to revitalize a distressed urban neighborhood.

This thesis answers how physical interventions helped to build and reinforce the social fabric of Hyde Square. It concentrates on three physical interventions and two repercussions led by a local non-profit agency, the Neighborhood Development Corporation of Jamaica Plain beginning in the late 1980s. These include the Hyde Square Cooperative Housing, the Stop & Shop Supermarket, and Walden Garden, and two repercussions: the 1-4 Family Housing Program and the Hyde Square Main Street Program. These five interventions have stabilized the decline of the neighborhood, provided a physical manifestation of positive change, improved the image of the neighborhood, and spurred other development. They have reinforced and improved the physical and social fabric allowing for a sense of place, safety, and pride in the neighborhood.

By paying special attention to elements of timing, design, and history, the physical interventions have reinforced the social-political work of neighborhood institutions and organizations. These physical interventions have stimulated and encouraged the revitalization momentum by producing physical, social, and economic benefits for the neighborhood. Each intervention’s success created opportunities for other physical interventions to occur producing a cycle of events. Their collective results have revitalized the neighborhood.

The analysis of the Hyde Square efforts shows that a conscious integrated revitalization effort that meshes government policies, good design, and a strong community organizational infrastructure is essential to successfully turning a neighborhood around. It is through the framework of collaborative efforts of residents, organizations, and institutions, in partnership with government and the private sector, that strategic physical interventions can be instrumental in revitalizing distressed urban neighborhoods.

Thesis Supervisor: John de Monchaux
Title: Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning
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CHAPTER:
INTRODUCTION

"The ethnic and economic mix of people, many with a strong feeling of community, has made Jamaica Plain one of Boston’s most vibrant neighborhoods."

City of Boston, Jamaica Plain
Neighborhood Web Page

The Hyde Square Experience

The smell of Latin cooking wafting down Centre Street, the sounds of Latin music emanating from cars and houses, friends on street corners chatting in Spanish and English, mothers walking their children to the park, older kids on bicycles weaving in and out traffic: these are the signals welcome the visitor into the neighborhood of Hyde Square. Hyde Square is a vibrant, colorful, healthy, interesting neighborhood with a community spirit that can be seen, felt, and heard.

This was not the case 10 years ago. The area was dotted with neglected vacant lots, residents were filled with fear of crime, and many had a sense of hopelessness. Hyde Square was plagued with the ills of inner city crime, drugs, high poverty rates, and general neglect, abandonment, and disinvestment. Beginning in 1989, Hyde Square changed from an area filled with abandoned housing and garbage-strewn vacant lots to a thriving, reinvigorated neighborhood. The neighborhood today has a renewed sense of itself, of liveliness, of safety, of a community – something that can be physically seen and felt. This thesis seeks to understand how this neighborhood turnaround came about.

A Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy of the 1990s
Hyde Square is an example of neighborhood revitalization for the 1990s because it did not call for the big master plans of urban renewal times. Rather, it is an example of patchwork re-stitching of the urban fabric by incrementally executing strategic physical interventions at critical pressure points. It is led by a local non-profit agency committed to positive change in the neighborhood. It entails a participatory community process creating a vision for the future. It is a process-oriented solution with its community-based nature as its critical component. It has linked webs of people and organizations allowing for accountability and responsibility. The effort has survived critical times by partnering with the city, other community organizations, and the private sector, creating social and political networks that helped to move the efforts forward. These elements characterize the reason for the success of the efforts.

The physical interventions are the focal points that created and fueled the revitalization momentum. They became a powerful tool for social change in the neighborhood. Indeed, they are an example of thinking big and achieving results by acting incrementally. The Neighborhood Development Corporation of Jamaica Plain (NDC), a local non-profit community development corporation, unified the efforts. Due to the organization’s modest entrepreneurial spirit, they were able to accomplish their goals in a sensitive way respecting neighborhood sentiments. Through the physical interventions, and in collaboration with other groups, the NDC was able to build trust in the neighborhood and encourage a spirit of community. They were also able to build up the social fabric of the neighborhood by improving the physical fabric of the neighborhood. Their belief in their mission and commitment to positive changes to help the neighborhood is shown in the quality of their work. For this reason, I will tell the story of the physical interventions through the lens of the NDC.

Motivation of Thesis

Hyde Square is an important case study because it demonstrates that social changes can be linked to physical changes in neighborhood revitalization efforts. The theme of neighborhood revitalization is not new. With national trends and economic forces concentrating on growth in the suburbs after World War II, the private market did not take up the task of revitalizing distressed inner city neighborhoods. As disinvestment and neglect followed the migration of
residents out of the city, neighborhood revitalization was taken over by federal programs for over three decades. Unfortunately, the polarization of effort on the physical or on the social aspects of neighborhood revitalization has not had the desired effects and many inner city neighborhoods have continued to decline.

The neighborhood revitalization literature of the last three decades reflects this polarization. Planning literature of the 1960s and 1970s describes a social agenda for bringing in services and jobs to inner city neighborhoods in an effort to revitalize them. Few of these programs or initiatives by the federal or city governments examined the link between the physical quality of neighborhoods and its social impact.

On the other side of the spectrum, urban design literature discusses the specific details of architectural elements as part of the components that make up a neighborhood. Recent urban design literature has discussed the contributions of the physical properties of neighborhoods to the quality of life of its residents. For example, in Peter Calthorpe’s, *The Next American Metropolis*, he claims that the scale, pace, pattern, and bounds of neighborhoods are essential to the “aesthetic of place—scaled to the human body, timed to a stride, patterned to ceremony, and bonded to nature.” The key is reaching a balance: while the physical form fosters community and social interaction, layers of space create the desired private realm. The important elements become the walkable nature of the neighborhood, the massing and scale of buildings, and the mixture of land-uses and activities. These ideas are known by several different names including Traditional Neighborhood Developments or Urban Villages, and share a common perspective, design principles, and set of goals moving away from the car- and suburbia-dominated development to one with more interactive, walkable environments. Often times though, examples in this literature lack a social infrastructure to make physical interventions succeed in revitalizing inner city neighborhoods.

*Purpose, Research Question, and Hypothesis*

The revitalization of Hyde Square shows an approach to linking physical to social changes. For this reason, this thesis seeks to analyze the role of physical interventions in revitalizing Hyde
Square. It concentrates on three physical interventions and two repercussions that occurred in Hyde Square beginning in the late 1980s clustered around Walden and Centre Streets. There is one housing intervention, the Hyde Square Cooperative Housing, one commercial intervention, the Stop & Shop Supermarket and Martha Eliot Health Center, and one open space intervention, Walden Garden. The two repercussions of these interventions include the 1-4 Family Housing Program and the Main Street Program. Each of these interventions has acted in several capacities: they have served to stabilize the neighborhood, provide a physical manifestation of positive change, improve the image of the neighborhood, and spur other development. In essence, these physical interventions have reinforced and improved the physical and social fabric allowing for a sense of place, comfort, safety, and pride in the neighborhood. This thesis seeks to answer how the physical interventions helped to build and reinforce the social fabric of the neighborhood.

I hypothesize that the strategic physical interventions in Hyde Square paying special attention to elements of timing, design, and history/tradition have reinforced the social-political focus of organizations and institutions. These physical interventions have stimulated and encouraged the revitalization momentum by producing physical, social, and economic benefits for the neighborhood. As a result, the quality of life of the neighborhood and image of the neighborhood has been improved thereby justifying the efforts of the organizations. The interventions created a cyclical effect, the success of the first created opportunities for other physical interventions to occur, spurring the revitalization effort forward.

*Organization of Thesis*

The Hyde Square case study shows that a conscious integrated revitalization effort that meshes government policies, good design, and a strong community organizational infrastructure are essential to successfully turning a neighborhood around. It is through the framework of collaborative efforts of residents, organizations, and institutions, in partnership with government and other external forces that strategic physical interventions can be instrumental in revitalizing distressed urban neighborhoods.
In order to argue these points, this thesis is divided into three sections, encompassing 7 chapters. The first section establishes the framework in which the interventions took place. Chapter 2 establishes the historical framework within which the neighborhood revitalization effort in Hyde Square has occurred. Chapter 3 discusses the work of the Neighborhood Development Corporation of Jamaica Plain and other community-based organizations and neighborhood institutions that helped to create the social framework for bringing about change. Chapter 4 describes the political atmosphere, the importance of the role of the city in the revitalization effort, and the Neighborhood Partnership Agreement which furthered many of the changes in Hyde Square.

The second section composed of Chapter 5 details the physical interventions. The chapter focuses 3 interventions on Walden Street and its repercussions in Hyde Square. The chapter is divided into 5 parts each detailing the history and inception of each project, the controversies in the implementation of each project, and the initial impact on the neighborhood and residents.

The third section focuses on the analysis of the interventions and conclusions. Chapter 6 analyzes the impact of the interventions and discusses measures of success including ways of quantifying results and examining external factors contributing to the success of the interventions, and the results of the resident interviews in gauging the image of the neighborhood. Chapter 7 reflects on the revitalization effort and extracts general lessons from the Hyde Square case study in order to make recommendations for neighborhood revitalization efforts in similar distressed urban neighborhoods.
SECTION 1:

THE FRAMEWORK FOR NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION
CHAPTER:

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CURRENT CONDITIONS

"Jamaica Plain is everything the American city is."

Alan Lupo, Rites of Way

Overview

This chapter seeks to highlight the recurring themes throughout Jamaica Plain’s history that define it as a distinct neighborhood. These themes include 1) resident loyalty to the neighborhood; 2) ability to adapt to change; 3) a spirit of activism; and 4) a diversity of ethnicities, income levels, and interests. It is this continuing thread of these themes through time that set the stage for the Neighborhood Development Corporation of Jamaica Plain and other community-based groups to mobilize residents to take control of their neighborhood. As such, an awareness of their history and their community spirit pervade the current revitalization efforts.

The first part of this chapter details the history of Jamaica Plain and its physical and social evolution as a Boston neighborhood (Figure 2.1). The second part of this chapter deals tells the story of Hyde Square. As the following chapters will show, Hyde Square is both a distinct sub-neighborhood within Jamaica Plain, its residents’ view it as a central part of JP.

Figure 2.1. A map of Boston’s neighborhoods.
The Jamaica Plain Story

Jamaica Plain has held a reputation for being a culturally, racially, and economically diverse neighborhood for over 100 years. Alexander von Hoffman, in his book *Local Attachments*, describes Jamaica Plain in the 1850s as a “bewildering and contradictory mix of agricultural village, exclusive suburb, artisan community, and urban ghetto.”¹ In late 1997, a Boston Globe article described Jamaica Plain as “funky, culturally and economically diverse.”² According to the brochure of a local real estate brokerage firm, “Jamaica Plain is often lauded as a true melting pot, embodying the best of our common vision of the American dream.”³ Today, JP is 44% white, 30% Latino, 20% African-American, and 6% Asian.⁴ Socially, JP’s reputation as a tolerant, open, and active community draws in new residents.⁵ This enduring diversity and community spirit, and the meshing different people, activities, and economic levels is one of the points that has attracted and kept residents in the area.

¹ von Hoffman, p. 3.
³ Jamaica Plain and Roslindale Community Guide by Innovative Moves, Inc.
⁴ From a report compiled for the JP NDC according to 1990 Census data.
⁵ Interviews with new residents in Hyde Square, Spring 1999.
The form of Jamaica Plain has an alluring physical quality that those looking for a semi-urban atmosphere. Mostly built in the latter half of the 19th century as a streetcar suburb, the neighborhood has a variety of brick and wood frame houses varying in architectural styles including Classical, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, and Italianate. Most structures are single, two, and three family homes, although there are some elegant brick homes and brick apartment buildings. The streets follow the gently sloping and hilly topography creating winding roads with some spectacular views to Boston and neighboring Brookline. When compared to another neighborhoods in the city, JP boasts the greatest amount of green open space, which includes Jamaica Pond, the Arboretum, Franklin Park, and the Southwest Corridor Park.

**Jamaica Plain in its early days (1640-1850)**

The Puritans settled Jamaica Plain, then known as Pond Plain, in the 1640s as a farming community in the town of Roxbury. The first settlements occurred on the flatlands to the south and east of the Jamaica Pond, the area’s most distinctive feature. The village center was located at the intersection of Centre and South Streets with Centre Street, then known as the Highway to Dedham, and Washington Street, then known as the Dedham Turnpike, as its main thoroughfares. Throughout the 18th century, Jamaica Plain continued to be dedicated to farming, although its focus shifted from subsistence-and-surplus style of farming to the production of
foodstuffs catering to the Boston market.  

By the 1850s, Jamaica Plain still possessed a pastoral image shaped not by farming, which was steadily declining, but by large estates built by wealthy families wishing to escape from Boston in the heat of the summer. The pond side area of Jamaica Plain was dotted with these estates, and their pleasure grounds, orchards, lawns, and gardens were interspersed with some working farms (Figure 2.3). In order to continue its idyllic, country town atmosphere, Jamaica Plain seceded from the more urbanized town of Roxbury and joined the more agricultural town of West Roxbury in 1851 (Figure 2.4). This act illustrates one of the early instances of residents wishing to define JP's character as well as showing a collective pride in the area. This theme will resurface in other examples throughout its history.

![Figure 2.4. Jamaica Plain within the town of West Roxbury, 1870.](image)

**The Growth of Jamaica Plain: Establishing Themes (1850s-1940s)**

As Boston grew in the latter part of the 19th century, its outlying areas were refashioned to respond to the change from an agricultural to an industrial economy, a change that brought manufacturing and transportation to Jamaica Plain. Both transportation and manufacturing

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6 Von Hoffman, 7.
brought new settlement patterns to JP changing the physical and social composition of the neighborhood and helping to form JP's new identity as an urban neighborhood.

The development of railway transportation changed the physical form of JP transforming it from a rural to semi-urban character. The Boston and Providence Railroad, later the New York, New Haven, and Hartford line, followed by the horse-drawn streetcar in the 1870s contributed to the fast-paced development of the area. As opportunities for coach and railroad transportation into Boston increased, the upper middle class and middle class chose to move to Boston's edge and commute daily into Boston to conduct their business. Customers then demanded special commuter fares and additional stations. In response, the railroad, running along Washington Street, opened a succession of stations beginning with a Jamaica Plain station in the late 1830s, followed by the Green Street, Forest Hills, and Heath Street stations. The addition of stations not only encouraged the layout of streets connecting Centre Street to the railroad line but also brought real estate speculation and the building of commuter homes. The result is a building agglomeration known as a streetcar suburb, as recorded by Sam Bass Warner in *Streetcar Suburbs*.

![Figure 2.5.](image)

Factories are interspersed with working class homes along Heath Street in Hyde Square.

Manufacturing also changed the physical character of JP. The Stony Brook, a small river that ran through the middle of Jamaica Plain, and its valley became an ideal manufacturing district with its valuable water source. Tanneries, leather manufacturers, shoe factories, machine shops, and breweries clustered in the valley. This, in turn, brought both German and Irish skilled and unskilled workers who built worker's cottages as well as more dense residences.
Factories, smokestacks, and workers' cottages dotted the landscape of the Stony Brook valley (Figure 2.5).

As transportation and manufacturing changed the physical composition of JP, the arrival of skilled and unskilled laborers, and businessmen commuters changed the dynamics of the social composition of the neighborhood. JP became a mix of the upper class, farms, commuters, and the working class. This mix explains the “mixed and inchoate personality” as von Hoffman describes Jamaica Plain at the mid-nineteenth century. This quote characterizes not only a mix of classes in JP, but also a mix of ethnicities. There was a population increase at this time with an influx of Irish and German Jews.

With an increase population came an increase in the need for city services. Realizing the town could not financially accommodate the addition of new infrastructure, many residents voted to be annexed to the City of Boston in 1873 along with West Roxbury. JP's annexation to the city of Boston brought about heated debates and discussions regarding the character of Jamaica Plain and set a precedent for residents organizing and working together to achieve results.

The formation of Jamaica Plain as a mixed city neighborhood developed fully with the introduction of the electric streetcar in the 1890s, making the neighborhood accessible to the lower class (Figure 2.6). The wealthy, middle class commuters, farmers, artisans,
shopkeepers, and laborers; the addition of its own newspaper in 1893; varied religious and educational institutions; a manufacturing district; and parks are elements that characterize JP as an urban neighborhood.

By the turn of the century, Jamaica Plain had formed its own identity with feelings of loyalty and community that remain to the present day. According to von Hoffman, "[the residents of Jamaica Plain] believed that the neighborhood in some sense belonged to them." This sense of belonging fostered a sense of attachment making the neighborhood the organizing element of the area's social life. Although most organizations formed along class, race, ethnic, gender, and religious lines, some organizations such as schools and churches served the crucial function of linking different groups within the community irrespective of these divisions. The profusion of religious groups; educational institutions; fraternal lodges based on concepts of brotherhood, mutual aid, and sociability; clubs; and other voluntary associations made for a rich public life in the neighborhood.

Local economic activity helped to forge local attachments by linking members of the community to their neighborhood. Neighborhood businessmen took advantage of the capital available to invest in businesses in the area encouraging local economic development. This activity created common economic interests that nurtured workshops and stores. Manufacturers and shopkeepers along with residents participated in the civic life of the neighborhood.

The rapid change of Jamaica Plain from a semi-rural to an urban neighborhood is best seen in the growth of its population. In 1850, the population was 2,730. In 1875, the population grew to 9,190. By 1900, it swelled to 32,750. It only took 10 more years to reach its population of just over 40,000, which it has steadily maintained since then.7

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7 Von Hoffman, p.3.
8 Ibid., 63.
9 Ibid., p. 34.
Little is written about JP in the early 20th century. According to interviews with longtime residents, JP went about its business of everyday living. It continued to be a vibrant neighborhood with a stable ethnic mix of Irish, Germans, and some Greeks. Before World War II though, many of the organizations that made JP interesting at the turn of the century were in decline.

**Continuing Traditions: Jamaica Plain in Transition (1950s-1980s)**

As a result of national trends, Jamaica Plain was in social and economic transition between the 1950s and 1970s. The manufacturing district began to decline after World War II and jobs were lost as factories closed. By the 1950s, the suburban movement and the draw of newer homes appealed to the middle class as the housing stock grew old and in need of repair. In the late 1960s, Alan Lupo describes JP as “an apathetic community, whose potential talent had been sucked out by the great American suburban brain drain.” The school desegregation and bussing issues caused more families in the 1970s to leave the area. Parts of Jamaica Plain suffered during the white flight due to a declining population base, disinvestment in the area, deteriorating housing stock, little maintenance, and absentee ownership. As a result property values dropped and crime increased. This change though opened opportunities for different ethnic groups, artists, musicians, and students to take advantage of the diversity and affordability of JP during the early 1970s.

In response to these changing conditions, the Ecumenical Social Action Committee (ESAC) was founded in the mid-1960s by a group of dedicated people working to prevent neighborhood decline in Jamaica Plain. ESAC focused on social urban issues and neighborhood decline due to housing abandonment, disinvestment, and neglect, concentrating on the church’s role in these issues. Building on existing neighborhood institutions and the work of local churches as a base of support and organization, ESAC laid the collaborative groundwork for the ensuing work of other organizations in JP. Their coalitions brought together new residents of JP, recent immigrants, and longtime residents.

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From this core effort, several organizations were born. The three organizations that grew out of ESAC were Oficina Hispana in 1973, Urban Edge in 1974, and the Neighborhood Development Corporation of Jamaica Plain in 1977.

The proposed construction of Interstate 95 through the center of JP galvanized many groups to action in the early 1970s. The fight against the highway became an opportunity for collaboration among diverse interests, people, and institutions towards a common goal. In *Rites of Way*, Alan Lupo describes the alliance of citizens collaborating to influence government action. The highway fight was a powerful threat to the social and physical fabric of the neighborhood. However, the fight also became an opportunity to form links within the community, to serve as a springboard for future neighborhood efforts, and to create organized groups and coalitions.

Through the social upheaval of the 1970s, Jamaica Plain maintained its activist and community spirit. As the neighborhood became more diverse with the influx of artists and musicians, the newcomers continued the history of collective action for the good of the neighborhood. By the time these neighborhood groups managed to stop the highway, many thousands of homes had been razed. The Southwest Corridor Coalition was formed to discuss the development of the vacant land in the wake of the failed highway. As a result, the MBTA’s Orange Line (T) was relocated along this land along with the Southwest Corridor Park, a linear park running along side the T creating a connection to downtown and open space.

By the 1980s, the forces affecting Jamaica Plain were different than in the three previous decades. As the real estate market revived, rapid condominium conversions and rising rents, which in turn attracted real estate speculation and the soaring of home sale prices. In response to these changing conditions, many of the active community groups in JP shifted the focus of their work. Urban Edge concentrated on acquiring and renovating multi-family properties for affordable housing and the NDC focused on stabilizing other housing in the

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11 Feloney, 29.

12 The story of Interstate 95 is well documented in Alan Lupo’s, *Rites of Way.*
neighborhood and on economic development. Other organizations concentrated on providing services for low income families in the distressed sections of JP. For example, Oficina Hispana focused on training with educational and support services for Jamaica Plain’s Latino Population and ESAC provided services for the elderly. When the real estate market fell in the late 1980s, these organizations had to again shift their focus to stabilizing the neighborhood.

As the real estate market came out of its slump in the mid 1990s, Jamaica Plain has again witnessed a resurgence in popularity as crime continues to decline, and property values continue to rise. From 1995 onwards, the strong economy has been sharply felt in Jamaica Plain, for example, since 1995, on average, there has been a 40% increase in home prices and a 20% increase in rents. These numbers attest to the vogue of the urban neighborhood as the place to live.

In conclusion, Jamaica Plain has maintained a diversity of cultures, income levels, and interests throughout its history. This history of diversity may be its key to long-term equilibrium despite the ups and downs of the market and the neighborhood.

The Hyde Square Neighborhood Story

The Hyde Square occupies the northeast corner of Jamaica Plain (see map). In many ways, the description of JP applies to Hyde Square, yet it has some of its own characteristics. First of all much of the diversity attributed to JP is due to places like Hyde Square that are ethnically diverse. Hyde Square has the reputation of being a working class district for the most part. As such it has a continuity of historical significance. The booming real estate market has decreased the affordable housing stock in Hyde Square.

Hyde Square is roughly three fourths of a mile by half a mile and has 8,000 residents. It is centrally located in Boston accessed by two major roads, the Jamaicaway on the west and

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14 The difference between Hyde and Jackson Squares.
Washington Avenue on the east. The neighborhood is 5 to 10 minutes from the Jackson Square stop of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) Orange line. It is three miles from downtown, close to cultural institutions, surrounded by many of Boston's famous green open spaces. The commercial district running along Centre Street traverses the center of the neighborhood and is dotted with stores and shops reflecting the ethnic composition of the area. According to the 1990 Census, the population of Hyde Square is 50% Latino, 28% African-American, and 20% white. It is near both public and parochial schools. Open space and recreation, Jamaica Pond, Franklin Park, the Southwest Corridor Park are a short drive away. These are all the positive attributes of this inner city neighborhood (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7. Map of Hyde Square.
By the 1850s, Hyde Square catered mostly to middle and working class residents due to its proximity to manufacturing along Heath Street and the Heath Street Station stop of the Boston and Providence Railroad.

Hyde Square experienced a surge in building during the 1860s and 1870s. As new roads were added, new homes in the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles were built in the area. The high concentration of artisans, clerks, and small businessmen defined the area as a mostly middle and lower middle class residential district. Three-deckers and apartment buildings lined the commercial sections of Centre Street. The greatest surge of building happened in the 1890s, a direct consequence of the electric streetcar.

Between 1888 and 1898, Robert Treat Paine, a housing reformer, developed the housing subdivision of Sunnyside to provide moderate-income housing in Hyde Square. Aimed at the “honest workingman,” the 116 modest Queen Anne-style homes attracted the lower middle and middle class. Many of the home buyers were rising members of the middle class, first and second generation immigrants composed of shopkeepers, salesmen, clerks, skilled workers, and factory foremen and operatives. Paine laid out streets in an “advanced method of romantic landscape architecture.”13 By giving street names such as Sunnyside and Roundhill and following land contours creating traffic cul de sacs, Paine followed the site planning vogue of the time by creating this “romantic landscape” (Figure 2.8). Sunnyside was an exemplary housing experiment that succeeded where others failed because the housing conformed to middle

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class housing aspirations of Bostonians.\textsuperscript{16} Compared to the well-kept Sunnyside development, the nearby triple deckers were cheap alternatives that fell into disrepair. Sunnyside in many ways set a precedent for the building of quality affordable housing in Hyde Square.

In the late 1890s, Thomas G. Plant built a shoe factory at Centre and Bickford Streets, employing up to five thousand workers at one point. In the 1920s, Plant instituted an innovative program of welfare capitalism, a management policy meant to suppress union activity in the shoe factory (Figure 2.9).\textsuperscript{17} The factory forms a rich part of the history of Hyde Square since it has provided employment to local residents.

The Scottish and the English first inhabited the area. Germans moved into Hyde Square in the 1860s and 1870s to work in breweries and factories located in the Stony Brook valley. By 1910, the population of Hyde Square was roughly 33%.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} von Hoffman, 53. The factory had extensive recreational facilities including a landscaped park, game rooms with bowling alleys, and a fully equipped gym as well as its own basketball and baseball teams.
American, 20% Irish, and 18% German. The Irish continued to stronghold this section of Jamaica Plain and did so into the 1970s. In response to Irish immigrants moving into the area in search of unskilled jobs, in 1892 the Roman Catholic diocese of Boston built the Blessed Sacrament Church on Centre Street built between 1910 and 1917 in the Italian Renaissance style (Figure 2.10).

The Forces Changing Hyde Square (1940s-1980s)

The construction of the Boston Housing Authority’s Bromley-Heath housing project in 1941 drastically changed the physical character of the northeastern corner of Hyde Square (Figure 2.11). The new public housing project replaced lower class tenement built between 1870 and 1900 on Bickford, Walden, and Minden Streets. Known as JP’s factory district, Bromley abutted the Plant Shoe Factory on Centre, the Chelmsford Ginger Ale Company on Heath Street, and the Moxie Bottling Company on Bickford Street. This housing was allocated for defense workers and families of servicemen stationed in Boston during World War II.

Hyde Square in the 1940s and 1950s was a stable mostly Irish working class area. There were a number of Italian-Americans and German Jews who worked in the Shoe factory and the breweries. According to Karen Chacon, who grew up in the neighborhood in the 1960s, Edgehill and Roundhill Streets, part of the early Sunnyside development, were mostly working class Irish families.

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18 ibid.
In the 1960s and 1970s, neighborhood stability began to deteriorate. Empty storefronts were common along Centre Street during this time. With the rumors of a federal highway construction project, many white families left the area. The arrival of Latinos and African-Americans in the area after 1960 changed the ethnic composition. Cuban immigrants followed by Puerto Ricans, and other Latino groups began to fill up the housing left by those fleeing the neighborhood. These shifting population trends unraveled the social and economic ties to the area. Karen Chacon also remembers the neighborhood slowly changing as different ethnicities, Puerto Rican, Honduran, Trinidad, moved in the 1970s. Even though there was a healthy mixing of cultures in Hyde Square, Bromley-Heath became primarily African-American. As a result, the neighborhood became highly divided along racial lines with Walden Street as its physical divider.

According to Officer Danilo Ramirez of the Jamaica Plain district of the Boston Police Department, in the 1980s Boston Police referred to the predominantly Latino Hyde Square area as the “Cocaine Capital of Boston.” Open drug dealing, drive-by shootings, and gang violence were regular occurrences. Drug dealers in Hyde Square had elaborate distribution channels to the rest of New England. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, marijuana and heroine was commonplace, while in the late 1980s cocaine became the drug of choice. Starting in 1987, drug busting became a priority for the Police Department. Drugs, coupled with youth gang violence, had the police constantly patrolling the streets.

In the 1980s, even though Hyde Square experienced the same boom in the housing market that the rest of Jamaica Plain and other Boston neighborhoods felt, it was mostly real estate speculators buying property in the hopes of a quick profit. In the early 1990s, the cooling of the market cooled was followed by an increase in foreclosed and distressed properties. Foreclosures dominated the real estate activity in the Hyde Square area, making up 42% of all sales. Investors during this time neglected their properties and some abandoned them creating a haven for drug dealers, resulting in increased crime and vandalism in the area.

20 Correspondence from the Hyde Square Task Force.
21 Interview with Officer Danilo Ramirez, Boston Police Department.
Arson became a problem in the area as owners were enticed by high insurance premiums. Resident feelings of neglect and decline deepened as arson, increased crime, and drug trafficking became rampant.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, Hyde Square had the symptoms of a declining urban neighborhood. It contained an inadequately educated labor force, a large percentage of families with low median incomes and living below the poverty rate, high unemployment, crime, and large tracts of vacant land foreclosed by the city. This neighborhood was leading the path of greater decline. In this atmosphere of fear and uncertainty entered the Neighborhood Development Corporation of Jamaica Plain into Hyde Square. The NDC and other community groups at this time mobilized to take control of their neighborhood and change it for the better. Even though these community groups had been in JP since the 1970s, when they decided to concentrate resources, a significant change happened.

The location of Bromley-Heath in Hyde Square is pivotal to the revitalization story. With downtown Boston easily accessible by public transportation, the neighborhood’s location increased its value in urban terms. With the pressure of the real estate market, rising prices, and affordability of the neighborhood in danger, Bromley-Heath could be the saving factor of Hyde Square. In other words, Bromley-Heath protects Hyde Square from total gentrification. This is because proximity to a public housing project is still a strong force to deter the middle class from moving into the neighborhood. In the downturn of the economy though, Bromley-Heath is seen as a liability and a source of social problems. This racial and social tension is still very much present in Hyde Square.
CHAPTER:
THE WEB OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS

"JP is the place where the activist citizen can make things happen."

JP Resident

Overview

This chapter shows that the community-based organizations and neighborhood institutions in Hyde Square led by the Neighborhood Development Corporation of Jamaica Plain (NDC) created the framework as well as the impetus for the revitalization of Hyde Square in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Given the complex set of relationships between the community-based organizations at work in the stabilization and revitalization of Hyde Square, this chapter explains the common roots of these organizations as well as their shared goals and members. While the purpose of this chapter is not to detail the organizations’ histories, some histories will be told in order to explain the connections between the organizations, as well as the spirit of collaboration.¹

As Chapter 2 discussed recurring themes in neighborhood history, this chapter will highlight organizational themes. These themes include 1) a spirit of collaboration, tolerance, and openness; 2) shared goals, members, and histories; and 3) a commitment to social change and the betterment of the neighborhood. The community-based organizations also exhibit an ability to adapt to change in the neighborhood and recognize the need to work together to achieve results.

The first part of this chapter details the Neighborhood Development Corporation of Jamaica Plain, its early beginnings and early work throughout JP, and its focused work in Hyde Square

since 1987. The second part of this chapter gives a sense of the plethora of organizations at work in Jamaica Plain. It also describes some of the interrelationships among organizations in JP by describing several joint efforts. Although there are more organizations working in Hyde Square, this chapter concentrates on those organizations working in conjunction with the NDC on projects on the Walden Street area.

PART I: LEADING THE EFFORTS

*The Neighborhood Development Corporation of Jamaica Plain*

Incorporated as a non-profit corporation in 1977, the NDC is dedicated to revitalizing Jamaica Plain through a comprehensive strategy of community empowerment, economic development, and affordable housing. By focusing on economic development, housing, and organizing, the agency has improved the quality of life for families and businesses, bringing new and affordable housing, new jobs, and new programs to the neighborhood. The breadth and diversity of programs and assistance to the neighborhood as well as their commitment to community participation in the neighborhood revitalization process has strengthened both the social and physical fabric of the neighborhood.

As the lead actor in the Hyde Square drama, the NDC has had a very focused presence in the neighborhood by leading the revitalization efforts via physical interventions in Hyde Square beginning in the late 1980s and continuing through today (Figure 3.1). Even though this organization alone has not changed the course of neighborhood events, their commitment to an inclusive neighborhood decision-making process, as well as their strategic planning, has had a major impact on the neighborhood. By understanding the importance of building on existing social and institutional networks, as well as collaborating and building trust between different groups in the neighborhood, the NDC was able to obtain political backing and financial support to implement physical changes. They designed a comprehensive neighborhood revitalization strategy that brought together their expertise in housing, economic development, and organizing with support from other community-based organizations, the city, and the private sector.
The NDC’s prior track record, their in-depth knowledge of the neighborhood, and the support of the neighborhood allowed them to leverage both social and political elements in gaining support for their proposed revitalization of Hyde Square. Their early efforts of responding to neighborhood change and resident needs gave the NDC the confidence and experience to take on simultaneous projects in the late 1980s. Furthermore, the success of the NDC’s modest entrepreneurial spirit helped them to gain credibility and visibility with city agencies and private foundations.

*Early Efforts of the NDC: The first 10 years (1977-1987)*

In the spirit of citizen initiative born out of the fight to stop Interstate 95, the NDC continued the collaborative spirit begun with its predecessor, the Ecumenical Social Action Committee (ESAC), and worked on current issues affecting Jamaica Plain. As JP experienced a sharp increase in rents, condominium conversions, and a new influx of homebuyers, concerns over affordability and displacement became the dominant topics.

The NDC’s projects in the early 1980s reflected the diversity of issues affecting JP. The agency’s first project in 1983 was the rehabilitation and transformation of a boarded-up nursing home into an 11-unit congregate elderly home. Also in 1983, the NDC began the process of acquiring and rehabilitating the former Haffenreffer Brewery into the Brewery Small Business Center in the Brookside neighborhood of Jamaica Plain. The Brewery became their flagship project encouraging local jobs for local residents. In the mid-1980s, the NDC worked on other projects throughout Jamaica Plain such as ensuring that the conversion of the Jamaica Plain High School included low and moderate-income units. Their renovation of 19 units of housing in Hyde Square became the first scattered site cooperative housing in eastern Massachusetts.

The NDC’s early efforts served to give the organization a grounding and prominence in the neighborhood. The agency became a recognizable organization focused on issues of expanding economic and housing opportunities in the neighborhood. The organization worked to gain visibility in the neighborhood and establish itself as an agency for change. It was the success of
these early projects that enabled the NDC to negotiate effectively with the City of Boston and other funders to continue their mission.

As the forces affecting Jamaica Plain in the late 1980s began to change from real estate speculation, condo conversions, and displacement, to economic disinvestment and neighborhood deterioration, the NDC needed to adapt to the changing conditions affecting the neighborhood.

**Strategic Planning: The Hyde Square Target Area (1987- Present)**

As a response to changing economic and market forces, the NDC undertook a strategic planning process that chose the neighborhood of Hyde Square as its target area (Figure 5.2). As one of JP's most economically distressed areas, the neighborhood was suffering from severe disinvestment and deterioration. In an effort to halt that decline, the NDC made an executive decision to focus energy and resources in one area. The agency chose a comprehensive approach, combining housing and economic development with organizing, youth development and an aggressive anti-crime and drug program. It was these concentrated efforts that began to turn Hyde Square around.

The revitalization strategy for Hyde Square deliberately phased development in order to take advantage of funding opportunities, and test the marketability of their strategy. To define the revitalization strategy, the NDC began a community process to identify issues and prioritize them. The neighborhood listed a variety of issues: vacant lots, the need for affordable housing, the many distressed and abandoned properties, crime, the lack of youth activities, and the need for more developed, secure open space. Given the magnitude of issues, the NDC made the development of housing on the vacant lots a first priority. Their second priority became the distressed housing, and concurrently with the vacant lots, several community gardens were being planned. From this effort, came the Hyde Square Coop, the Distressed Property Rehabilitation Initiative (1-4 Program), and Walden Garden.
The NDC did several things right. First, to accomplish their long-term goals, the NDC allowed for flexibility in implementation strategies by taking advantage of opportunities as they presented themselves. Second, their deliberate, one-step-at-a-time, approach in the long run benefited the neighborhood by mimicking organic growth and change that the neighborhood could sustain. Third, their comprehensive attitude allowed the simultaneous planning and implementation of social interventions that helped to make a difference in the neighborhood. The plan was able to be both strategic and comprehensive in that it was strategic in place and incremental in time, and comprehensive in the scope of issues they addressed.

As the NDC began to set the stage for the physical interventions, they realized they could not do it all themselves and sought the help of several organizations in the revitalization efforts. The following section details some of the neighborhood organizations that partnered with the NDC in the revitalization of Hyde Square.

Figure 3.1. Staff from the NDC at JP Cleanup day in Mozart Park in April 1999.
PART II: THE PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

*City Life/ Vida Urbana*

City Life/ Vida Urbana was founded in 1973 by a group of people committed to social change. Their political orientation was born out of the Women’s movement, Civil Rights movement, Labor movement, and the anti-war movement of the late 1960s. Beginning as the Jamaica Plain Tenant’s Action Group, a tenant’s rights group, City Life in the late 1970s and early 1980s used strategies of direct action including organizing, rent strikes, and pickets at neglected buildings in JP. During this time, City Life was an independent organization with its own agenda. As times changed though, City Life evolved and began working with other organizations in JP to form coalitions that would preserve JP’s character as a mixed income neighborhood.

The mid-1980s brought a change in leadership and a change in times as City Life/ Vida Urbana partnered with other JP organizations to work toward common goals of the preservation and creation of affordable housing in JP. This included partnering with the NDC in a community organizing initiative around the Forest Glen Cooperative in the late 1980s. City Life also partnered with the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council in its early stages. Another joint effort involved City Life, the NDC, Urban Edge, Oficina Hispana, and other local institutions in forming the Jamaica Plain Arson Prevention Council (JAMPAC) in 1985. These partnerships helped to strengthen the bonds in the neighborhood build trust and stronger relationships.

City Life continues to collaborate with the NDC and other organizations in Hyde Square to further their mission. As Chapter 5 shows, City Life will be critical in the community organizing around the creation of the Hyde Square Coop, the 1-4 Program, the Supermarket, and Walden Garden.

City Life represents another theme in JP’s history. Even though they represent a more progressive form of politics than their counterparts, they are able to find common ground in
working towards similar goals without losing their identity as a group. It is groups like City Life that help to keep JP as a diverse community.

**Hyde Square Task Force**

The Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF) was founded as a non-profit organization in 1991 when a diverse group of Jamaica Plain neighbors came together to deal with the issues of crime and safety, especially related to drug dealing and youth gang violence. Their mission is to decrease street violence, gang activity, drug selling and use, and crime in the neighborhood, and create a friendly, safe, caring community. The majority of the participants in the Task Force lives in the immediate Hyde/ Jackson Square neighborhood and is from low-income families. A main focus of the Task Force is for Hyde Square youth and their parents to develop the necessary skills to improve their own lives and to improve the overall quality of life in Hyde Square.

As a neighborhood-based organization, the Hyde Square Task Force relies on the efforts of committed volunteers. The organization has over 200 members with multi-cultural and multi-racial Board of Directors made up of 16 members and 20 regular volunteers. During the past year, they have expanded their programs, doubled their annual budget, reorganized staff and finances, and opened a storefront office on Centre Street in 1998. The organization has been recognized as a model of neighborhood and public school partnerships by Mayor Menino and has received awards from public agencies for its work in crime prevention.

The HSTF collaborates with other JP organizations to gain support and to fulfill the goals of the Task Force. The Task Force has a satellite office at the Kennedy Elementary School, where they run an after school program and have a summer literacy camp. They also collaborate with the Hyde/Jackson Square Main Streets, the Hyde/Jackson Square Business Association, and the Jamaica Plain NDC on issues of development, zoning, crime, safety, neighborhood cleanups, neighborhood festivals, and related matters.

\footnote{Feloney, 54.}
Hyde/ Jackson Square Merchants Association

During the early 1990s, the Merchants’ Association was a disjointed group of merchants with a distressed commercial strip along Centre Street. Understanding that the health of the commercial sector was vital in the revitalization of the neighborhood, various community planning processes identified economic development and technical help for businesses as important to the neighborhood. These processes sparked a renewed interest in the business sector. With renewed leadership, the Merchants Association began to work with the Hyde Square Task Force and the NDC to improve the business district. Currently, the president of the Merchants Association sits on both the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council and the NDC Board, allowing for bridges between the organizations as well as a represented business interest.

The Merchants Association has been a key player in Hyde Square. During the planning for the Stop & Shop supermarket in 1994, many storeowners were fearful of losing business to the grocery store. During this time, the merchants became organized to advocate for their interests. They were instrumental in helping to bring about a community controlled Trust Fund in the process.

In the 1996, several merchants approached the NDC in search of technical advice on improving their business leadership skills and inquired into making Hyde Square a Main Street district. During the mid 1990s, the idea for a Jamaica Plain World’s Fair to draw people to Hyde Square businesses gained popularity. In this organizing, many organizations in Hyde Square became involved in promoting the cultural event with booths and vendor tables representing the diversity of business in Hyde Square.

Crime Watches

The formation of five crime watch groups in Hyde Square since the early 1990s exemplify the interest of residents in control over the neighborhood. With cooperation between residents and the police, crime has been significantly reduced in Hyde Square. Drug dealing began to get
reported and a more vigilant constituency made for a safer place. As residents join together and keep a watchful eye, they have formed a powerful deterrent to violence. According to Police Commissioner Paul F. Evans in *The Neighborhood Observer*, “I believe that these partnerships [between crime watch groups and the police] are an important key in continuing our successes in crime reduction, and are helping to make Boston a safer city as a result.”

The Day Street Crime Watch has been voted one of the 10 best crime watch groups in the City of Boston for 1998. With Day Street on the northwestern edge of Hyde Square, they “watch” the area north of Centre Street and report any suspicious activities to the police. With a police representative present at monthly meetings, residents have built relationships with the police based on trust and mutual agreement making a safer neighborhood. According to David Hayes, a resident and member of the Day Street Crime Watch, “[The crime watch has] had a positive impact on the neighborhood. A lot of the problems, such as drugs, high-stake gambling and prostitution have been greatly reduced.” (Figure 3.2)

3.2. The Day Street Crime Watch at JP Cleanup in Mozart Park in April 1999.
The Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church

The Blessed Sacrament Church has been a stabilizing influence in Hyde Square and bestows the neighborhood with a sense of time continuity and support. While the church has been a source of unity, it also reflects the changing attitudes and values of the times. It has experienced a decrease in staff, and the high school and the other buildings were closed. In response to changing parish numbers and the composition of the neighborhood, the Church leased the convent to the Jesuits and the old high school building to the Compass School. The school still holds Kindergarten through 8th grade.

Even though, it is not as prominent in the life of Hyde Square as it once was, the Church is still very much a physical presence in Hyde Square. The Blessed Sacrament Church sits on Centre Street just three blocks from Walden Street. The church building was closed in 1987 and remained closed for 5 years due to structural problems. The front stairs were in such disrepair that a yellow police ribbon was put in front of the church becoming the “biggest eyesore in Hyde Square.” On the edge of being permanently closed, residents got together and formed fundraisers. Due to these efforts, the Church was renovated and opened its doors during the Christmas season of 1991.

The church in the late 1980s and early 1990s, like the Hyde Square Task Force, concentrated on addressing the violence on the streets, especially youth and gang-related violence. According to Father Mike McClellan, Pastor of Blessed Sacrament, when Church reopened in 1991, one of its main activities including holding the wakes of the many gang deaths. Due to a tight security plan and a respect of the Church, they were successful in keeping violence from happening during the wakes. Father McClellan enlisted education as the vehicle for social change, especially in his dealings with neighborhood youth. He also attributes neighborhood change to a change in neighborhood attitude, especially around the early 1990s, “People said we’re not putting up with it. People in JP cooperated and the violence in the area ended.”
**Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council**

The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council (JPNC) was created during the administration of Mayor Raymond L. Flynn in 1984 to foster neighborhood input on issues of housing and neighborhood planning. The neighborhood council acts as an advisory group and makes recommendations to the city and state on Jamaica Plain issues. There are several standing committees that address issues of zoning, public service (public safety, transportation), business, and parks and human services. Members are elected to the Board and are the representatives of the neighborhood on these issues.

The JPNC played a critical role in expediting many of the development projects in Hyde Square given the overwhelming community support for these projects. For example, the JPNC quickly gave variances for several of the NDC’s projects including the Hyde Square Coop. According to Kevin Maloney, a member of the JPNC, the neighborhood council is a forum that allows people to be heard as well as being a vehicle for fair decision-making.

**Conclusions/ New Prospects**

The web of community-based organizations in Hyde Square is unusual, as is their ability to work collaboratively. However, the organizations do share common goals and in order to further them, they have come to reconcile their differences for the benefit of the neighborhood.

The overlapping of people sitting on different organizational boards allows for a continuity and awareness of issues of the different organizations and maintains a spirit of collaboration and communication. It is also a means to share information between groups as well as to keep other groups informed of the others’ activities. For example, the NDC board, elected from residents of Jamaica Plain only, has people that belong to the Hyde Square Task Force and City Life.

An example of this overlapping of organizations and the atmosphere of goodwill and mutual assistance is the planning of the Hammond Building. The NDC negotiated in 1997 to purchase...
the building, a warehouse and office space for the Hammond Office Products, located in Hyde
Square, on Chestnut Street near Centre Street. The plans for the Hammond Building are to
house the Hyde/Jackson Square Business Association, Arts In Progress, the Hispanic Office of
Planning and Evaluation, and City Life. The intent is to provide a place for "one-stop shopping
for everyone from job hunters to home buyers."  

Several of these organizations in February of 1999 joined forces to oppose a proposal of a K-
Mart in Jackson Square, near the Jackson Square T Orange line. A letter signed by many the
Hyde Square groups to city council members and the mayor asking them to intercede in the
plans. The community was so outraged by the proposed development that they called for a City
Council Community Hearing. At least 200 people attended, and most testified against the
proposed development. Four city councilors spoke in opposition of the K-Mart as well as any
large-scale development. Various groups were advocating for an open community planning
process to include residents and merchants in the area in order to create a vision for the area that
would benefit residents.

As market forces are making Jamaica Plain and Hyde Square in particular less affordable to its
current residents, City Life/ Vida Urbana and the NDC kicked off the Campaign of Conscience
for an Affordable and Diverse Jamaica Plain in February of 1998. The Campaign of Conscience
is a response to rising housing costs that threaten to displace low and moderate-income
residents. The campaign targets landlords to sign a pledge to charge affordable rents to their
tenants as well as calling for increased government funding for affordable housing. The
campaign is an awareness-raising vehicle to inform and educate residents of the affordable
housing crisis.

3 Foran, Karen. "Nonprofit services may move under one roof" Jamaica Plain Gazette, August 23, 1996.
The Public Facilities Department Neighborhood Partnership Initiative is a model program that works actively with neighborhood residents, merchants associations, and community organizations to develop coordinated plans for neighborhood preservation and commercial district development. The program uses funding and staff from PFD and other City agencies and directs them to key blocks and streets to create visible and lasting improvements.

Overview

This chapter describes the political atmosphere surrounding the City of Boston program that framed much of the revitalization efforts in Hyde Square. The first part discusses the creation of the Neighborhood Partnership Agreements. The next part details the Neighborhood Partnership Agreement at work in Hyde Square including conclusions and thoughts regarding the Neighborhood Partnership Agreement as a model for neighborhood revitalization.

The Neighborhood Partnership Agreement between the City of Boston and numerous Hyde Square organizations and residents has been a key ingredient in the success of the revitalization efforts in Hyde Square. The Agreement was more than a document signed in 1993 by the City and neighborhood organizations and individuals committed to revitalizing their neighborhood; it was the culmination of a community process that identified pressing needs for the neighborhood and guaranteed the financial commitment necessary to address those issues. The Agreement outlined tasks for each party to carry out and specified a time frame for projects to be accomplished. This collaborative atmosphere created ripe conditions for neighborhood organizations and individuals interested in revitalizing Hyde Square to follow through with their visions of a better neighborhood. The Partnership Agreement became a means for neighborhood participants to apply political pressure for funding and other city services in order to begin re-building the community fabric.
The Background of Neighborhood Partnership Agreements

The Neighborhood Partnership Agreements were written legal agreements between different City agencies and several Boston neighborhoods. The stated purpose of the Partnership Agreements was to establish a shared vision of needs and priorities, outline the actions the Public Facilities Department (PFD) and the local partners committed to take, as well as spell out accountability and communication channels between the neighborhood and the city. The program began in 1992 with a specific shelf life of 2 to 4 years depending on the neighborhood. Originally, only five neighborhoods, Dudley Square in Roxbury, Franklin Field South and Erie/Ellington in Dorchester, Eagle Hill in East Boston, and Egleston Square in Roxbury/Jamaica Plain, were chosen. As the word spread to other neighborhoods of the city's commitment, other neighborhoods began to pressure the city to expand the program. By the end of the Neighborhood Partnership era around 1996, 14 neighborhoods had committed to such agreements.

The Neighborhood Partnership Agreements were initiated as a response to political and economic conditions in Boston in the early 1990s. As the economy and the real estate market reached the bottom of its slump in 1992, many Boston inner city residents were complaining of a lack of city services in their communities. Since Mayor Raymond L. Flynn preferred a decentralized approach to community development, leaving the work to the neighborhoods themselves, forming a Partnership Agreement between the city and distressed neighborhoods was a method for addressing this need.

The Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) was given the task of coordinating the efforts. DND officially changed its name from the Public Facilities Department (PFD) to DND in November of 1997. The change in name reflects a philosophical change of mission to be more concerned with neighborhood services as well as public land and building programs. Although the name Public Facilities Department will be retained for all legal purposes, the name DND gives a broader and more accurate account of the work of the Department. In many ways,

1 Neighborhood Partnership description, memo from DND, 1992.
the Neighborhood Partnerships would begin to define DND’s goals as a department in the early 1990s.

Project Initiators

The Neighborhood Partnership Agreements were designed to take advantage of several city, state, and federal initiatives and funding sources already available. As part of Mayor Flynn’s Project 747, an initiative to develop buildable vacant city-owned lots in the city of Boston for housing, the neighborhood sites were chosen in tandem with this program. Furthermore, the agreements were also designed to take advantage of HUD resources, especially money targeted for large housing developments. Program guidelines and local politics also dictated the areas such as commercial or housing districts the Partnership Agreements were to concentrate. Even though most of the money available went to bricks and mortar development, there were funds available for trainings and community events.

One of the main triggers of the Partnership program was the City’s desire to protect other investments and commitments in certain neighborhoods. According to Michael Thomas, a Project Manager at DND, the City did not want those investments to “crash with the market.” Therefore, as the Neighborhood Partnership program came into existence in 1992, neighborhoods were chosen in order to protect the city’s other investments in the area.

Implementation of Goals

One of the main goals of the partnerships was to target areas that would spur other neighborhood investment in order to have the most significant impact on the neighborhood. Even though the neighborhood chose its priorities, the Partnership strategy was to prioritize interventions so that the impact would attract other investments. Usually, the first priority was to begin construction. Michael Thomas refers to this concept as the “Big Bang Theory,” the spark, i.e. the intervention, which would drive the momentum in the neighborhood. In many instances, the objective was to get the housing in the ground.

2 Interview with Michael Thomas.
Once the neighborhood identified and prioritized goals for their area, other City programs were created to deal with the city’s commitments to the neighborhoods. For example, the 1-4 Family Housing Program targeting distressed properties to be rehabilitated and sold to First-time Homebuyers began with the Hyde Square Neighborhood Partnership Agreement. These commitments also led to training sessions and classes to teach those interested in how to apply for the city programs, such as First-time Homebuyer Classes. The city also made “deals” with Banks to give lower mortgage interest rates and lower downpayments to those who qualified.

As grass-roots organizations representing the interests of their neighborhoods, community development corporations (CDCs) played a critical role in the creation and implementation of the Partnership Agreements. Essentially, the city tapped CDCs to do one of its main jobs, organize the community. Even though organizing is a critical job, the CDCs were better equipped to handle this aspect because of their histories and trust within the neighborhoods. On the whole, projects went quicker when the city was friendly with a CDC since the city was dealing with a more conscientious neighborhood. The city designed the Partnerships with a specific shelf life of 2 to 4 years in order to encourage independence of the CDCs after the agreements ended.

The Hyde Square Neighborhood Partnership Agreement

Hyde Square was not designated as part of the network of neighborhoods chosen by the city in its first round of Neighborhood Partnerships. Hyde Square was designated a Partnership Neighborhood in 1993 in part to appease the neighborhood over a proposed supermarket. The proposed 50,000 square foot supermarket had caused uproar among Spanish storeowners in Hyde Square. As the first supermarket to be built in the inner city in over a decade, the mayor had taken an interest in the project. The city hoped the promise of government improvements to the neighborhood might garner support for the supermarket. Individuals and organizations took this opportunity to pressure DND to receive more funding for other neighborhood needs. Chapter 5 discusses further the controversies of the supermarket in Hyde Square.

3 Interview with Michael Thomas.
Hyde Square was designated a Partnership Neighborhood in 1993. While most other Neighborhood Partnership Agreements focused either on housing or economic development, residents in Hyde Square wanted a comprehensive approach to fix their neighborhood. According to DND Project Manager Harold Raymond, the DND staff was sent out into the neighborhood to determine neighborhood wishes especially around housing issues. “We started getting hit with other issues – drug houses, kids…” The Hyde Square neighborhood identified issues such as open space, economic development, abandoned housing, transportation, crime, social services that deserved as much attention as new housing.

All neighborhood groups in Hyde Square were invited to attend a planning process to map out actions to be taken by the city and the neighborhood (Figure 4.1). Weekly meetings were held to flush out ideas and create a shared vision for the neighborhood. The major players in forming the Partnership included DND, the Police, and Neighborhood Services.

Residents and organizations were aware of the need for various events to happen concurrently. Furthermore, the neighborhood recognized that is was “not just public funds but sweat equity” that was needed to make revitalization happen.⁴ According to Bob Jones, Project Manager at DND in charge of the Hyde/Jackson Square Partnership Agreement, people understood that “housing wasn’t enough to make revitalization happen,” there also needed to be a mix of projects happening, working side by side. Therefore, the Partnership Agreement in Hyde Square, signed in October of 1993, dealt with all of the following:

1) Housing (rehab housing and new construction)
2) Economic development
3) Open Space
4) Public Safety and Youth (crime prevention)

The Hyde Square Partnership agreement outlined specific tasks and dates to accomplish parts of each of the outlined interventions.

⁴ Interview with John Berg.
As a direct result of the Hyde Square Neighborhood Partnership planning process, the city created the 1-4 Family Housing Program. Residents had identified distressed properties that were either abandoned or foreclosed that needed attention. The city created the program to channel funds to address this need. The program was later expanded to other city neighborhoods. Chapter 5 discusses the 1-4 Program in detail.

The mix of timing, monetary resources, trust among community organizations, and the availability of vacant city-owned land made the Hyde Square Partnership Agreement successful at a crucial time. By obtaining the political backing and funding necessary to address neighborhood issues given the right conditions and timing, the Agreement bridged the major barriers to community re-building.

The strength and success of the Neighborhood Partnership Agreements were in recognizing the need of the community to identify priorities for their community. The city also recognized that it takes project and task specific actions for real changes to occur.

The neighborhood visioning/ planning process was critical to the development of the goals of the Partnerships. This became a method in which residents envisioned the future of the neighborhood with examples of the interventions.

Consensus between those who were involved in the process gauge the Partnership as a success in Hyde Square for several reasons. First, the priorities came from the neighborhood groups. The community pushed for the mixed nature of the interventions needed. Second, there was a clear layout of responsibilities and accountability, which were divided into several sub-areas with detailed tasks and responsibility in each. Attached to this was a timeline detailing begin and end dates.

In general, the partnership model has been a successful vehicle for neighborhood revitalization because 1) the Partnership was a comprehensive plan, 2) the community controlled part of the process, 3) the city committed to funding specific projects, and 4) the distribution of resources
covered many interest. Despite all the positives, the community remained distrustful of the city, yet the Partnerships built trust among the neighborhood groups.

Figure 4.1. The Neighborhood Partnership Agreement cover page. This page includes the purpose of the Partnership and the organizations involved.

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**Hyde Square/Jackson Square**

*Neighborhood Partnership*

The Public Facilities Department NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE is a model program that works actively with neighborhood residents, merchants associations, and community organizations to develop coordinated plans for neighborhood preservation and commercial district development. The program uses the funding and staff of the Public Facilities Department and other City agencies and directs them to key blocks and streets to create visible and lasting improvements.

Local PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEES create a shared set of goals, define matching commitments from the City and the local organizations and implement a coordinated plan of action. PFD is currently working in a total of 14 neighborhoods areas in either a planning and research or implementation phase. These include: six (6) RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS, four (4) COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS and four (4) MIXED RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL DISTRICTS.

**HYDE SQUARE/JACKSON SQUARE PARTNERSHIP**

The Partnership is composed of several Jamaica Plain organizations:

- Academy Homes Association
- Blessed Sacrament Parish
- Boston Urban Gardeners
- Bromley-Heath TMC
- Chestnut-Mozart Neighborhood Association
- City Life/Vida Urbana
- Councilor Maura Hennigan Casey
- Danforth-Paul Gore Crime Watch
- Day/Marx Street Association
- Dominicanos Unidos
- Edgehill Crime Watch
- El Comité Hispano
- Evergreen-Bynner Crime Watch
- Hyde Square Business Association
- Hyde Square Task Force
- Jamaica Plain Development Corporation
- Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council
- Kennedy School Parents Council
- Latino Homeowners Association
- Martha Eliot Health Center
- Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services
- Oficina Hispana
- Representative John McDonough
- Representative Kevin Fitzgerald
- Roundhill Neighborhood Association
- Sheridan-Cranston Crime Watch
- United Baptist Church
- Urban Edge

that have been meeting monthly in General Partnership and Sub-Committee meetings since October with the Public Facilities Department to formulate and develop a Partnership Agreement. A general community meeting was held in January to solicit input and ideas from the Jamaica Plain community about developing a Partnership Agreement.
Figure 4.2. The Hyde/Jackson Square Partnership Agreement had detailed timelines for accomplishing tasks. An evaluation of tasks occurred at the sixth month point.
SECTION 2:

THE PHYSICAL INTERVENTIONS
CHAPTER:
THE PHYSICAL INTERVENTIONS

“The planning and patterning of any act towards a desired, foreseeable end constitutes the design process.”

Victor Papanek
Design for the Real World

“[Architecture’s] purpose is to mediate between the individual and the natural world by creating the physical reality of the human community, by which the individual is linked to the rest of humanity and nature is in part kept out, in part framed, tamed, and itself humanized.”

Vincent Scully

Overview

Physical interventions in neighborhood revitalization strategies have the ability to make a marked change not only in the landscape but also on the social fabric of a neighborhood. Physical interventions may include any conscious change to the physical realm of the neighborhood ranging from the addition of street trees to new houses. The idea that buildings having responsibility beyond their walls moves architecture from the spirit of functionalism to contextualism.\(^2\) Fitting in with their neighborhood context can help to change the image of the neighborhood. If spaces are created that foster a place for neighborhood interaction, a sense of place and community can be fostered. As the neighborhood becomes involved in the changes to their living environment, they exhibit a sense of ownership in the area. It is at this point that the physical can have an impact on society. By paying attention to the grain, scale, pattern, and texture of the intervention in relation to the neighborhood, the physical intervention can reinforce and improve the physical urban fabric of the neighborhood. The successful physical interventions coupled with community participation in their design and planning process play a

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2 Calthorpe, “The Urban Context” Sustainable Communities, 29.
key role in changing the quality of life of the residents and how they perceive their neighborhood, thereby building the social fabric of the neighborhood.

In order to demonstrate the role of physical interventions in the revitalization of Hyde Square, I will focus on three physical interventions initiated by the NDC on and immediately around Walden Street: the Hyde Square Cooperative Housing, the Stop and Shop Supermarket and Health Center, and the Walden Garden. I will also discuss the rehabilitation of abandoned housing along Walden Street and the improvements of the commercial district brought on by the Main Streets Program as examples of phased development and repercussions as part of the overall revitalization strategy.
PART I: HYDE SQUARE COOPERATIVE

"Beyond Bricks and Mortar: Knitting a Community Together"

Hyde Square Coop Slogan

Overview

The Hyde Square Housing Cooperative, or the Hyde Square Coop as it is more commonly known, is a scattered site, limited equity, syndicated cooperative. It is located on 8 sites, with 17 buildings, containing 41 units. Its scattered site allows affordable housing to be dispersed throughout the existing neighborhood rather than concentrated in one location. The construction of three story wood-frame buildings compatible with older structures in the area on vacant land throughout the Hyde Square neighborhood filled the missing physical links in the neighborhood (Figure 5.1). The limited equity cooperative ownership structure reflects the complexity of securing public funds for affordable housing as well as the desire of area residents to have a more secure and affordable housing alternative to their other option, renting a home.

As the above slogan for the Hyde Square Coop suggests, the construction of the Coop accomplished more than creating well-designed and solidly built affordable housing. The housing intervention made a large effort to halt the decline of the neighborhood by increasing home “owners” in the area, replacing blight with housing thereby reducing the number of places where outside illicit activities could happen, and adding investment to the neighborhood signaling hope for the neighborhood. The Coop also helped to improve the quality of life of the area beginning to change the stigmatized image of the neighborhood and to improve communication among neighbors.

The NDC’s goals, as the developer/sponsor of the Coop, were (1) to replace garbage-strewn vacant lots with tenant-controlled affordable housing, (2) to involve the neighborhood in the issues of revitalization, and in the process 3) tie the community together by improving the physical condition of the neighborhood. According to several individuals involved in the effort, increased communication and collaboration between various groups in Hyde Square was a
Figure 5.1. The Hyde Square Coop along Walden Street. The Coop forms an edge to the Street resembling triple-decker like homes in the neighborhood.
significant by-product of the process. The Hyde Square Coop accomplished its goals and in the process, became a catalyst for the neighborhood to begin its turnaround.

**The Hyde Square Target Area**

In the late 1980s, the NDC chose Hyde Square as its target work area focusing their energy and resources into this distressed section of Jamaica Plain. Figure 5.2 shows the boundaries of this target area divided into four sub-market areas. The northeastern section, labeled the Walden-Minden sub-market, was the worst of the four sub-markets having the greatest number of vacant lots and distressed buildings. It is in this sub-market that the NDC concentrated its efforts of development.

Figure 5.2. The target area of the NDC with 4 sub-markets.
**The Community Input and Planning Process**

Ricanne Hadrian, project manager during planning and development of the Coop at the NDC, and Betsaida Gutierrez, a community organizer from the NDC, embarked on an extensive four month door-knocking campaign in the fall of 1989 to discover the wishes of the Hyde Square neighborhood. Skeptical of the “net public value” of producing only a few affordable housing units, Hadrian and Gutierrez spearheaded an organizing campaign by holding numerous meetings in order to establish priorities for the neighborhood, especially the type of housing residents preferred. When the NDC teamed up with CityLife and began doorknocking, reaching over 150 families, in order to get community input into the future of the vacant lots in Hyde Square, the organizers encountered resistance. Getting people to open up their safety latches was slow and painstaking work for the community organizers. “If the authorities couldn’t change much, how could [residents] hope to do any better?” In this atmosphere of fear and resistance, the NDC began building trust with residents. The NDC was perceived as outsiders during this time, so they felt they needed to gain community support for the effort before proposing any kind of project.

One of the results of the initial organizing work was a participatory five-month community process with meetings conducted in English and in Spanish in order to get support, work out design and ownership issues, and achieve consensus around the project. The community meetings were open to all residents of Hyde Square and invitations were in the form of phone calls and flyers. Community leaders were especially invited and asked to tell residents. Many of the meetings took place in the basement of the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church. As people shared their stories, they found many commonalities, especially a desire to call the place home. From these meetings, the community identified several issues that needed addressing. The issues included: 1) vacant lots, 2) distressed and abandoned housing, 3) economic development, 4) crime, and 5) the need for youth programs. The NDC focused on the first priority, vacant lots, since attention to these would create the most visible impact. Supported by community input, the NDC took the strategic decision to build affordable housing on the vacant lots.

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4 Hirsch, 134.
The NDC then identified several city-owned vacant lots as potential development sites for affordable housing. Taking advantage of Mayor Flynn’s 747 project, a policy initiative to dispose of vacant city-owned land in Boston, the NDC realized only four vacant lots of the 26 they had identified were on the 747 list. In 1990, the NDC began to negotiate with the city for the sale of many of the 26 vacant lots. Almost all of the lots were sold by the city to the NDC for $1, as the NDC was selected as site developer.

The first challenge of the NDC process was to determine the housing ownership structure the neighborhood preferred. Most of the current housing stock is mixed owner occupied and renters. Residents had identified absentee landlords as a problem and wanted some form of owner-occupancy for the proposed new units of housing. Seizing on the opportunity of development funding presented by the Boston Coop Initiative, the NDC organizers together with City Life set out to gauge neighborhood support for an alternative form of development, the limited-equity cooperative home ownership model. This model allows carrying costs, the Coop form of rents, to remain affordable while residents maintain a management and ownership interest in the project. Long term affordability is maintained through restrictions dictated by the federal income for the use of Low Income Tax Credits. The Coop was a way to have the stabilizing benefits of homeowners while protecting the property from the forces that had led to the neighborhood’s decline. The Coop would also ensure that flipping, the developer buying a home and selling the property in a few months making huge profits during the time of real estate speculation, did not occur. After several meetings and a doorknocking campaign, they discovered the neighbors supported the Coop initiative.

The second challenge of the project then revolved around securing funds for the estimated $6 million project. In the early 1990s, the NDC applied to the Boston Housing Partnership to be a Project Sponsor in the Boston Coop Initiative, a mayoral initiative to encourage the building of affordable housing through the use of Low Income Tax Credits in the form of cooperative housing. The NDC was designated the developers of the city-owned vacant lots in 1990. The majority of the funds was secured between 1990 and 1992 and came from Low Income Housing Tax Credits, and the remainder from City of Boston Community Development Block Grants,
State Housing Innovation Funds (HIF) funding, and Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) funds. With such a complex financing package, many use and design restrictions were placed on the development. Coordinating the project requirements with sources of funds was a challenge requiring over a year of planning before construction began on the project in April of 1992.

In 1990, the NDC formed a 15 member Hyde Square Community Investment Coalition (CIC) made up of neighborhood residents to facilitate community input in the process. The Council met weekly to decide the lots on which the housing would be built (Figure 5.3). The Council created a Participatory Development Plan to foster and implement public participation in the project, particularly around design, and to encourage the neighborhood to have a stake in the project in order to attain a sense of ownership in the project and the neighborhood. The Council discussed design trade-offs and cost-benefit comparisons as a basis for making design decisions in a large community meeting.

Figure 5.3.

The vacant lots with the sites chosen for the Coop.

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5 ibid.
Extensive neighborhood participation made the large community meeting and the one day long charrette in the summer of 1990 a success because residents were able to voice concerns as well as strong preferences regarding the design of the units. The major design issues that inspired controversies included the layout of the apartments, the inclusion of basements, and the choice of exterior materials. One of the trade-offs included smaller kitchens, with separate living and dining rooms instead of the more open plan proposed by the architect. Another preference was given to smaller individual yards as opposed to larger common outdoor spaces. Residents also opted for common parking lots rather than individual driveways due to the tight size of the lots. A controversial item was the choice of vinyl siding over wood clapboard exteriors on the grounds of lower up front and maintenance costs. This reconciling of differences shows the commitment of participants to make the project work.6

**Design Process**

The architects of the project, Domenech, Hicks, and Krockmalnic (DHK), viewed the Coop as an infill project, which in their view created the need for the buildings to be contextual, i.e. adhering to existing building heights and widths, proportions, and other setbacks. In the early design stages in the fall of 1990, the architects called into play the prevalent shapes and forms that are found in the neighborhood and used them in a creative way. From the onset, DHK used community input to answer many issues throughout the design process. For example, the architects presented to residents a choice between several prototypes that fit in with the neighborhood to decide the massing and scale of the buildings.

The architects viewed the participatory design process as one of the strengths of the project.7 During these meetings, residents asked for a 3-family building that was not stacked, i.e. each unit should have its own outside entrance. This request allowed opportunities for creativity in the configuration of the units as other 3-family house models were explored. Even though the Boston Coop Initiative laid out design regulations, residents were vocal in specifying features within the layout of the units.

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6 It is important to mention that most of the meeting participants would not be Coop residents.
7 Interview with Fernando Domenech, February 23, 1999.
The residents corroborated with the architect’s ideas on the size of the units and zoning but had more specific ideas on the features of the units. Several features such as personalized outdoor spaces, bay windows, individual porches, and hardwood dining room floors make the project distinctive. Each unit has its own outside entrance, a backyard, and the second floor units also have decks. As a response to safety concerns, each unit has a security system installed with motion detectors. The final design included three building types with a combination of two and three unit structures with different square feet variations, all three stories high with full basements (Figures 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6).

Figures 5.4, 5.5, 5.6.

The three designs of the Hyde Square Coop.
Political and Funding Obstacles

The project encountered several funding challenges. Due to proposed state budget cuts in the spring of 1991, the NDC feared the project would fall through. Luckily, pressure from state legislators and housing advocates convinced the Executive Office of Community and Development to commit $500,000 in a Housing Innovation Fund construction loan. This example characterizes the tenuous relationship between politics and public money that funds affordable housing.

Impact on the Neighborhood

When construction began on the Coops in April of 1992, the construction activity gave residents positive signals encouraging them to remain as well as a hope for the future. By the time construction was completed and the last resident moved in October of 1993, the investment of 41 new units of housing assured residents to stay. The Coop stabilized the Walden-Minden area by replacing glass and garbage-strewn vacant lots with affordable housing.

The Hyde Square Coop produced positive public benefits. These included increased community involvement as well as awareness in the affairs of the neighborhood, improved communication between organizations, and affordable housing that was resident managed. The Coop’s successful completion attracted other investments in the neighborhood, including several public-private subsidies. The Coop gave the NDC credibility to receive city funds for other projects. It also gave the NDC the visibility and experience to partner with a private developer.

The animated process of community meetings allowed residents to feel invested in the impressive results. The process also helped to translate conversations and feelings about the neighborhood into a physical product. The meetings acted as a platform for residents to meet, get to know, and work with each other. The community participation process helped assure the approval of variances during the implementation stage. Since most buildings did not meet the requirements for off-street parking, front yard setbacks, minimum side and rear yards setbacks,
or excessive floor to area ratios, variances were needed. Given the support of the community throughout the entire process, the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Council issued the approvals willingly. This ease in implementation facilitated the difficult financing.

**Physical Impact of the Intervention: Design Elements Discussed**

The physical design of the interventions have improved image of the neighborhood by reinforcing its architectural tradition as well as using design elements of scale, massing and forms, texture and pattern, site placement, and color. According to DHK’s Principal-in-Charge, Fernando Domenech, the Hyde Square Coop housing was a project about “missing teeth.” He and others agree that the project has given the community a “sense of completeness” and did so in a respectful way. The architect said the new housing exhibits “a sense of oldness, a romance of old buildings with attic spaces” (Figure 5.7). The design of the three styles of Coop buildings blends well into the existing fabric and filled in the physical gaps in the neighborhood. DHK won a Boston Society of Architects Housing Design Award for the design of the Coop.

![Figure 5.7.](image)

The corner of Walden and Minden Streets.

The two and three family Coop buildings resemble older homes in the area. The architects maintained the 3-story scale of the other homes while adding private entrances for each unit. The massing and forms, such as pitched roofs and triple-decker like buildings, imitated the architectural forms of adjacent buildings.

The patterns and textures of windows, doors, and porches endow the street with a continuity that was previously lacking. The familiar forms of porches and wood columns make the buildings identifiable (Figure 5.1). The texture and pattern of these details provide an interest to the eyes and blend with adjacent buildings (Figure 5.8). Colors also add to the vibrancy of the textures that the wood and other materials provide. Details such as back porches and fences add to the texture and pattern of the building (Figures 5.9 and 5.10).

Figure 5.8.

Detail of a porch gabled roof. The outside material is textured like wood.

Buildings constructed close to the sidewalk have created a sense of safety and activity in the neighborhood that had been missing (Figure 5.11 and 5.12). For this reason, the placement of the buildings on the site was very important in the area giving the perception of additional safety. This is partly due to more people physically living in the area, and an added element of activity and noise. This idea references Jane Jacobs and the element of safety with "eyes on the street." With more people living in the area, more self-policing occurs. Also, with individual back yards, people take better care of those than communal spaces.  

9 Oscar Newman and Defensible Space.
Figure 5.9 and 5.10. The backs of the Hyde Square Coop also exhibit details that enhance the texture and pattern of the buildings.
The buildings facing the street reinforce identity and activity. Peter Calthorpe writes “housing entrances, overlooking balconies, corner commercial stores and restaurants, and landscaped streetside sitting areas all contribute to the life and ultimately the safety of the street. It is such affirmations of the street... that binds neighborhoods and ultimately cities together.”

Figure 5.11 and 5.12

The Coop buildings create a street edge.

Most importantly, the Coop is a model of fine grain additions that reinforce the urban fabric of the neighborhood. The buildings are identifiable, endow an element of safety to the area, help people to feel invested in the neighborhood, and encouraged others to fix their properties. This micro-level focus, not only of design but of planning, is discussed in Clare Cooper-Marcus, in Design As If People Mattered. She addresses many of these issues, including the discussion of creating micro scale plans and the audience or users of the design. The Hyde Square Coop exemplifies this idea.
PART II: STOP & SHOP SUPERMARKET AND MARTHA ELIOT HEALTH CENTER

Overview

With a total development cost of $14 million, JP Center has been a tremendous boon to Jamaica Plain bringing millions of dollars of investment and a spirit of hope to the Hyde Square neighborhood. A JP resident in an editorial in the Boston Globe in December of 1992 called Hyde Square, in anticipation of the supermarket, "an inspiration, not a trouble spot." JP Center, whose tenants include Stop & Shop, the largest grocery chain store in New England and the Martha Eliot Health Center, affiliated with Boston’s Children’s Hospital, opened in September of 1996 and put Hyde Square on the map as a destination. Built in a strategic location, the project is located one block from the Jackson Square T-stop on the Orange line and is adjacent to the Bromley-Heath Housing Project, on Centre Street, between Walden and Bickford Streets (Figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13. The Stop & Shop Supermarket with parking in front.

The construction of JP Center replaced 5 acres of blighted vacant land with badly needed goods and services. The project is an excellent example of a successful public/private partnership that drew on each partner’s expertise and strengths to benefit a low-income community. JP Center is
also the story of a successful transformation of a brownfield site into a community asset. In many ways though, JP Center does not exhibit the fine grain urban addition to the neighborhood fabric that the Hyde Square Coop exhibits. Nonetheless, the project is a success because it served to create jobs for neighborhood residents, contributed to the improvement of the quality of life of the neighborhood, helped change the image of the neighborhood, and signaled investment in the neighborhood.

At first, the proposal for the development of the 5-acre parcel as a supermarket and health center sparked many interests and controversies in 1992. As the first supermarket in a city neighborhood in Boston in over a decade, the proposal carried political weight especially with economic development promises made by Mayor Menino. Also the site of heavy manufacturing in the past, the 5-acre parcel was a candidate for severe environmental contamination. The project garnered both strong neighborhood opposition and support. Through rigorous negotiations between the developers, the neighborhood, and the tenants of the site, JP Center is a lesson in negotiation, strategy and the political game, and the stabilization of neighborhood racial relations.

**Background of the Site**

According to an 1887 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, the land on Centre Street between Walden and Bickford Streets housed several homes and a large wagon shed. Just 10 years later, the 5-acre parcel was the site of Boston’s largest shoe factory, the Thomas G. Plant Shoe Factory (Figure 2.9). During its hey day, the factory employed up to 5,000 employees. After the factory closed, the building became an industrial oil refinery. When the factory building burned down in 1974, the land became a dumping ground for construction and other debris. At one time, it had weeds up to 20 feet high attracting illicit activities in its environs. In the late 1970s, the Massachusetts Urban Re-Investment Advisory Group (MURAG) purchased the site for redevelopment. Due to financial constraints of the general partner, the site remained vacant through the early 1990s,

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1 von Hoffman, 57.
2 Interview with Richard Thal, JPNDC Executive Director, March 10, 1999.
becoming a terrible eyesore to the community. Owing $2 million in back taxes, the Public Facilities Department (PFD) foreclosed the property in the early 1990s.³

**A Private Venture: The Development of JP Plaza**

Directly on the corner of Centre and Walden Streets sits a small lot, contiguous to the 5-acre parcel. In the early 1970s, this corner site housed a short-lived Stop and Shop Supermarket. When the supermarket closed in the 1970s, residents believed it signaled the decline of the neighborhood, as it was a sign of disinvestment.⁴ The site remained vacant until the late 1980s when Mordechai Levin, president of Boston Community Ventures (BCV), saw the untapped potential of the inner city market and began the process of developing a mini-mall on the site. Levin named the development JP Plaza and brought in a BayBank, now BankBoston and a CVS.⁵ Completed in the autumn of 1993, the same time as the Hyde Square Coop, JP Plaza brought a much-needed full-service bank and pharmacy into the low-income area (Figure 5.14).

The success of JP Plaza became the springboard for the development adjacent 5-acre parcel. Levin saw greater potential in the adjacent parcel and began searching for potential tenants. JP Plaza had raised the awareness that other development might work in the area, however many were skeptical that a large commercial development would work on the site.

³ Interview with Harold Raymond, former Planner with DND, February 19, 1999.
⁴ Interview with Richard Thal.
⁵ A Federal Reserve Bank of Boston study showed that redlining was happening in the area. The rates of mortgage denial were uncharacteristically high with no explanation other than race. This study brought various coalitions to apply pressure on banks to open inner city branches.
The Private/Community Partnership

As the development of JP Plaza was in progress, BCV saw the opportunity to develop the adjacent vacant site when the city issued an Request For Proposals (RFP) in 1992 to reinvigorate the site. Levin, convinced that the redevelopment of the 5-acre site could be a success, initiated a dialogue with Purity Supreme Supermarkets and secured them as a tenant for the site. Levin also approached the community-based Martha Eliot Health Center that had been operating in an apartment in Bromley-Heath as a potential tenant. With a commitment from the supermarket and the health center, Levin had lined up two major tenants for the project to move forward. Before approaching the city with a plan to develop the site, Levin realized that the success of the project depended on strong community support.

After securing the two tenants, he approached the NDC and the Bromley Heath Tenant Management Corporation (BHTMC), the first tenant management corporation for public housing in the country, to be partners in the development. Since BCV had successfully developed the adjacent JP Plaza, Levin entered the negotiations with the confidence and expertise needed to develop a large-scale project in the neighborhood. In 1992, BCV formed a partnership, called the Jackson Square Limited Partnership (JSLP), with the NDC and the BHTMC to develop JP Center. The JSLP interest in the project is divided as follows: BCV 60%, NDC 20%, and BHTMC 20%.

As a non-profit organization in partnership with a private developer, the NDC was able to secure up-front equity in the form of a pre-development grant in the amount of $500,000 from the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Community Services. This grant provided leverage for other funding, public and private, and it lessened the risk of the private developers for up-front costs.

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6 During the development process, Stop & Shop bought Purity Supreme.
7 A strategic move on the part of the developer because a 1980s study showed that within 1 to 2 miles of world class hospital facilities including Beth Israel/Deaconess Hospital and the Longwood Medical Center, there were very high infant mortality rates.
8 Interview with Richard Thal.
The Political Atmosphere

The intense political atmosphere surrounding the supermarket proposal created opportunities for the neighborhood. The city of Boston, and Mayor Menino in particular had an interest in the project; it would be the first inner city neighborhood supermarket development in Boston. “This project is a perfect example of the public and private sectors teaming up successfully and revitalizing property that has languished for years,” said Mayor Menino in 1995.\(^9\)

After securing tenants, up-front equity, and the development team, the JSLP contacted the city to redevelop the site in response to its RFP. According to Art Johnson, the attorney involved in legalizing the “marriage” between Levin, the NDC, and the BHTMC, the politics were right for this development to happen. Given Levin’s persistence, community support, and the politicized nature of the proposal, the city sped up the developer selection process. The RFP process designated the Jackson Square Limited Partnership as the developers. In April of 1994, the city sold the lot to the JSLP for $1. At this point, the city was committed to seeing the project built. Thus, when neighborhood controversies arose, the city was eager to mediate for the survival of the project.\(^10\)

The development of the supermarket sparked controversies from the proposal’s onset. The large size of the supermarket caused an uproar among nearby storeowners. In order to calm the controversies, the city negotiated with neighborhood groups to garner support for the supermarket. As a direct result, Hyde Square was designated a Neighborhood Partnership district. Through the Neighborhood Partnership, the neighborhood discussed priorities for other development needed in the neighborhood. Several neighborhood groups applied pressure on the city to have a comprehensive approach to the Partnerships including housing, open space, youth programs, and anti-crime activities along with economic development to revitalize the neighborhood. The Neighborhood Partnership Agreement agreed to fund the rehabilitation of distressed properties and open space and recreation in the area.

\(^10\) At first, the city was unwilling to pay for all remediation costs but reached an agreement later.
Although city improvements were promised to Hyde Square, small bodega owners still opposed the Stop & Shop supermarket. Bodegas, the Spanish word for little store, line Centre Street from the Jackson Square up to Hyde Square and storeowners felt the supermarket would take away their Latino-based customers creating “unjust competition.” Their persistence and input ensured that a careful market study would be implemented to gauge the effect of the supermarket on their business and that a Trust Fund would be created to help the bodega owners improve their stores to help attract customers. The business owners wanted a community controlled trust fund to be used for loans and technical assistance to assist small businesses in the Hyde/ Jackson Square area. At first, the city promised to fund the Trust Fund but as severe environmental obstacles surfaced, there was little money from the project for the Fund.

*Environmental Obstacles*

One of the largest obstacles faced by the development team was the significant environmental remediation of the site in 1994. Excavation and tests showed four underground storage tanks, 600 tons of solidified sludge, and 38,000 gallons of contaminated water, all of which needed to be carted off site. Due to groundwater contamination, over 2 million gallons of water had to be pumped out from below surface and treated. Regulatory changes allowed other soil contamination to be cleaned up on site thereby lowering costs. In the end, remediation costs totaled $2.4 million. This total is considerably less than the $20 million estimated by previous potential developers. Who was going to pay for these costs became a source of contention between the developers and the city. After significant struggle, the city agreed to finance the remediation using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. This became a significant public contribution to the project. 12

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11 *La Semana (Spanish newspaper)*, “Comerciantes de Jamaica Plain Objetan Plan de Construir Supermercado en Lote de Centre St.”, October 12, 1995.
12 Environmental information taken from a NDC Document describing the project.
Community involvement was essential to the success of the project. Those opposing the supermarket created tension in the neighborhood. It was the community process that the NDC had built that ensured the project did not "blow up."¹³

The partners formed a Working Committee composed of neighborhood residents and business people in JP to advise the developers on all aspects of development as well as to represent the needs of the community. The Working Committee met on a monthly basis from 1992 to 1996 to review drawings, traffic studies, parking plans, lighting, and safety issues.¹⁴ The meetings discussed the consequences of the project as well as its incorporation into the life of neighborhood. One of the committee's biggest concerns was to ensure that neighborhood residents had access to the creation of the new service and construction jobs.

With the NDC as one of the supermarket partners, the partnership was able to build upon the community input process begun by the NDC in the Coop. This facilitated the community process because the community was familiar with the staff of the NDC and with making decisions and voicing concerns. The community had less control over design of this project than the Coop, but they were still able to shape several features of the project.

Design Issues

One of the most visible project battles in which ultimately the developers and the community lost, involved the physical site planning of the store and health center. The developers and neighborhood residents wanted the store to be near Centre Street, catering to the pedestrian with parking behind the store. Stop & Stop would not budge on its site layout policy to keep the parking in front of the store. Neighborhood impact on the design was therefore negligible,

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¹³ Interview with Virginia Bullock, NDC Project Manager during 1996.
¹⁴ NDC Document
resulting in a suburban supermarket model in an urban context (Figure 5.15 and 5.16). Figure 5.15 shows the sea of parking in front of the supermarket.

Even though the Stop and Shop and not the community drove the site design, community input did make several recommendations to which the company was receptive. The largest compromise was the minimizing of store size from 50,000 to 44,000 square feet.

Furthermore, the community fought for windows to be added to the facade. Large glass windows line the front of the store where a brick wall was in the original plan (Figure 5.16). The community also suggested that the materials reflect the surrounding context with the use of red brick but with soft accents in cream. The architects accented the design with green architectural/ornamental elements, drawing on similar forms from the new renovations at Bromley-Heath.

Landscaping also minimally tries to address the context of the street and the pedestrian traffic with the addition of a black heavy metal fence and shrubs. The Martha Eliot Health Center sits farther on the site connected to Bromley-Heath (Figure 5.17 and 5.18).
While the Coop was an example of a fine grain addition to the fabric of the neighborhood, JP Center is an example of a suburban supermarket model dropped in an urban context (Figure 5.19). The building does not address the street, the sidewalk, or the pedestrian. The building does not form an edge and therefore does not define a street edge. The diagram below illustrates the fill-in nature of the Coop compared to the plopped down version of the supermarket, a box with parking in front and along the side.

THE IMPACT OF JP CENTER

The immediate result of this commercial physical intervention was the construction of a 44,000 square foot supermarket and a 26,000 square foot health center. JP Center created a new hub for quality grocery shopping and health care. Furthermore, on an economic level, the project has been a financial success. As the closing of the old Stop & Shop signaled the neighborhood’s demise, the new Stop & Shop signaled the neighborhood’s turnaround. JP Center is a highly visible component of investment in Hyde Square. It brought much needed goods and services, and JP Center created a destination and put Hyde Square on the map. Most importantly, JP Center created many public benefits.

The developers gained increased experience and credibility with the public-private partnership. Gathering the development team as representative of the stakeholders of the area was a critical political move on the part of BCV that made the project a success. According to Richard Thal,

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15 The Health Center provides critical health care services to a population with high infant mortality rates, low birth weight babies and malnutrition.
Executive Director of the NDC, the Partnership was not tokenistic, “it worked like a three-legged stool; if one of the legs were not present, the stool would not stand up.” The JSJP partnership is a success due to its mix of development expertise, funding sources, knowledge, and neighborhood support. The project allowed the developers to be in a position to advocate for neighborhood benefits. The public-private partnership also gave the developers the experience in negotiating trade-offs with high visibility projects.

Another benefit of JP Center includes the collaboration of many groups increasing neighborhood relations between disparate groups and creating relationships with the city and connections to the private sector. “In the end neighbors, government agencies, banks and even the Carpenter’s Union, ... came together to build the project.” The collaborative atmosphere built relationships between these groups. The photograph of Mayor Menino with Mildred Hailey, director of the Bromley-Heath Tenant Management Corporation, shows the high level of visibility and media attention that the project received (Figure 5.20).

The creation of 200 new jobs in the area is an important impact of the development. The NDC with Stop and Shop held job readiness workshops and as a result, 60% of the new hires were from Jamaica Plain, with the remainder coming from neighboring areas. The creation of visible jobs in the neighborhood is one of the benefits of the supermarket, according to a Hyde Square neighbor. He believes that parents at work set a good example for kids enabling them to witness positive role models everyday.

Figure 5.20. Mayor Menino with Mildred Hailey during the opening of the supermarket in 1996.

17 Ibid.
18 Interview with Bill McCann, resident of Roundhill Street.
The project changed the image of the area by making it safer. Replacing vacant land with a place to shop has created a well-lit area where residents can walk from shopping to home and feel safer. According to another resident of Hyde Square, “I can walk to grocery store now, I wouldn’t walk near there before.”

Before the supermarket, a semi-social space did not exist for Hyde Square residents to interact with Bromley-Heath residents. Stop & Shop tried to bridge the different factions within the neighborhood first by the community process to develop the supermarket, and second, by providing a physical place where different races and interest groups can interact. Supermarkets used as a social space commonly occurs in the suburbs and is not a new phenomenon. However, people were skeptical that this kind of interaction and community spirit could happen in the inner city. According to a Hyde Square resident, by shopping at the supermarket, “you begin to see the same people.” They felt it was a good way to get to know their neighbors.

Realizing the importance of ensuring that the project generates benefits for all members of the community, the developers put $500,000 in a Community Benefits Trust from income generated from the project. The Trust Fund became operational in spring of 1998 and will provide grants to local organizations and businesses and will offer scholarships to area residents. This trust fund was one of the results of the organization of the Merchants whose businesses line Centre Street.

Even though in economic and social terms, JP Center has been a success, it is lacking in physical design terms. JP Center does not reinforce the physical fabric of the neighborhood. It negates the sensitive, organic approach to development that the old and new housing exhibit. By creating a suburban model in an urban setting, the supermarket forgets the pedestrian. According to several resident accounts, they wished the supermarket was closer to the street so they do not have to dodge traffic, and “take their life in their hands” while crossing the street.

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19 Interview with a resident on Rouhill Street.
20 Interview with Richard Thal.
JP Center does not represent the model for neighborhood revitalization, the careful planning and community controlled development, that the Coop exhibited. On the contrary, the Stop & Shop project was a high stakes, politicized project that had two usual non-players combined. The project held together because the developers had built a solid relationship with neighborhood residents who in the end were willing to negotiate. Furthermore, having neighborhood players whom understood the political process and had political alliances helped to calm the tension-building situations. This story especially shows the importance of forming partnerships with the high stakeholders in the area and the importance of having community support on their side. With the city, the private sector, and the community on the table, the connections and relationships among the players became very important. In the end, the moral of the story is the importance of political alliances, the perseverance of neighborhood groups to apply pressure on government for neighborhood needs, and having flexibility necessary to negotiate trade-offs for the benefit of the community.
PART III: WALDEN GARDEN

Overview

Walden Garden is a community garden created to bridge two cultural worlds with one activity. Celebrating its official opening in the spring of 1998, the garden is a result of four years of hard work on the part of the NDC, the Bromley-Heath Tenant Management Corporation, and committed neighborhood gardeners. John Berg, Department of Neighborhood Development Project Manager, called Walden Garden a great example of what can happen with public funds and sweat equity.

The garden is mostly a vegetable garden, with public areas holding 8 apple and pear trees, and roses along an elegant black four-foot fence. Walden Garden is 10,758 square feet with 24 plots, 14 feet long by 8 feet wide. The NDC currently owns the garden, but will sell it to Boston Urban Gardeners (BUG) for $1. BUG, a group of gardeners handling 10 other community gardens throughout Boston, is more equipped to manage the garden long-term with its expertise, resources, and equipment.

Brief History

Located on Walden Street between Heath and Minden Streets, a house used to sit on the lot that now houses the garden. Two developers bought the site in the late 1980s with the intention of renovating the existing house on the lot. As the real estate market crashed in the early 1990s, the property lost its value, and the owners abandoned the property. Around 1991, the City of Boston condemned the house and tore it down leaving only the brick garage on the site. The result was a “big, abandoned” lot collecting trash, oil, and dumped cars.

During the Hyde Square planning meetings in 1990-1991, neighborhood residents expressed a desire to see the vacant lot as a community garden. With 2 Hyde Square Coop buildings on either side of the vacant lot, residents decided the site was more suitable for open space than more housing. After substantial community organizing and gathering support by the NDC and
City Life, the NDC convinced the private owners to donate the lot to them for use as a community garden in early 1994. At this time, DND designated the site a Grassroots Project, which provides funding for community gardens.

**Garden Goals and the Partnership**

The NDC envisioned the garden as a bridge over the cultural gap between the Hyde Square neighborhood and Bromley-Heath. Walden Street had been viewed as a strict dividing line between the neighborhood and Bromley-Heath. As Karen Chacon, a resident of Hyde Square, accounts, some residents have never stepped across Walden Street into Bromley-Heath territory. For this reason, one of the garden goals was to create a dialogue between the two sides.

In order to gain support for the project, the NDC asked the Bromley-Heath Tenant Management Corporation (TMC) to be partners on the development of the garden. As part of their partnership, the TMC put up $10,000 for repairing and fixing up the existing brick garage on the site to park their police vehicles. As a partnership strategy, this was critical to the successful development of the garden since the Bromley-Heath police would ensure a security presence on the site. Their presence became an asset for the garden from the beginning because otherwise, the lack of a fence encouraged the dumping of cars and oil changes on site.

**Community Design Process**

A total of 8 meetings were held in 1994 with residents and architects to design the garden. The residents decided that youth activities, passive-seating areas, and public garden spaces would constitute the program for the site. Most of the meetings were intentionally held at Bromley-Heath to get Hyde Square and Bromley residents to meet each other and begin working with each other. The community design process was finished and priced in 1994.

**Environmental Challenges**
The NDC faced many obstacles in the construction of the garden due to environmental remediation. As part of the public funding involved with the project, an environmental assessment had to be performed on the site in 1995. The results of the testing showed the site was heavily contaminated with oil and lead. Unfortunately, the lead was more pervasive than the oil and also more expensive to clean up.

The bureaucracy surrounding the environmental cleanup delayed the project over two and a half years. The NDC went through extensive effort with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in order to create an acceptable remediation plan. According to Lizbeth Heyer, Project Manager at the NDC, DEP’s procedure is designed mainly for large industrial sites and not for small urban sites intended for community gardening. Due to the cost of hiring consultants, engineers, and writing environmental reports, the DEP process is time-consuming and not cost-effective for small organizations to do community gardens.

Determining the extent of contamination and cost of remediation became extremely risky and costly for the NDC. There were two methods for cleaning the site, capping the site or removing and replacing the soil. Since the engineers could not estimate the extent of contamination and therefore the cost of cleanup until the site was dug, cleanup of the site became a huge liability for the NDC. Their risk could not be quantified at an early stage so they made the decision to cap the site rather than remove the leaded soil. After capping the site, terracing and new soil were added. DEP finally approved the remediation plan in the fall of 1996 and construction of the garden began immediately thereafter.

**Grassroots Program**

Most of the funding for the garden was provided by DND’s Grassroots Program. The NDC also received a grant from the Henderson Foundation, which paid for the fencing. In addition, Bromley-Heath contributed $10,000 to fix the garage. With the environmental problems, the garden turned out to be an enormously expensive project totaling $120,000, about 50% over the estimated budget.
Part of DND's funding program is a sponsor match, a component that needs to contribute 20% of the cost either through volunteer labor or funds. The NDC met its quota through donated labor. The volunteer gardeners planted fruit trees, vines, ornamental berries, and roses.

**Impact on the Neighborhood**

Since the first gardeners began gardening in the summer of 1997, Walden Garden has been a success in the neighborhood. The garden is well tended and fully utilized. As the before and after picture clearly shows (Figure 5.21 and 5.22), the garden has a tremendous impact on the image of the neighborhood.

Plots filled up as soon as formal applications were available. Plots in the garden are limited to neighbors living in a specific geographic area, north of Centre, south of Heath Street, Bromley-Heath to the east, and the Nira Rock area to the west. Preference for plots was given to those involved in the design process and abutters of the garden. After those spots were filled, they took gardeners on a first come, first serve basis. There is currently a waiting list to receive a plot in the garden.

Socially, the garden is slowly mixing residents from Bromley-Heath and Hyde Square. The gardeners are mostly Bromley-Heath residents with some from the surrounding neighborhood. Even though the garden is not truly mixed, according to the NDC, it was a huge psychological step in the mind of the neighborhood in beginning to bridge the two worlds.

The gardeners have become territorial about the project; they take good care of the garden and it is well respected. Non-gardening neighborhood residents are also really attached to the project. They feel the garden adds beauty to the neighborhood. John Berg feels that the garden is appreciated, "It is recognized as a positive physical attribute."

Bill McCann, a resident of Roundhill Street, raves about the design of the garden. "The bright yellow columns are incredible," he says (Figure 5.23). He thinks the neighborhood needs more bright colors. Many gardeners planted big sunflowers in the summer of 1998, creating a bright
field of big yellow flowers that many enjoyed while walking down the street. Many residents commented how “terrific” the sunflowers and garden looked in the summer.

Figure 5.21. The site of Walden Garden in early 1990s.

Figure 5.22. Walden Garden in the Summer of 1998.
Figure 5.23. The bright yellow columns not only add color to the garden; they will hold grape vines that will shade the seating areas below. Also note stepped terracing of the plots.

Figure 5.24. The garden, with its black wrought iron fence, gives the street a defined edge. The garden fits snugly in between a Coop building and an NDC renovated home.
PART IV: THE 1-4 FAMILY HOUSING PROGRAM

Overview

The 1-4 Family Housing Program (1-4 Program) is a distressed housing rehabilitation initiative (DHRI) that targets distressed buildings in order to renovate them and sell them to first-time homebuyers. The 1-4 Program is a city-sponsored program, mostly funded through HOME, a city-administered federal program, to stabilize housing in areas where homes are sources of blight and security threats to neighborhoods. The NDC has used this program to rehabilitate 7 homes in their target area with one house currently in development (Figure 5.25).

![Walden Street: The NDC renovated the first house and the fourth house from the left. These homes have made a big improvement in creating a street edge.](image)

The 1-4 Program is integral to the NDC's comprehensive housing stabilization strategy in Hyde Square. The primary objective is to provide first-time home ownership opportunities to low and moderate-income families. The program also seeks to eliminate physical deterioration and locations of criminal activities, and to increase the number of owner-occupants in the area. The program meets a real need of curing blight, providing safe, decent and affordable homeownership and rental opportunities to community residents and removing destabilizing influences from the neighborhood. It also acts to protect the NDC's other investments in the neighborhood.
According to a funding application submitted to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), "we believe that the support and assistance we receive from individuals and organizations in Hyde Square is one of the most valuable resources we can contribute to the DHRI. The collective commitment the neighborhood has made to the improvement of Hyde Square will provide the base of support necessary to attract and sustain new homeowners to Hyde Square."

The Public Facilities Department (PFD) provides the gap subsidy for the affordable homes. Strong deed restrictions guarantee long-term affordability with resale and appreciation restrictions, and rental income guidelines on the rental units. The 1-4 Program works in conjunction with the city’s First-time Homebuyer Program, a program specifically targeting low and moderate-income families for homeownership opportunities.

**Brief History: The City Program Born from Neighborhood Pressure**

Hyde Square was the neighborhood that inspired the 1-4 Program. During neighborhood negotiations with the city regarding the Neighborhood Partnership Agreement in 1993, the working

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1 Application for funding to LISC, March 1994.

Figures 5.26. Map showing the distressed housing targeted for the 1-4 Program.
committee pushed for funding to be allocated in the Partnership Agreement to rehabilitate abandoned housing in Hyde Square. Even though the NDC had been planning for the rehabilitation of these homes, the Partnership provided the financial opportunity as well as the political link for the program. Once the funding was secured and the architect selected, work on the first house began at the end of 1994.

The NDC saw the rehabilitation of the distressed properties as a critical link to neighborhood stabilization. Minden-Walden sub-market area, prior to development activity, contained 10 vacant lots and 9 abandoned buildings (Figure 5.26). Even though it was costly to renovate buildings the private sector would not, these buildings were key to stabilizing housing in the area. Since the program was conceived at the time of a “soft” real estate market, the NDC was able to negotiate with the city and banks to get the houses for very little money. Some homeowners in the area opposed the production of new units during this time since there were few resources for renovating and preserving existing properties. In response, the NDC pushed for more resources to homeowners and educating homeowners as to existing resources.

_The Rehabilitated Homes_

Most of the houses in the 1-4 Program are located in the Minden-Walden sub-area. I will concentrate my descriptions in this area although several have been renovated outside this area including 85 Chestnut and 26 Danforth. 21 Chestnut is in development.

The following chart shows the timelines of the projects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Transfer of Ownership</th>
<th>Construction Begins</th>
<th>Completion Date/Occupied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73 Walden</td>
<td>February 1996</td>
<td>June 1997</td>
<td>October 1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91 Minden</td>
<td>November 1993</td>
<td>April 1998</td>
<td>December 1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Design Issues

Even though these homes were rehabilitated, the physical design played a major role in the finished products. The Narrow Gate, the architects on the projects, enhanced elements that added to the home’s character. Those elements that emphasized the importance of style and scale such as entrances, porches, trim (details), views in windows, and wood doors, added to the overall quality of the home.

Bob Wegener, the project architect for the rehab projects, describes the most important element in additions as maintaining the existing neighborhood character. He said the challenges of the project were specifying the low-maintenance quality of the materials and adding or preserving architectural details that are historically important and compatible with the neighborhood. Others included following the building code and adding amenities like porches. He wished landscaping could be a feature to be added to homes but cited the limitation of costs on the projects.

In the case of 61 Walden, a 2-family home, the architects created the rental unit with its own entrance into the house to provide its own territory and privacy. This eliminated the unwelcoming and sometimes dangerous foyer.

In each of the buildings, the architects felt one of the most important elements is the entry. The architects included a wood door in each of the main entrances of the houses because it provides an element of warmth. The front porches to the houses add an element of transition from outdoors to indoor.

The improvements of 7 Walden (part of the Hyde Square Coop), Walden Garden, and 9 Walden have completely transformed that side of the street. Tenants at Bromley-Heath faced a wasteland before the Garden and 9 Walden were completed. This coupled with the closing of the liquor store on the corner along Heath made a significant difference on this block.
Even though the Hyde Square Coop was designed without a community meeting room, the NDC has planned to add one in the future. The opportunity arose in 1993 when 91 Minden Street, a burned vacant late 18th century house with a commercial ground floor turned up on the Resolution Trust Corporation's foreclosed list. The NDC acquired it as the first building of the 1-4 Program. Plans for the rehabilitation of the building included a first floor community room and office space for the Coop's management company, and two units on the second and third floors to be added to the cooperative, expanding the total number of Coop units to 43 (Figures 5.27 and 5.28).

When the NDC acquired the building and began plans for rehabilitation, the building was designated a historic building and special proceedings were needed to adapt as well as save some significant architectural elements of the house. This historic designation added expenses to the

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2 Interview with Bob Wegener, March 4, 1999.
project that the City was reluctant to pay for. After struggling with the city around this and other complicated funding issues, the building was finally completed in October of 1998.

According to one neighbor, it is an important addition to the neighborhood since it occupies a prevalent corner and its bright colors gives it the “attention it deserves.” 3 This corner is heavily trafficked by cars on Heath Street to the north cutting through to Centre Street. The building turns the corner and addresses both Minden and Schiller Streets making the building a noticeable and important addition to the neighborhood.

**Impact**

One of the most important impacts of the 1-4 Program is that it allowed low to moderate-income residents, many from JP, to invest in the neighborhood. The program ensures not only affordable housing but a diversity of people and incomes as well.

The program also enabled the NDC to competitively bid projects to small local contractors opening up job opportunities in the area. They also used other programs such as Youth Build, a youth training model, as the contractor for 9 Walden.

City Life, the Hyde Square Force, and the NDC built up their collaborative partnerships by working together to facilitate community planning. Through their collaborative work, and the use of political muscle by City Life in negotiations with lending institutions, resulted in the donation of three buildings to the NDC for the program. The Hyde Square Task Force has also been a valuable influence during negotiations with private owners of distressed properties and played a coordinating role in the effort to curb drug dealing and violence in the buildings.

A direct impact of the program is the First-time Homebuyer Classes offered by the NDC. The class provides complete homebuyer training courses with credit and mortgage counseling, assists buyers in identifying and securing a mortgage product. As part of the city program, graduates are

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3 Interview with Bill McCann, resident of Roundhill Street.
eligible for city downpayment assistance, closing cost assistance, and lower interest rates and “soft second” mortgages with particular banks.

The rehabilitation efforts have spurred reinvestment in adjacent privately-owned properties. Neighbors are beginning to improve their properties as a result of these investments. The ripple effect has included private developers investing in the area (Figure 5.29 and 5.30). The combination of public and private investment over the past several years has significantly expanded the qualities that are attracting buyers to Hyde Square. The rehabilitation signals investment and commitment in the area ensuring new homebuyers that there is an invested resident population.

The 1-4 Program is an example of the incremental nature of the interventions undertaken by the NDC. Even though the incremental nature is partly due to cycles in government funding, its stepping allows one project to start before the last ends. As such, this sustains interest in the revitalization effort of the area

Figure 5.29 and 5.30. A local private developer bought this home, located on the corner of Walden and Minden Streets. This is an example of private development in the neighborhood.
PART V: THE HYDE/JACKSON MAIN STREET PROGRAM

"The key word here is 'GROWTH'. I...render my full support to the cause. With the improvement and upgrade of the businesses in this community we look forward to a new future."

Idalia Flores, All Checks Cashed

The Hyde/ Jackson Main Street Program provides funding for storefront improvements and technical help to local businesses as well as other funds to promote the shopping district. The main goal of the Hyde/ Jackson Square Main Street Program is to revitalize and improve the Hyde/ Jackson Square business district, with support from local residents, businesses, and neighborhood organizations, by making the district more pedestrian, shopping, and driving friendly in order to reinvigorate it as well as meet shopper needs. The program’s activities include hosting the Jamaica Plain World’s Fair, funding local storefront improvements on Centre Street, waging an anti-litter campaign by adding new trash cans, and bringing new businesses and events to the area such as the Hyde/Jackson Square Tree Lightings and the 5K Road Race through Jamaica Plain.

Merchants from local businesses initiated the process to have a Hyde/ Jackson Square Main Street Program. They approached the NDC for help with revitalizing the district and as a result, the NDC helped to file the Main Street application to the city in late 1996. Receiving its designation as a “Main Street” in October of 1997 "made people feel good; like the city is paying attention to them,” commented Debra Askanase, the Executive Director of the program. At the onset, the program rode on the goodwill of the prospect of revitalizing the businesses on Centre Street more than anything (Figure 5.31 and 5.32). As part of the federal program, the program funding in Hyde Square lasts for four years. Out of the 88 businesses in the Main Street District, 22 businesses are participating in the program.

Last year, Main Streets gave money to four stores on Centre Street averaging $3000 apiece. For 1999, Main Streets has a total of $50,000 for improvements and are hoping to give $10,000 to

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4 Quote taken from the Hyde/Jackson Square Main Street homepage located on the City of Boston web page.
5 Hyde/ Jackson Square Main Street Program Membership Brochure.
five storefronts. The physical improvements, mostly storefront improvements, need to follow design guidelines provided by the city. These include signature awnings, lighting, color, and materials. Applications to receive these funds are judged by a design committee made up of merchants and residents. The program has several committees organized around design, technical assistance to stores for economic restructuring, and others that include creating shopper surveys in order to help businesses and organizations working on economic development. According to Debra Askanase, bridging the gap between merchants and the community is a top priority.

The designation of Hyde Square as a Main Street is a direct consequence of the revitalization efforts and investments in Hyde Square. With housing being built and renovated, the shopping district needed to improve. While the supermarket made many of the bodega owners nervous, they were pushing for the program in order to be able to better market their stores. The Main Street Program builds on the relationships in the neighborhood between residents, merchants, and organizations.
SECTION 3:

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION
CHAPTER:

ANALYSIS AND MEASURES OF SUCCESS

"Community is the continual process of getting to know people, caring and sharing responsibility for the physical and spiritual condition of the living space."

Mel King, Chain of Change

"A community is a multi-layered and densely textured organism."

Kathleen Hirsch, A Home in the Heart of the City

PART I: ANALYSIS

The Hypothesis

Physical interventions alone are insufficient to turn a neighborhood turnaround. A strategy integrating physical, social, political, and institutional elements is needed to create lasting and sustainable change in a distressed neighborhood. A strategy initiated by community-based groups with resident input in collaboration with government and the private market creates a framework in which successful physical interventions may occur. This is the way it happened in Hyde Square.

Strategic physical interventions paying special attention to elements of timing, design, and history/tradition created physical, economic, and social benefits for Hyde Square. I hypothesize that the physical, social, and economic by-products of the physical interventions reinforce the social infrastructure in Hyde Square. These by-products, including improving the quality of life and changing the image of the neighborhood, stimulated and encouraged the revitalization momentum by justifying the efforts of the community-based organizations. The success of one physical intervention created opportunities for other physical interventions to occur. This constant reinforcing produces a cyclical effect (Figure 6.1).
Figure 6.1. Hypothesis Diagram

Community-based group
With public participation
(Social Infrastructure)

Collaboration/ Partnerships

Private Market  Government
Other groups

Strategies:
• Timing -- Incremental
• Design Elements
• History/ Tradition -- Context

Reinforces

Physical Interventions

Physical Benefits
Social Benefits
Economic Benefits
The Argument

The social infrastructure of Hyde Square includes community-based organizations, neighborhood institutions, and neighbors. All were involved in the revitalization effort and it was difficult for one to do something without consulting the other. Collectively, the social infrastructure of the neighborhood began the revitalization efforts. Ultimately, the interventions that they pushed for ended up benefiting them. My argument therefore begins and ends with the neighborhoods social infrastructure.

The Framework for the Physical Interventions

The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation created the framework for the revitalization effort in Hyde Square. By the early 1990s, this neighborhood-based group, intimate with the functioning of the neighborhood, through 10 years of working on similar issues throughout other parts of Jamaica Plain, had gained the credibility, stamina, resources, contacts, and experience to plan and implement the physical interventions. The NDC’s neighborhood process led to a strategic phasing of development.

The collaboration among community-based groups, individuals, government, and the private market set the framework for the physical interventions to happen. At a time when the real estate market would not have undertaken many of the interventions, the NDC realized the importance of forming alliances and effective partnerships with other neighborhood groups, the private sector, and the city. This also included fighting the forces that at times threatened the effort including City Hall, the police, banks, and other neighborhood groups. This meant being aware at every step of the decision-making process. Not only did creating these partnerships provide financial and mental support for the effort, but they were also a mode for accountability.

Community participation not only in the design but also in the planning of the physical interventions has been instrumental in the success of the projects. Since residents were involved from the onset in the decision-making, opposition was eliminated later because issues were
resolved before a concrete plan was proposed. The changes and additions to the proposed plans were successful because they were suggested by the neighborhood. Community participation in the designs was therefore a means of resident empowerment. Participating in these decisions gave the residents a stake in the shape and form of their neighborhood and contributed to a shared sense of ownership and responsibility.

**Incremental Steps -- Rolling Results**

Since the above recipe was utilized in each physical intervention, once the first intervention was in place, its momentum contributed to the next phase of interventions. The community process that led to the construction of the Hyde Square Coop set the framework for the process that was used in the supermarket. Also, the neighborhood identified additional issues during the Coop process such as abandoned housing and open space that led to new interventions and new program initiatives by the NDC and other organizations. Each subsequent intervention then added to the quality of life, the image of the improved neighborhood, to the sense of place, community, and pride in the neighborhood. Essentially, each intervention would reinforce the social infrastructure (Figure 6.2).

The Coop was the first and most important piece in the puzzle as it catalyzed other development in the area. Even though the construction of the Coop alone did not bring all the subsequent development to Hyde Square, it did create several opportunities and channels for revitalization. Its physical improvement to the neighborhood attracted other investments to the area. It also gave the NDC credibility and visibility as an organization necessary to continue its work of revitalizing the neighborhood since it did not have this foothold previously.

The Coop also catalyzed residents to become more involved. After the Coop community planning meetings, neighborhood associations started to form again and crime watches were revitalized. It helped to bring a new consciousness of community.
Figure 6.2. The circular flow of the revitalization effort.

- Political Elements, Private Sector, Other organizations
- Community-Based Group
- Community Participation in Planning and Design
- Local Project providing public benefits and improving community image
- New Community Development Initiatives
By the time all the Coop units were occupied in October of 1993, a private developer had completed JP Plaza, on the corner of Walden and Centre Street. This private initiative directly led to the building of the next intervention, the supermarket. While the Coop did not directly lead to the development of the supermarket and health center, it indirectly benefited the project since it set the stage for community input in the development process. While the Coop was an NDC initiated project, the private developer approached the NDC and the Bromley Heath Tenant Management Corporation to become partners in the economic development of this phase of interventions.

The Coop also set in motion plans for the rehabilitation of distressed housing and the creation of programmed open space. Although the NDC had plans for this portion of the phasing, the partnering in the supermarket gave them the leverage and the opportunity to push the other initiatives forward. Since the city was highly involved in the supermarket deal, the NDC and other pushed for other city funding. This window of opportunity led directly to Hyde Square being designated a Neighborhood Partnership Agreement District. Formed in the summer of 1993, the Neighborhood Partnership Agreement provided funding for the One to Four Family Program aimed at rehabilitating the distressed buildings along Walden Street. The Partnership Agreement also gave the push to Walden Garden.

The successful physical interventions also attracted other investment, more people, and other programs. According to area sales information between 1991 and 1993, the Hyde Square Coop and planned supermarket had impacted market trends in the area. The selling of all Coop units showed that it was possible to attract new residents to Hyde Square with affordable, high quality, stable housing. These repercussions included the need to focus on the business district of Hyde Square. Through efforts of merchants and the NDC, Hyde Square was designated as a Main Streets area in 1998. Tapping into government funds, the program aims to fix storefronts along Centre Street, clean the street, and add street trees.

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1 Funding application to LISC from the NDC, March 1994.
In the aftermath of these interventions, there has been a trickle of private investment in the area. Private developers are buying property and rehabilitating houses and neighbors are beginning to fix up their properties.

The stepped and incremental nature of the strategic physical interventions produced a circular flow of results. One intervention contributed to the other, attracted attention and investment from the city and private world, gave credibility to the initiating organization, more residents became involved, the next intervention occurred, and so on. The community-based organizations as the pushing force is helped in the process as their mission is reinforced and they push for the next wave of interventions (Figure 6.2). The critical piece in this model attaching the government funding piece to continue the cycle (in the diagram the floating piece).

Benefits of this incremental nature of change include 1) the ability to sustain a level of interest in the revitalization movement, and 2) the ability for residents to easily digest their new surroundings. As Figure 6.3 shows, new projects began before other ended. This allowed a continued level of activity. Since the interventions did not happen all at once, it became easier for the neighborhood to absorb the changes. Hyde Square followed Kevin Lynch’s strategies of change. He wrote:

*Change should be legible and fairly rapid, concentrated in time or space to make a noticeable difference, yet made up of moderate increments that can be deferred without disrupting the entire process. First actions must be successful, however limited. Actions should build in intensity with time, the familiar “bandwagon” technique. Active groups must derive clear benefit from the change. Even better, the benefit should be widely diffused, and many small groups be involved in initiating the action. We should increase the information about the present and future, raise realizable expectations, and educate new needs. We may deliberately create imbalance and frustration, in the hope that the subsequent efforts to restore balance will complete the desired change.*

This “bandwagon effect” is clearly shown in the Hyde Square example. Not only are the physical changes phased in time, legible, and create a noticeable difference, they also lead to the next
intervention. The diagram (Figure 6.4) below illustrates the causality and connections between the physical interventions in Hyde Square. The process that the Hyde Square Coop began directly led to Walden Garden and the One to Four Rehabilitation Program. The Coop process indirectly led to the supermarket by co-opting their community input process. JP Plaza, the private initiative, directly led to the supermarket, which directly led to the funding of Walden Garden and the One to Four Program through the Neighborhood Partnership Agreement. The collective result was the designation of the Main Street Program.

Figure 6.3. A Timeline of Physical Interventions. One intervention begins before the previous ends.

\[ \text{Timeline of Physical Interventions} \]

\[ \begin{array}{cccccccccccc}
\end{array} \]

Coop

JP Plaza

Stop & Shop and Health Center

Walden Garden

1-4 Program

Main Street Program

\[ ^2 \text{Lynch, Kevin. What Time is this Place, p.205.} \]
The five physical interventions collectively have created an incredible positive impact on the neighborhood. One intervention informs residents of interest in the area. Several interventions signal sustainable change and commitment in the area. The mixed-use quality of the shopping center, housing cooperative, and open space flagged the revitalization of the neighborhood. The interventions have also augmented neighborhood activities and lessened the feeling of blight and disorder. The collective changes were therefore pivotal in changing the image of the neighborhood. It is difficult to speculate if one of the interventions had not happened if the same results would have happened. Each of the interventions has strengths in its own right, but
grouped together, the result is greater than the sum of its parts. For these reasons, the physical interventions could be deemed successful in helping to revitalize Hyde Square.

PART II: MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The physical interventions have been a success on many levels. On a physical level, new places to live, shop, get health care, and garden are tangible and visible results. On an economic level, jobs were created; successfully completed projects attracted other investments; and property values rose. On a social level, the quality of life has been improved for residents, the image of the neighborhood has changed, a sense of place, community, and pride were created, crime has been reduced, community-based organization have built up trust, communication networks, and credibility, and value was added to the neighborhood.

Overall, the strategic physical interventions contributed to the success of the revitalization effort in Hyde Square. But how does one judge success? Success, per se, is difficult to define because it is subjective; it is dependent on a particular set of parameters or criteria. Measuring success though in this instance is important for two reasons. First, it justifies the time, energy, and resources that streamed into the efforts. Second, if lessons are to be learned and applied elsewhere, a claim needs to be made that these interventions worked in Hyde Square for particular reasons.

1) Quantitative Measures

One way to measure success is to quantify the outcome of the efforts. In Hyde Square, 43 units of cooperative housing were constructed; 12 units of housing were rehabilitated; 24 plots in a new community garden were created; 44,000 square feet of commercial space and 25,000 square feet of a health care facility were developed and built; over 200 new jobs were created; and 200 people graduated from first-time homebuyer classes. These numbers in themselves though have little meaning without a means of comparison. While the physical and economic results can be
quantified as indicators of success, the social benefits created by the revitalization effort are more difficult to gauge and are less quantitative.

2) **Repercussions**

Another method of judging success is to analyze the repercussions of the interventions. As Figure 6.4 shows, each intervention had tangible results since it led to the successive interventions. They also helped to bring about government programs for funding other initiatives. Examining these repercussions has an element of quantifying yet it borders on judging the effort.

3) **Resident Image**

The third way to measure success is to gauge resident’s perceptions about what has happened. Even though this is the most subjective, it is also the most direct since the interventions are benefiting the residents. Finding out resident views on their neighborhood is a good measure of success. The third part of this chapter will examine closely the residents’ image of the neighborhood.

*External Conditions Contributing to Success*

For the purpose of this thesis, I have concentrated on the role of the NDC in initiating the interventions as well as government aid and private initiative. It is important to mention that there are external forces contributing to the success of the interventions and efforts in general. Even though they are beyond the scope of this thesis, the external forces still merit mention in order to contextualize the physical interventions.

The economy was a major factor of change. When the economy was in a slump in the early 1990s, the NDC had time to carefully plan and seek citizen input in the Coop process. They could also attract government support to the area in a time of discontent with the slow economy. As the economy became stronger by the mid to late 1990s, the NDC has to be more
strategic the projects and tasks they undertook since competition for land was tight from the private market. While property values rose, the NDC concentrated on city-owned property rather than the private lots. This shows that the NDC needed to be market based and adapt to changing pressures from the economy as well as the real estate cycles.

National trends and population shifts also affected the revitalization effort. As people are attracted into city neighborhoods and the middle class is squeezed out of more expensive neighborhoods in the Boston area, they are choosing places like Hyde Square to live that drive up the prices in the neighborhood.

A history of activism attracted progressive political types to the neighborhood. There was also a willingness of all parties to work together. Other threads include the ability to adapt to change, a sense of history and self-awareness, and a specific “JP”ness that allows the community to be tolerant and accepting. All of these are factors that contributed to residents participating in the revitalization effort.

An existing “traditional neighborhood development” pattern of growth also encouraged the success of the interventions. Since most of the development occurred during its spurt as a streetcar suburb, the neighborhood contains elements of the urban village concept. These elements include a human scale to the buildings, sidewalks, buildings close to the sidewalk, a critical density of people, a main shopping strip, a nearby school, and access to public transportation. These factors have heavily influenced the planning and design of the vacant land in the area.

In addition, to the changes the physical interventions created in adding to the sense of safety, the drop in the crime rate is a major contributed to the safety of the neighborhood. Increased cooperation with law enforcement and a crackdown on violence by the police caused the rate to decrease. The crime rate though is one of those reinforcing factors that worked simultaneously with the physical interventions. As a result of increased community participation in the planning of the Coop, crime watch groups were resurrected, neighbors began to report unusual activity, and the police began to pay more attention.
**Victims of their Own Success**

The Hyde Square revitalization effort may have been too successful. The “hot” real estate market of the late 1990s has pushed up prices in the neighborhood to a point where those initially involved in the efforts may become victims of their own success. As the neighborhood becomes more popular, families with higher incomes move in and prices go up, those with lower incomes in the neighborhood may not realize their dreams of buying a home in the neighborhood. The ones who helped to fight the crime, vision the improved neighborhood, may not the enjoy fruits of their efforts.

**PART III: RESIDENT IMAGE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

*The Image of Hyde Square: Resident Views*

In planning literature, writers argue that the experts of a place are the people who live in the space and use the space. Roberta Gratz, in her book *The Living City*, asks “who are the real experts?” She argues that many times the on-site experts are the neighborhood resident or the businessman, the city user whose instinctive judgement is sometimes at odds with the professional experts. Dolores Hayden, in *Power of Place*, discusses the power of mapping and interviewing residents to see what they think of the meaning of their neighborhood. People in the neighborhood have a special understanding of the area, its “landmarks, sights, sounds, smells, pedestrian patterns, and social organization.”

For this reason, enlisting neighborhood residents to discuss how changes in the neighborhood have impacted them is a justifiable measure of judging the success of a revitalization effort.

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According to 30 interviews conducted throughout Hyde Square, resident image of the neighborhood today is different than 10 years ago. Residents continually described a renewed sense of confidence and community spirit in their neighborhood. In these interviews, even though residents did not whole-heartedly agree on a single factor that contributed to their change in image of the neighborhood, they did agree that their image of the neighborhood had changed -- and for the better. Many were very specific about what they felt contributed directly to the change of image, others talked about their feelings towards their neighborhood in general. In essence, many residents pointed to the physical interventions as one of the main reasons their image of the neighborhood changed. The following section describes the results of some of these interviews.

**Truth in the Words**

Over and over again, neighborhood residents utilized the same words to describe Hyde Square. The following are a collection of words used in resident descriptions:

Diversity, mixture of people, vibrant, convenient, accessible, communication among neighbors, livable, home, neighborly, community, people care about each other, Latino, dynamic, our own community, friendly, small-town feel, dirty, opportunity, in crisis, fear of gentrification, quiet, a good mix, tolerant, accepting, mine, changing....

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![A Jamaica Plain Documentary: Resident Views of their Neighborhood](image_url)

Using resident views to gauge the image of the neighborhood is not new to Jamaica Plain. In 1976, a doctoral student at MIT, William Wolpert Harris, made a documentary about Jamaica Plain. He selected Jamaica Plain because he was impressed by several attributes that showed the area's viability. These include a racially, ethnically, and economically mixed community; private and public money sources had been committed to area; a strong business district; a variety of community groups, pressure groups, and organizations which were involved in “maintaining the vitality and responsiveness of the area.” Citizen involvement in revitalizing efforts was high. At the same time, there were areas that had problems: 20% of dwelling units were in need of repair, 15% of people were 65 and older, as well as some housing abandonment.

His purpose was to discover the role of television could have in changing the image of a neighborhood. His hypothesis was “a locally originated public affairs television program can reinforce some resident viewers’ pride and confidence in their neighborhood as well as increase some non-resident viewers’ knowledge of and interest in the target area.” The Jamaica Plain program gave residents an opportunity to express pride in Jamaica Plain. Furthermore, some residents who were considering moving decided not to leave the area after they saw the program.
From this list, it is clear that residents care about the place they live. Yet, it is evident that it is not a perfect place. There are qualities inherent in the place and in the people though that point to ways to achieve solutions.

**Source of Pride — Sense of Community**

The physical interventions have acted as a source of pride for the neighborhood supporting a sense of community. A month after Stop and Shop opened, a column appeared in the Boston Sunday Globe that captured the feelings of many residents in the area:

"It is the feeling of community pride that I and my neighbors feel as we stroll the wide aisles of the new supermarket... We were all there – moms pushing jogger strollers, immigrant families speaking different languages, folks, young and old from next-door Bromley-Heath and nearby Academy Homes... I felt certain that we in Jamaica Plain had achieved something that people living in other sections of the city can only hope for. More than a neutral meeting place where different communities come to conduct their business, our achievement is in creating an authentic sense of community born out of shared values and common purpose... Our community represents the belief that what’s good for the community is also good for business..."

The pride residents feel in their neighborhood is reinforced by such positive media attention. Editorials in the Boston Globe or awards to local heroes by the mayor, for example, strengthen the positive image that residents have acquired of their neighborhood.

Kathleen Hirsch’s book about Jamaica Plain, *A Home in the Heart of the City*, discusses the author’s search for community. She tells the real stories of others in the neighborhood espousing the common values of tolerance, generosity, and cooperation. One resident commented that while he was reading the book, he was surprised to find familiar names and stories in the printed pages. Many residents empathize with her having found a strong community in JP.
With a Sense of Place comes the Sense of Ownership

One of the main results of the physical interventions is the creation of a sense of place. This sense of place captures both the public and private spheres. The Stop & Shop, the improved storefronts on Centre Street, and Walden Garden have created a destination and social gathering space both visible and practical in the neighborhood. The new housing has added to the sense of place by showing an investment by outsiders and residents in the neighborhood. These feelings of place and ownership surfaced as Hyde Square residents told their stories.

The Stop and Shop has created a destination in Hyde Square; it has established a local hangout where residents from all over JP come to shop. Art Johnson, a lawyer who moved to Hyde Square in the 1970s, said that Stop & Shop put Hyde Square on the map. Bill McCann, a resident of Roundhill Street, believes the supermarket has brought people together. He calls it a social place where people of all kinds interact on a daily and/or weekly basis. Kristen Harol comments that her 70-year old aunt who lives on Pond Street shops at the Stop and Shop.

With positive changes happening in the neighborhood, many residents feel invested in the results since they helped to bring them about. Kathie Meinzer, the owner of the gourmet pizzeria ‘Bella Luna’ and local merchant who helped turn an unsafe corner into a local safe hangout comments “…that’s what makes a neighborhood safe, the sense of ownership.” She believes that extending the ownership of the store onto the street is a way to relate to passersby a sense of investment in the area. For this reason, she is also one of the few merchants who has not put up grates in front of her restaurant.

Attached to the sense of ownership are feelings of being territorial and possessive about everyday spaces. For example, the Day Street Crime Watch holds a clean up every Saturday at noon for a new, small park on the corner of Day Street and Roundhill Street. This group has taken it upon themselves to clean the park instead of waiting for others to do it. Mark Guertin of the Crime Watch commented that the kids who use it have noticed the interest in upkeep of the park and have put in their part. As a result, it has taken less time to clean the park each
subsequent week. In this respect, territoriality has not only helped to maintain the park but build stronger bonds to the neighborhood.

The positive changes in Hyde Square have contributed to residents’ sense of ownership of their neighborhood. Rik Alhberg moved to JP because he was looking for “a place to call home.” He feels that Hyde Square is a place where people put down roots, and once there, won’t be uprooted easily. With all the activity, he says there is a new sense of investment in the neighborhood.

**The Repercussions of the Physical Interventions**

Father Mike McClellan of the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church sites the Broken Window Theory as the phenomenon that occurred in Hyde Square. He described the theory’s use in many disciplines especially law enforcement. Essentially, the principle states that “neglect begets neglect.” He asks hypothetically, “Why should I fix up my property when my neighbor’s property looks horrible? If there is a broken window in a house, it is a sign that it is abandoned and therefore things inside are free rein. It is almost guaranteed that the house will be looted. It is a cycle. Neglect breeds disrespect for property as well as people.”

Along the same principle, Father Mike also mentioned that the Broken Window Theory is working in reverse in Hyde Square. If someone takes good care of their property and invests time and money into them, this care inspires care. He noticed that several residents located near or next to the Hyde Square Coop have been inspired to fix up their homes in response to the construction and rehabilitation of the buildings. In this way, neighbors are slowly inspired to fix up their properties.

**The Look of Hyde Square**

Many residents commented on the difference the addition of new housing has made in Hyde Square. One resident claims, “Walden Street has been completely transformed.” Debra Askanase, the Executive Director of the Hyde Square Main Street Program, said, “the experience on the street is completely different.”

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4 Quoted from Hirsch, Kathleen, p. 162.
Most residents are impressed by the way the Coop fits into the neighborhood. Some newcomers into the neighborhood thought the buildings fit in so well, they are hardly noticeable. Most residents commented that they preferred the housing to the vacant lots.

A resident of Roundhill Street feels Stop and Shop serves a dramatic need in the neighborhood but is “ghastly from a design perspective.” He called it “bad strip mall stuff, not master planned, just built.” He would have liked to see a site plan more sensitive to the pedestrian.

**The Process of Change**

Bobby Platt, who was born and has lived in JP his whole life and soon to be a resident of Minden Street, commented that he likes the changes in Hyde Square because they are not fast changes. He thinks the gradual process to improve the neighborhood is the kind the community can handle best.

**Neighborliness**

Bill McCann credits getting to know his neighbors through several meetings held by community groups. He told the story of cooperation and goodwill among neighbors; the carpenter who does odd jobs for neighbors, his wife who baby-sits, his friend who fixes cars.

Some residents called the Hyde Square Coop “good neighbors.” Residents cited the existence of the Coop as a stable influence in the neighborhood. One resident liked the Coop board because he knew to whom and where to complain.

**Safety**

Several residents directly attributed the renewed sense of safety to the physical interventions. “Before Stop & Shop and [the new housing on] Walden Street you couldn’t walk around there” comments a resident of Roundhill Street. Betsaida Gutierrez, a resident of Hyde Square for over 20 years, comments, “Now we can walk around without being scared.” The physical presence of new buildings and people occupying those buildings makes it safer for neighborhood residents to walk the area.
Bill Allan, one of the main organizers of the Hyde Square Task Force, attributes the safer conditions in Hyde Square to neighbors taking an active role in policing their neighborhood. According to Bill, residents were angry about the crime and took it upon themselves to do something. He said, this is our neighborhood and “we weren’t going to be pushed out.” With cooperation from the police, they have helped to keep eyes on the street. Not only did crime go down but the perception that crime was dropping was also a factor. For example, teenage vandalism on his street, such as slashing tires, used to happen once a week, today it happens about once a year.

Officer Danny Ramirez, on the police force in Jamaica Plain for 26 years, says the neighborhood has been completely transformed in the last couple of years. He joked that he has a little more time to enforce parking laws and loud music now that the drug scene is under control. He mentioned that the shutting down and rehabilitation of several drug houses by the NDC has made an incredible difference in the neighborhood.

**The Activist Citizen**

One resident commented that a commitment to urban life takes hard work. It needs people committed to making things work, spending time and energy. For some, it was the liberal nature of the community that made the difference. Several residents agreed with one resident’s comment that “JP is the place where the activist citizen can make things happen.”

**The Work of Community Groups**

Many residents pointed to the work of community groups working in the neighborhood as a major factor in the change of the neighborhood. Many mentioned the good work of the NDC, City Life, the Hyde Square Task Force, and Urban Edge in the change of the neighborhood.

**Hope and Strength**

Betsaida Gutierrez, a former employee of the NDC who now works with City Life, says that the positive changes, especially affordable housing, in the neighborhood give “esperanza,” the Spanish word for hope, for the community to keep moving forward. She works with the Latino
community helping them to gain access to ways to improve their lives. Whether it is first-time homebuyer classes, which she teaches in Spanish, or advocating for tenants’ rights, she talked about the need for residents to be part of the decision-making for the future of the neighborhood.

Officer Danny Ramirez believes “there’s unity in strength.” He said that having activities like the JP World’s Fair, and places like the community gardens bring people together.

**Commitment**

Residents show commitment to the neighborhood in many ways. Many have lived in the neighborhood for over 20 years. Most of the people who work in the neighborhood also live in the neighborhood. Others become involved in many of its organizations. Kevin Maloney, one of the elected representatives on the JP Neighborhood Council, believes the institution of neighborhood councils should be preserved to give residents a direct voice on issues affecting them.

**Unfinished Work and Next Steps**

Even though resident responses were generally very positive, they had strong opinions about areas that needed improvement in the neighborhood. Education, civic participation, the business district, and access to good jobs were some of the areas that residents felt the neighborhood needed to improve. Residents also voiced general concerns of affordability; some were afraid of being placed out of Hyde Square by rising prices.

Father McClellan says he cannot call the revitalization efforts a success, since there is still unfinished work. He sees the trash blowing around as an indication of the work yet to be done. He views the efforts in Hyde Square as succeeding in halting serious neighborhood decline rather than a neighborhood turnaround.
Ramona Gonzalez, a resident of Hyde Square for over 25 years, feels the neighborhood has come a long way since the 1980s. She feels that if the positive changes are to continue, more residents need to become involved in actively participating in neighborhood change.

Most of the residents sited the educational system as an area that needed severe improvement. Many residents reiterated the importance of creating positive environments for their kids. Claudio Martinez, the Executive Director of the Hyde Square Task Force, talked about the need for more affordable housing, healthy places to play and live, a decent education, especially positive role models for teenagers in the neighborhood. He said that Hyde Square is “getting there,” moving beyond the violence, the crime, but still in crisis.

As interviews with Hyde Square residents have shown, Hyde Square is moving in the right direction by building up the physical fabric of the neighborhood, which in turn is helping to build up the social fabric of the neighborhood. As many residents pointed out, we should be hesitant to call it a success for there is still much unfinished work (Figures 6.5 and 6.6).

CHAPTER:

CONCLUSION: KEYS TO SUCCESS

Reflections

As I enter the Hyde Square neighborhood, walking up Centre Street from the Jackson Square T stop, I feel an immediate connection to the place. And it is not just because the smell of Latin cooking reminds me of home. It is because Hyde Square is home to the people who live there; it is a spirit that can be seen and felt. Even outsiders feel the vitality, the roots, and yes, even the sense of community. This thesis has examined the reasons for this neighborhood turnaround. There are many neighborhoods in need throughout the country. This example of neighborhood revitalization might be applicable in aiding in their efforts. Before we can extract lessons from Hyde Square, we should think about why the neighborhood is important.

Urban neighborhoods are the lifeblood of the city and the building blocks of society. Doug Kelbaugh calls neighborhoods in Common Places, “the integers of cities.” They are the whole numbers, the main elements of the system, and yet, many inner city neighborhoods have gone by the wayside, have become forgotten places and homes to sometimes forgotten people. For 50 years, they have been plagued by disinvestment, a neglected housing stock, and they suffer the ills of poverty, crime, and a declining population base.

These neighborhoods need more than a second look. They need careful and creative attention. They need policies that answer to the needs of those currently living there. They need to be a priority to our cities. And the key to success is neighborhoods addressing the need themselves.

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Lessons to be Learned from Hyde Square

The story of Hyde Square describes a neighborhood revitalization effort that worked. Hyde Square can be a model of the “if they can do it, we can do” approach to neighborhood revitalization. Obviously, this example should not be reproduced “as is.” Indeed, every neighborhood has its own characteristics, history, and people, with different external forces acting upon it. It is therefore important to adapt the ideas behind the success of Hyde Square rather than to replicate them. By analyzing the Hyde Square effort, similar distressed neighborhoods can apply these concepts which build on neighborhood strengths and encourage local differences allowing for creativity and flexibility. In light of this, the following are the important lessons to be learned from Hyde Square:

- Community development corporations (CDC) like the NDC of Jamaica Plain can act as a mechanism for initiating and implementing positive physical and social change in distressed neighborhoods.

As the trend toward government decentralization continues, CDCs are in a position to take on a greater role in community development. Since many inner city neighborhoods distrust large government actions, a local organization employing local residents can help to gain the trust needed to form the links between government funding and neighborhood needs. By acting as liaisons between the city and the neighborhood, CDCs can gain the credibility and visibility needed to produce changes while still being held accountable to its neighborhood constituents.

In the case of young organizations, the NDC shows the importance of starting small in order to build up trust and credibility in the neighborhood. The organization needs to be market-based, in order to adapt to the changing needs of the neighborhood. This requires a great degree of flexibility and negotiation skills. These organizations need to be prepared to negotiate and trade off one desire in order to receive other goodies. A key element in the success of the organization is knowing when to seek help and sound advice.
One of the most effective ways to create neighborhood relationships is to build on existing institutions that reinforce the history and tradition of the neighborhood. In this way, the organization allows for a continuity in time and of people.

- Physical interventions can be used as a tool for building the physical and social fabric of the neighborhood.

Physical interventions strengthened the sense of place and community spirit in Hyde Square. By removing and replacing blight with needed housing, commercial centers, and programmed open space, the physical interventions changed the residents’ stigmatized image of their neighborhood. Physical changes provide visual clues of investment, giving the neighborhood hope and garnering support for continued efforts.

Physical interventions can also create a sense of identity missing from a neighborhood. Creating a civic or social place that can foster a sense of community can be a tool for gaining support for physical changes. As access to global places and products becomes mainstream, the local neighborhood becomes important in creating a specific identity for the area. By creating a focus of community pride, establishing goals, visions, and value statements, the neighborhood may begin to build social relationships leading to a collective identity.

- Community participation is critical to the survival and success of the interventions and the revitalization process.

In order for the physical interventions to achieve their desired results, residents should be involved and support the process. Engaging the public into the process is difficult, but necessary because they have a special cognitive knowledge of their neighborhood. Although this expertise is sometimes difficult to extract, it may be accomplished slowly through trusted exchanges. As communication increases, the role of the CDC becomes crucial in gathering and synthesizing this expertise. Furthermore, this process leads to a sense of community and investment in the neighborhood. Through this process, residents are empowered to support the physical
interventions and in the process help to speed up planning and development issues such as zoning.

Community participation is also a means to gain a sense of ownership and responsibility in the neighborhood. In order for the interventions to succeed, the community needs to be invested in the results. The participation process is the vehicle for the community to have a stake in the efforts.

- A collaborative atmosphere within the neighborhood and across sectors, either with government or with the private market, can create a solid foundation and a vehicle for change.

Partnerships between community-based organizations, the city, and the private sector worked to benefit the Hyde Square neighborhood. They built upon and took advantage of each partner's expertise, financial solutions, and connections. The partnerships allowed for a system of checks and balances as well as a method for accountability to the neighborhood. This collaborative atmosphere helped to build the social infrastructure of the neighborhood and created the framework for other interventions to happen.

In order to establish this collaborative atmosphere, an organization needs to take the lead, have a focused agenda with realistic goals, a method by which to accomplish them, specific tasks with time limits, persons responsible, and benchmarks of measuring success.

- Revitalization needs a multi-dimensional and comprehensive approach targeting physical, social, and economic needs of the neighborhood.

Focusing solely on one issue of development, such as housing, does not provide the comprehensive strategy needed to make marked improvements in the social and physical fabric of the neighborhood. Issues of housing, economic development, and open space, need to be combined with youth programs, crime prevention, community involvement, etc. Many of these issues though such as public education, crime, and health care, may be beyond the scope of the
organization or group of individuals involved. However, by simultaneously thinking about how to advocate for the improvement of those arenas along with physical interventions, the neighborhood benefits in the long run.

- Incremental interventions contribute to sustainable change in the neighborhood.

The implementation rate of physical interventions should be addressed when planning physical changes. The physical changes in Hyde Square occurred in a sensitive, organic way that tried to match available funds with the needs of the community, its history and tradition, and its existing architectural context. The stepping of the interventions helped to sustain interest in the revitalization effort and allowed residents to incorporate the changes easily.

- The quality of design is integral to improving the image of the neighborhood.

The physical changes in Hyde Square that respectfully filled in the missing physical links were more easily accepted than those that did not reinforce the history and tradition of the physical space. Contextual and quality architecture and urban design convey the idea of investment and care which help to build an improved image of the neighborhood.

In order to advocate for this kind of design quality, there needs to be a system of educating the public. Educated in the sense of knowing the system, the rights of homeowners, the value of property, and the deals of development. This knowledge also extends to develop awareness as to the architectural and historical value of buildings.

- The perceived negative image needs to be changed along with the actual physical image of the neighborhood.

If neighbors still perceive danger or decline then physical changes might not be as effective in neighborhood revitalization. By involving residents in the process of revitalization, the image of the neighborhood may begin to change and feed the momentum further. Creating a shared sense
of place, and even territoriality also helps to further the change in perception. By cultivating a sense of community, negative perceptions may also decline.

An important element for organizations and neighborhoods to change the image of the neighborhood is the media. In order to spur revitalization, people need to know what is happening. For this reason, positive publicity and attention is helpful for the effort. Often times, these groups can use their clout or prestige as leverage for financing. Although the NDC was modest in publicizing its efforts at critical times, they partnered with organizations that allowed the project and not the organization to receive the attention.

- City government plays a critical role in the revitalization of the neighborhood.

The city government has many tools at their disposal to finance local neighborhood development. Many times however, this requires pressure and perseverance from neighborhood groups to get the desired funds. Jokingly, the city referred to Jamaica Plain as “Jamaica Pain” yet during the Partnership Agreements with the city, Jamaica Plain was able to receive the more funds than other Boston neighborhoods.

Grass-roots organizations should call for institutionalizing vehicles for neighborhood change like the Neighborhood Partnership Agreements that were successful in Hyde Square. In this manner, a vehicle is established to deal with neighborhood change after key people have left the neighborhood organization; it is a means for the survival of previous successful efforts and ensuring the way for future ones.
INTERVIEWS

I would like to give special thanks to all those who took time from their busy schedules for interviews:

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ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

2.1 PFD Map from Neighborhood Profiles Report
2.2 BRA Interim Planning Overlay District Map
2.3 von Hoffman, Local Attachments
2.4 Warner, Streetcar Suburbs
2.5 von Hoffman, Local Attachments
2.6 Warner, Streetcar Suburbs
2.7 DND Neighborhood Map
2.8 Author
2.9 von Hoffman, Local Attachments
2.10 Author
2.11 Jamaica Plain Gazette

3.1 Author
3.2 Author

4.1 Document from DND
4.2 Document from DND

5.1 DHK Architects
5.2 DND Map
5.3 NDC Map
5.4 Author
5.5 Author
5.6 Author
5.7 Author
5.8 Author
5.9 Author
5.10 Author
5.11 Author
5.12 Author
5.13 Author
5.14 Author
5.15 Author
5.16 Author
5.17 Author
5.18 NDC Document
5.19 Author
5.20 Boston Globe
5.21 NDC Photo
5.22 NDC Photo
5.23 Author
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


