

Gentrification in JP/Rox: Seeking a Collaborative Local Process for a Regional Problem

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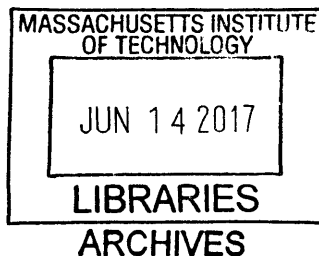
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis takes a case study approach to explore gentrification in Boston, the policies designed to mitigate it, and the public participation process by which these policies are crafted and implemented. It focuses on the JP/Rox planning process in the Jamaica Plain and Roxbury neighborhoods of the city through interviews with neighborhood residents, non-profits, and city policymakers who were involved in the process. In particular, the thesis explores the inherent tension between urban planning's contemporary commitment to local decision-making power and a regional problem such as the housing market. In order to obviate the collective action problem of diffused benefits and concentrated costs created by this local/regional dichotomy while maintaining a commitment to local input and knowledge, interviews with stakeholders suggest a more collaborative approach to local planning may be necessary. In particular, such an approach would entail a focus on convening appropriate stakeholder groups, engaging in joint fact finding, generating creative trades among parties, implementing agreed-upon goals, and jointly monitoring outcome metrics. This restructured process of public participation would require a more active governmental role in organizing the public and require trust from city policymakers and neighborhood residents alike, but could achieve greater buy-in for larger regional action at the local level.

Thesis Supervisor: Ingrid Gould Ellen

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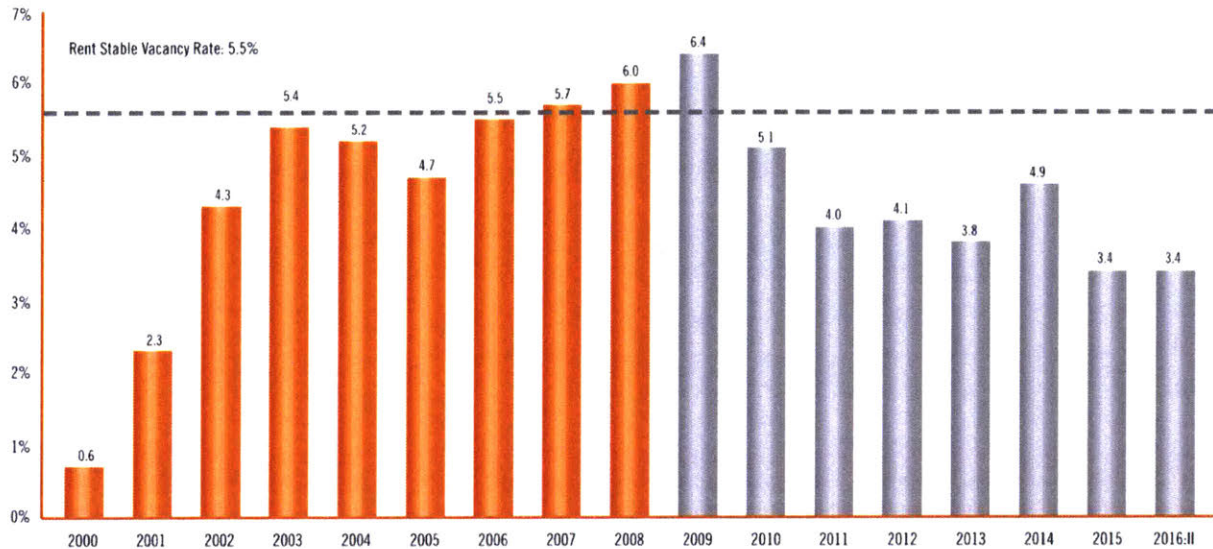
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## Introduction

In the last couple decades, the downtown areas of several large cities around the United States have experienced an influx of new residents drawn by the economic and cultural vitality of these urban centers. The subsequent increase in demand for housing has resulted in a rapid escalation of housing prices, including in neighborhoods with historical concentrations of lower income and minority households, a process generally identified as gentrification. New residents of these previously disinvested neighborhoods typically have a higher socio-economic status and bring with them new investment in local businesses and amenities. While new investment is certainly welcome in these areas, the increasing demand for a limited supply of housing has created a bind for long-time residents, whose rents are growing faster than wages, resulting in lower residual incomes to spend on other goods, and potential displacement from their homes and communities.

If a limited housing stock for a growing population is the problem, then an increase in housing supply would appear to be the straightforward solution. So far, this solution is proving elusive in the Boston region. Propelled by an explosive economy, the five-county region encompassing the Boston metro area grew by 67,000 households between 2010 and 2014, but only added 15,000 new housing units (Bluestone, Huessy, White, Eisenberg, & Davis, 2015). As a result, vacancy rates have plummeted, allowing landlords to command higher prices for scarce units, thereby driving up the price of buildings and land.

**Figure 1: Greater Metro Boston Rental Vacancy Rate, 2000-2016: II**



Source: (Bluestone et al., 2016)

What can we as policymakers, planners, and city residents do to temper the negative impacts of gentrification and ensure that low-income residents can continue to live in transforming neighborhoods? In her interview, Sheila Dillon, Boston’s Chief of Housing at the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND), described this challenge as a “math problem.” To the degree that policy

solutions to address gentrification are

correctly calculating the numerical

configurations of affordability

percentages, Area Median Income, and

subsidy amounts, this observation

resonates. However, math problems

belong to the austere world of the

**Figure 2: Average Market Rent, Inner Boston Core, 2009-2016: II**



Source: (Bluestone et al., 2016)

natural sciences, where right or wrong answers exist indifferent to the goals and politics of human beings. Gentrification, on the other hand, is an outgrowth of human affairs and the policies designed to govern them, and therefore is embedded within the messy social entanglements of human relationships, trust, communication, and shared knowledge. Any attempt to understand and mitigate such a problem will need to elucidate ways to diffuse any latent tensions, clarify goals, and generate knowledge between pluralistic factions at the local level, so that these local residents can collaborate with city policymakers on the most effective mitigation strategies.

This challenge is compounded by the local-regional nature of housing, and its resultant impact on gentrification. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, responses to expansive regional issues were simply administered by technocratic city planners with little regard for localized impact on neighborhoods. Acting on their theories of best practice, city planners deemed certain neighborhoods blighted and proposed new highways to the suburbs without consulting the residents of the neighborhood themselves. In the post-urban renewal world, urban planners value grassroots efforts with localized input and decision-making power. However, given the regional nature of housing markets, the collective decision of all localities to limit new development leads to increasing prices in the region as a whole. Subsequently, this limited new development in the rest of the city and the suburbs as a whole exacerbates rental increases in gentrifying neighborhoods. The key tension at play is reconciling the need to act regionally to address housing affordability broadly, while maintaining the primacy of neighborhood control in the planning process to address gentrification locally.

Reliance on local decision-making creates a collective action problem, where the benefits of new development are diffuse across the housing market, but the associated costs are concentrated in a neighborhood or town. If policymakers are committed to local input and grassroots planning for housing development, any action to increase supply and density will require the city to work collaboratively with local stakeholders to ensure that proposed neighborhood plans benefit local neighborhoods as well as the city at large, and that residents' trust in the stipulations of the plan will be honored. Policymakers need to work closely with residents, listen to their concerns, and build trust to find and enact the right policies.

This thesis examines the JP/Rox neighborhood planning process so as to better understand these challenges and propose a path forward for policymakers. The rich fomentation of community discourse over the course of the process provides a unique window into the particular local barriers that inhibit new construction, illustrating the collective action problem. Through interviews with local activists, both for and against new development, neighborhood residents, neighborhood CDCs and other non-profit institutions, and city officials, this thesis elucidates the viewpoints of each faction, their goals and strategies, and their opinion of the planning process itself. In so doing, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

- Who are primary actors in the JP/Rox planning process, what are their chief goals, and how do these goals conflict or agree with one another?
- What change in the city's public participation process might ameliorate conflicting goals, leading to a neighborhood plan with greater public buy-in?



- Based on stakeholder feedback and literature, how might Boston policymakers effectively address the collective action problem and encourage regional housing production through local participation processes?

## Thesis Structure

First, I will present a brief review of the literature germane to this thesis. I will then present how my thesis will build on this literature through a case study approach, adding new insight to areas not already covered by the vast pool of literature focusing on gentrification and housing costs. Next, I will provide a description of research methodology, as well as background on housing and gentrification in Boston and the region as a whole. This background includes details on recent data trends and the Mayor's current housing plan, *Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030*. I will also give greater detail on the JP/Rox plan, its developmental timeline and final proposed policies, and the contentious debate from which they emerged. The next chapters will provide an analysis of the JP/Rox planning process, highlighting key areas of discord and miscommunication, as well as provide recommendations for what a better participation process might look like. Finally, the thesis will summarize key takeaways for city policymakers to build on going forward.

## Literature Review

Although sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term in 1964, and several scholars discussed it in the 1970s and 80s, gentrification has recently attracted the attention of researchers, largely in response to widespread changes in urban neighborhoods since 2000. Most recently, a symposium hosted by the Philadelphia Federal Reserve in May of 2016 convened researchers and practitioners to discuss the current state of knowledge and understanding of gentrification, as well as useful tools and strategies for local policymakers. The literature specifically on gentrification that is most relevant to this thesis focuses on policy responses to mitigate the impact of gentrification at the local, state, and federal level. In addition, there is a body of literature that indirectly addresses gentrification by studying land use regulation and its impact on regional housing prices and affordability. There is relatively little synthesis in the literature drawing an explicit connection at the regional level between restricted new housing development and gentrification pressures, but a few key articles begin to draw this connection. There are also few articles that examine the process by which policies are decided upon, and the social frictions that inhibit that decision making.

A chief concern of much of the literature is gentrification's impact on the well-being of existing, low-income residents in changing neighborhoods, particularly their displacement. It is difficult to quantitatively assess the extent of displacement in specific neighborhoods, since households make decisions to move for a variety of reasons, not easily captured in surveys, and it is impossible to assess the counterfactual had gentrification never occurred. Overall, these studies find that displacement of low-

income households from gentrifying neighborhoods is limited in magnitude (Ellen & O'Regan, 2011; Freeman, 2005; Freeman & Braconi, 2004; Vigdor, 2002). However, such results depend crucially on definitions of gentrification and displacement, the appropriate comparison group, and the relevant timeframe during which to measure displacement. At the very least, there is consistent evidence of indirect, "exclusionary" displacement where low-income households are unable to move to a neighborhood due to high housing costs, even if the evidence of direct displacement is mixed and difficult to state conclusively (Zuk et al., 2015).

In addition to measuring displacement, numerous articles in the literature articulate the tools and policies available to various levels of policymakers to help address or mitigate the problems associated with gentrification. One of the major tools that has been implemented in Boston and in many surrounding suburbs is inclusionary zoning. Local governments have taken to this tool because it has a flexible framework (Schuetz, Meltzer, & Been, 2009) and can encourage the production of affordable units with minimal public subsidy. In a market with robust demand such as Boston, inclusionary zoning, combined with density bonuses, can encourage affordable units with limited pressure on overall prices and minimal public subsidy (Hughen & Read, 2014). However, inclusionary zoning policies are not as effective in suburban areas of Boston (Schuetz, Meltzer, & Been, 2011).

A handful of reports from 2006 and 2008 take a more holistic approach to gentrification and provide insight and guidelines for local CDCs, policymakers, and other stakeholders

to manage neighborhood change and provide equitable redevelopment (Levy, Comey, & Padilla, 2006; Mallach, 2008; Urban Land Institute, 2006). These three reports share overarching recommendations to embrace community partnerships in a stakeholder envisioning process, to understand the relevant neighborhood and market context, and to preserve existing affordable housing in a transitioning neighborhood. All three reports emphasize proactively working with communities to implement policies ahead of neighborhood change, rather than reacting to changes. They also propose a blend of policies designed to preserve and create new affordable housing for the long term, while also helping vulnerable low-income households in the short term. The appropriate policies shift over time as neighborhoods change, and policymakers need to continuously engage with community groups to recognize what goals new policies should address. The necessity of preserving currently affordable units was echoed by Derek Hyra at the Philadelphia Federal Reserve symposium: “In these economically transitioning neighborhoods, poor people are moving out, and once they do, their housing units typically command higher prices” (Hyra, 2016). From that same symposium, Jeffrey Lubell also stated many of these same points, arguing for proactive coordination between communities and multiple government agencies to adopt multiple policies and programs to build and preserve affordable housing (Lubell, 2016).

Finally, there is an abundance of recent literature examining land use regulation, housing costs and affordability. Common across this literature is discomfort with the term “housing affordability,” which conflates a myriad of disparate issues, including housing prices and quality, distribution of income, and access to credit, among others

(Quigley & Steven Raphael, 2004). Instead, many authors in the literature look at housing price relative to its cost of construction, theorizing that regions with prices consistently above some marginal cost of construction result from artificial limitations on supply through land use regulation (Furman, 2015; Glaeser & Gyourko, 2003, 2017, Glaeser, Gyourko, & Saks, 2005a, 2005b; Ihlanfeldt, 2007; McCabe & Ellen, 2016; Schuetz, 2009). Since the Boston region has among the most regulated land use in the country (Gyourko, Saiz, & Summers, 2008), this branch of literature has important implications for affordability across the Boston region. Some of the literature focuses on the Boston metro area specifically (Glaeser, Schuetz, & Ward, 2006; Glaeser & Ward, 2009; Zabel & Dalton, 2011). The Boston metropolitan area, comprising 187 separate, contiguous, and long-established communities and no regional land use jurisdiction, has both restrictive land use regulations and limited housing production, resulting in a substantial increase in regional home prices. In particular, the authors find that “each extra acre per lot is associated with about 40 percent fewer permits between 1980 and 2002” (Glaeser & Ward, 2009).

These same authors make a key point that is critical to the thrust of this thesis regarding the regional nature of housing markets and the negative externalities of supply constraint: “If the residents and businesses in greater Boston are seriously interested in making affordable housing a reality, they must lower the barriers against new construction” (Glaeser et al., 2006). Therefore, any attempt to understand the affordability crisis in Boston’s gentrifying neighborhoods needs to take into account the broader regional housing market and supply constraint. Indeed, this is precisely the

point Katherine O'Regan makes in her article from the Philadelphia Fed symposium on gentrification: given the interconnections between local neighborhoods and larger jurisdictions, "We need to think of each neighborhood as being part of an 'ecosystem' of neighborhoods and communities" (O'Regan, 2016). Similar points are made by Miriam Zuk and Karen Chapple in their article on housing filtering and regional housing production of both affordable and market rate units (Zuk & Chapple, 2016) as well as Darcy Rollins in her overview of Massachusetts's 40R and 40S programs, which were designed to stimulate housing production in Boston's exclusionary suburbs (Rollins, 2006).

The last grouping of literature embraces an *in toto* approach to understanding neighborhood gentrification pressure within the context of a regional housing market, with all the externalities of local policy decisions, as well as the pushback against policies at the local level. In addition, it infuses a political and historical lens to its analysis, moving beyond the strictly economic or public policy focus of the other literature. William Fischel recognizes the dual nature of housing as a major financial investment, and interprets local land use and housing policies through the viewpoint of the median homeowner. Likewise, his proposed solutions to increase affordability relies on the need to assuage this influential voting bloc's chief concern, such as through home equity insurance (Fischel, 2001, 2004). Similarly, David Schleicher points to the inherent imbalance of power among concentrated property-owning constituents with the most at stake in local land use decisions (Schleicher, 2013). In another article, he and Roderick Hills propose revamping the housing development decision-making process

by creating a “zoning budget” each year, drawing inspiration from similar issues of concentrated costs and diffuse benefits in international trade policy (Hills & Schleicher, 2011). Finally, John Mangin in a key article draws an explicit link between exclusionary practices within a region and exacerbated prices in gentrifying neighborhoods, arguing that metropolitan areas that “cannot or will not build, low-income neighborhoods are systematically hit the hardest.” He exhorts housing advocates and activists to divert energies away from confronting developers and towards wealthy homeowners within the region who are enriching their vested interest by limiting new supply, at a cost to renters and lower-income households (Mangin, 2014).

While these articles detailing the various political and economic barriers help illustrate the challenges to increasing supply in metropolitan areas like Boston, they do not dig down to the neighborhood level where development decisions are approved and social friction between opposing factions occur. As a result, although the analysis is crucial to understanding the dynamics of this particular problem, the proposed recommendations are simply broad encouragements for various actors to support more development.

Likewise, the policy literature suggests detailed strategies and tools to ensure affordability, but provide little insight on how to engage communities and implement these tools on the ground. This thesis builds on this literature by descending to the local level and observing a neighborhood negotiation over issues of density, development, gentrification and affordability, which is representative of many neighborhoods in cities experiencing similar pressures and tensions in their housing markets. With the help of literature on collaborative planning (Briggs, 2008; Innes & Booher, 2004; Quick &

Feldman, 2011) and consensus based approaches to negotiating (L. E. Susskind & Cruikshank, 2006; L. Susskind, McKearnan, & Thomas-Larmer, 1999), this thesis provides an analysis of the problematic components of the neighborhood planning process and provides suggestions for facilitating better dialogue between policymakers and residents that can ultimately achieve jointly-held goals to mitigate displacement in JP/Rox.



## Background on Gentrification in Boston and JP/Rox

As illustrated by the wide-ranging literature, gentrification is a broad subject matter with numerous facets to explore. This chapter explains the approach taken in this thesis, as well as background on relevant context and the events leading up to the interviews with stakeholders. It provides an introduction to the key stakeholders involved with the JP/Rox process, as well as details about the plan itself.

## Methodology

This thesis focuses on the phenomenon of gentrification in Boston, the policies that can mitigate the negative impacts of gentrification, and the process by which such policies are generated and proposed to residents for buy-in. In particular, it focuses on the implementation process, as without a well-structured process that can create buy-in and trust from residents of gentrifying neighborhoods, policies to address gentrification effectively will be delayed and potentially sub-optimal.

In order to understand this process better, I first conducted a review of the literature pertaining both to gentrification policies and real estate economics. While valuable, this body of work focused broadly on policies, and had little to say about the actual implementation of such policies in a gentrifying neighborhood. A brief literature review on collaborative planning helped supplement my understanding of local processes and the dynamics involved among residents and city policymakers.

In order to find the appropriate local neighborhood to direct the focus of this thesis, I identified neighborhoods in Boston that had experienced the most neighborhood change, as measured by increases in resident income, education and rent levels. Using the Neighborhood Change Database, which reweights Census tract areas to determine change over time for a single neighborhood, I found that South Boston and the Jamaica Plain/Roxbury neighborhoods experienced the greatest degree of change in these metrics from 2000 to 2015, as illustrated in Figure 3. Simultaneously, the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) chose these two neighborhoods to engage in neighborhood comprehensive planning studies: the Dot Ave and JP/Rox plans. Of the two, the JP/Rox planning process experienced more friction and disagreement, and was therefore a richer phenomenon to explore and analyze. I interviewed 15 key stakeholder individuals or groups who were either directly involved in the JP/Rox planning process, or were experts in an area pertaining to housing in Boston broadly. These stakeholders include both city officials, policymakers and planners, JP/Rox residents and non-profits, and organized neighborhood civic groups. This list is by no means representative of the diversity of opinion of JP/Rox stakeholders, but it captures the viewpoints of the most prominent voices in the planning process. In addition, I relied on several articles from the local neighborhood newspaper, the Jamaica Plain News, which covered the JP/Rox planning process in its entirety and provided a rich picture of the local dynamic and tensions within scheduled meetings. Together, the collective reflections and

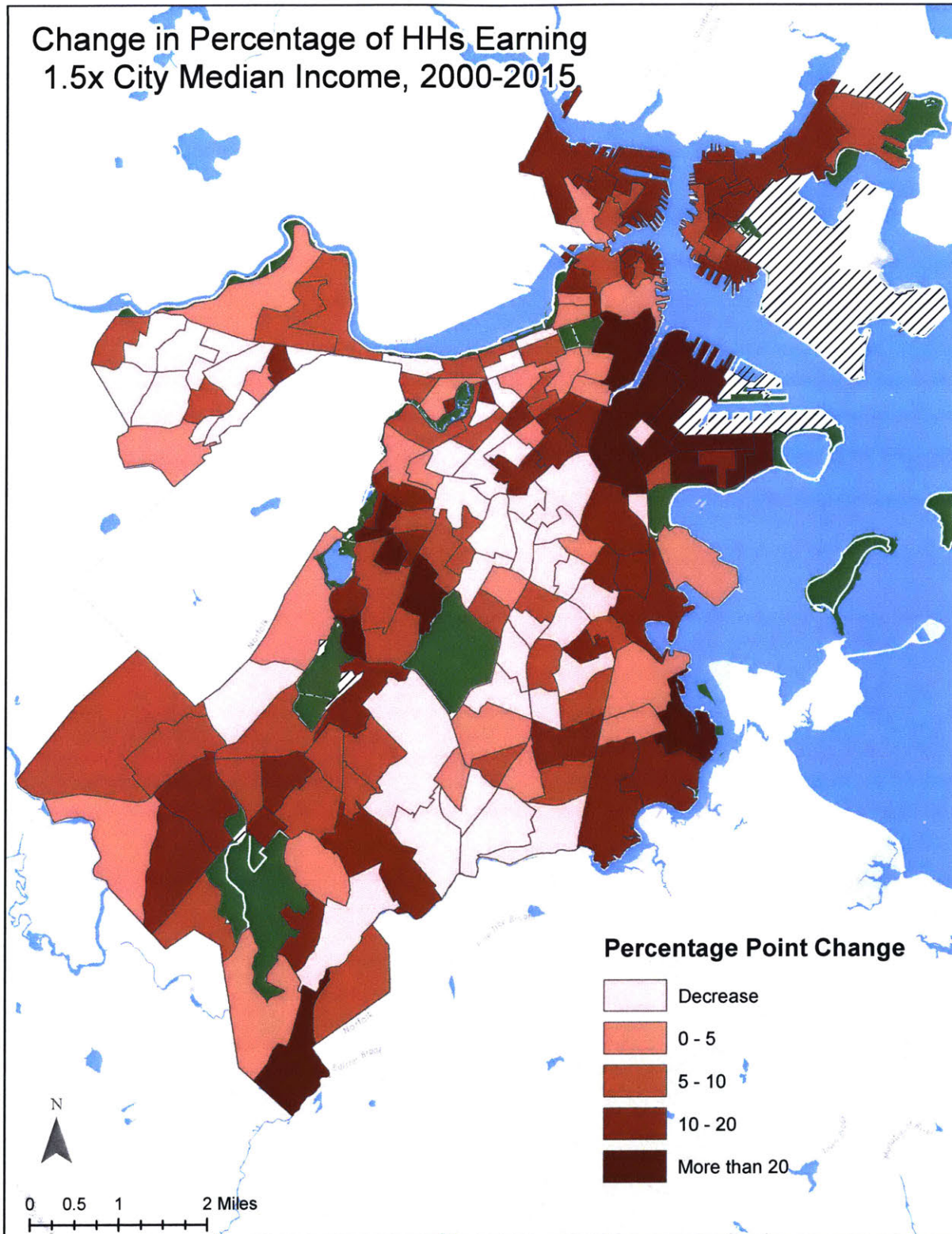
insights inform the analysis of the process and provide guidance for recommendations for similar processes in the future.

**Table 1: List of Key Interviewees**

Name	Position	Organization
Alex Ponte-Capellan	Community Organizer	City Life/Vida Urbana
Clark Ziegler	Executive Director	Mass Housing Partnership
Danielle Sommer, George Lee, Julio Nuñez, and Kelsey Galeano (Collectively)	Leadership committee	Keep It 100 for Real Affordable Housing and Racial Justice
Devin Quirk	Director of Operations	Department of Neighborhood Development
Donna Brown	Executive Director	South Boston Neighborhood Development Corporation
Homefries Matthews	JP Resident	City Life/Vida Urbana
Jesse Kanson-Benanav	Founder and chair	A Better Cambridge
Joe Kriesberg	President	MACDC
Marie Mercurio	Senior Planner II	Boston Planning and Development Agency
Mark McGonagle	Community Affairs Liaison	Boston Planning and Development Agency
Mary Knasas	Senior Planner III	Boston Planning and Development Agency
Richard Thal	Executive Director	JPNDC
Sheila Dillon	Chief of Housing and Director of Neighborhood Development	Department of Neighborhood Development
Sue Pranger	JP Resident Neighborhood Group member	Neighborhood Alliance
Tim Reardon	JP Resident, planner, group member	MAPC, JP/Rox YIMBYs

\* List of interviewees is not exhaustive

Figure 3: Growth in High-Income Households Relative to City Median, 2000-15

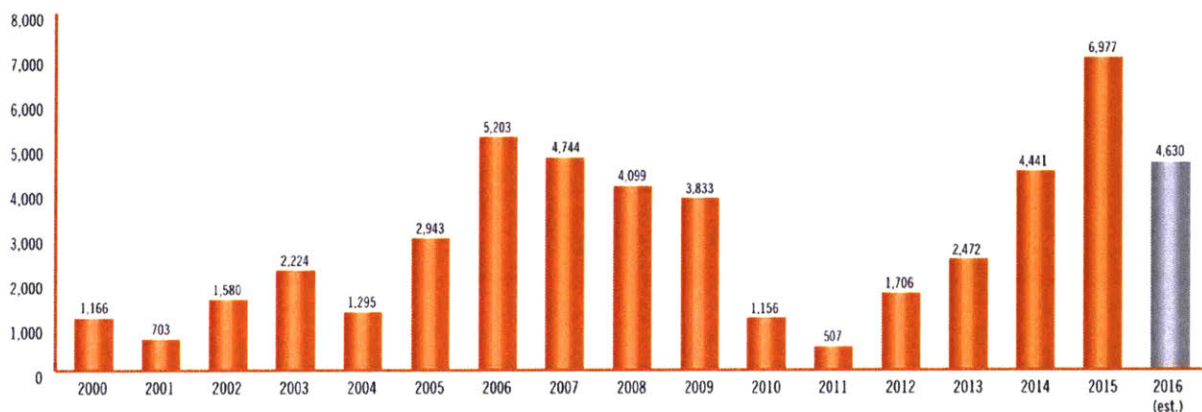


Source: Neighborhood Change Database; 2000 Census; 2011-15 5-yr ACS. Map created by author.

## Boston Housing Market

Since 2009, Massachusetts's economy has grown faster than the nation as a whole, primarily driven by the Boston region. This growth has drawn new workers to Boston, in addition to the ever-growing student population. As a result, between 2010 and 2015 the population of Suffolk County increased by nearly 8%, more than double the rate of the entire state (Bluestone, Tumber, Huessy, & Davis, 2016). Furthermore, this population increase is likely to accelerate in the near future as Baby Boomers retire, requiring an influx of new workers to replace them. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) estimates that under the current demographic rates, the region's population will grow by 6.6% between 2010 and 2040, approximately 300,000 new people (Reardon & Hari, 2014). This estimate represents a more conservative estimate. MAPC also predicts a "Stronger Region" growth scenario that predicts a 12.6% increase in population (ibid).

**Figure 4: New Completed Apartment Units, Boston Metro Area 2000-16**



**Source: (Bluestone et al., 2016)**

While strong economic growth is undeniably good news for the region, the excitement is tempered by the prospect of housing this new population, and what the subsequent

pressure will do to further exacerbate housing price increases and gentrification pressures in neighborhoods. Under MAPC's Stronger Region scenario, the region needs to add 327,500 new housing units, of which 60,200 would be multifamily rental units in the Inner Core (Reardon & Hari, 2014). The region as a whole needs to produce 5,890 apartment units per year to match this growth prediction, but the Boston Metro area has only exceeded this annual goal once, in 2015 when it produced nearly 7,000 new apartment units. As illustrated in Figure 4, from 2011-2015, the Boston region has averaged 3,220 new apartment units per year, well below MAPC's estimated need, foreshadowing increased rental pressure and slower economic growth than would otherwise be possible if this gap persists (Bluestone et al., 2016). This gap between supply and demand of rental units is illustrated in the vacancy rate, which is typically stabilized at 5.5% but has been well below this point since 2010, and is at its current low point in recent years of 3.4% (ibid). A lower vacancy rate leads to higher prices as the demand for fewer available units leads to competitive bidding between prospective tenants<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Notes from Professor Bill Wheaton's 11.433 Real Estate Economics course

Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030

In light of these imposing challenges in the region’s housing market, Boston’s Mayor Walsh proposed a plan in 2014 to produce 53,000 new units of housing within Boston by 2030. This number corresponds to MAPC’s projection of 49,100 new households in

**Table 2: Proposed New Units in Boston by 2030, by Demographic Group**

Production Source	New Units
City Assisted Low-Income: Non-Senior	6,500
City Assisted Low-Income: Senior	1,500
Middle-Income Inclusionary/Assisted	4,000
Middle-Income Unassisted: Non-Senior	11,000
Middle-Income Unassisted: Senior	2,500
Middle-Income Units Released via Dorm Production	5,000
Market-Rate Unassisted: Senior & Non-Senior	18,500
Market-Rate Units to Support Market-Stabilizing Vacancy Rate	4,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>53,000</b>

Source: (Martin J. Walsh, 2014)

the city, plus an additional few thousand units to raise the rental vacancy rate and stabilize market prices. The plan also focuses on the population as a whole, apportioning the proposed units for households by income and elderly status. In fact, a plurality of the proposed units are market-rate unassisted units, or units naturally produced by private developers.

For low-income, non-elderly households (households making less than \$50,000), the city’s goal is to provide 6,500 new units of housing, which would cover 67% of the anticipated now low-income households by 2030. These numbers are an explicit acknowledgement from the city that, in an era of declining federal housing resources for cities and finite city land and funding, city officials will need to develop new strategies to address housing needs for the city’s most vulnerable households. In addition, it will need to raise more local and state revenues, a topic to which the report devotes a whole chapter.

The 2030 Housing Plan is wide-ranging document, with numerous individual sub-goals and action items nested within its larger aims. Of these actions, two relate to the JP/Rox planning study directly. First, there is an action item to “allow significant density in areas affordable to the middle-class,” so as to provide for more efficient development. These include “areas where market rents and housing prices are affordable to the middle class; where there is vacant and underutilized land available; where there are mixed-use development opportunities in commercial districts; and where there is good access to public transit.” Second, there is an action item to “launch a residential zoning reform process” around select transit nodes, where the city would work “closely with community partners [to] establish a process to create more as-of-right support for housing production citywide.” Both items outlined the city’s ideas going into the JP/Rox planning process.

#### Plan JP/Rox: The Process

The JP/Rox planning process officially kicked-off July 28, 2015 with an open house for community members. Along with the Dot Ave plan in South Boston, these two initiatives were the first planning studies to implement the goals Mayor Walsh laid out in his housing plan. A series of visioning sessions throughout the fall and winter gathered community input on plan priorities and initiatives. It was not until the initial draft elements of the plan and initial formulations were presented to the public in March of 2016 that community advocates began to push back against the plan in earnest, a development captured by the local newspaper, the Jamaica Plain News.



The planned event on May 11th to reveal initial formulations of plan goals and development scenarios was interrupted by members of Keep It 100 for Egleston (now called Keep It 100 for Real Affordable Housing and Racial Justice; “Keep it 100” throughout thesis), a newly formed affordable housing advocacy group consisting of participants of City Life/Vida Urbana and Affordable Housing Egleston, which were also actively protesting prior meetings. A quotation from a protestor in a Jamaica Plain News article captures their sentiment about the JP/Rox plan and how it fits within the context of the Mayor’s housing plan, “Jamaica Plain and Roxbury are the first areas the BRA is targeting but they won’t be the last because [Mayor] Marty Walsh wants to do whatever it takes to build 53,000 units of housing mostly for wealthy white people who want to move back to Boston” (Heath, 2016a). Organizers speaking to the crowd expressed displeasure with the process and with the BRA, stating that they weren’t listening to the advocates.

**Table 3: JP/Rox Block Groups Socio-Economic Demographics**

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
White, non-Hispanic	28.5%
Black, non-Hispanic	24.1%
Hispanic or Latino	41.8%
Other	5.6%
<b>Family Type</b>	
Married-Couple Family	23.5%
Male Householder, No Wife Present	5.1%
Female Householder, No Husband Present	20.4%
Nonfamily Households	51.1%
<b>Education (Age 25+)</b>	
Less than High School	24.8%
High School Graduate (Includes Equivalency)	21.2%
Some College	16.5%
Bachelor’s Degree	20.5%
Grad Degree	17.0%
<b>Employment (Age 16+)</b>	
In Labor Force:	65.8%
Unemployed	4.5%
<b>Tenure</b>	
Owner Occupied	22.8%
Renter Occupied	77.2%
<b>Units in Structure</b>	
1 Unit	13.2%
2 to 4	46.5%
5 to 9	16.0%
10 to 19	3.5%
20 to 49	8.9%
50 or More	11.9%
<b>Gross Rent</b>	
Less than \$600	38.8%
\$600 to \$1,249	29.4%
\$1,250 to \$1,999	25.3%
\$2,000 or More	6.5%
Median Gross Rent	\$828
Median Household Income (\$2015)	\$35,366

Source: 2011-15 5-Year ACS; Social Explorer

Quoting a Roxbury civics teacher, Op Banjinweh, the Jamaica Plain News writes, “The BRA already had a plan before it started...They asked the wrong questions and so they got the wrong answers. They refuse to listen. Now we will make them listen” (Heath, 2016b). A similar sentiment was expressed by a Jamaica Plain resident in an interview for this thesis,

Figure 5: JP/Rox Process Timeline

- **July 28, 2015** – Open House kick-off session
- **Sept 2015 to Jan 2016** – Workshops to gather community input
- **March 2016** – Keep it 100 protestors disrupt process to protest draft recommendations on housing affordability
- **June 2016** – BPDA extends planning process in response to demands
- **Fall 2016** – Neighborhood Alliance and Keep it 100 meet with city officials to discuss plan details
- **January 2017** – Updated plan released to neighborhood
- **March 2, 2017** – BPDA Board passes JP/Rox plan despite protest

who was deeply critical of the process, “People feel like the BPDA came in with their agenda...I think their agenda around affordability was already determined.”

Chief among the protestors’ concerns is income levels of proposed affordable units. The plan originally called for 20% of all new units to be designated affordable at 50%-70% AMI. However, protestors objected to this calculation, saying it didn’t reflect prevailing incomes of the neighborhood. Instead, they demanded that 70% of all new units be designated affordable – 50% for households earning below \$35,000 (approximately 30% AMI for a family of four) and 20% for households earning above \$35,000 (ibid). They also disagreed with the tactic of relying on density bonuses and inclusionary zoning, which they saw as ceding too much authority to private developers (ibid). As a result, they called for a three-month delay to the JP/Rox process, which was ultimately granted, pushing the project past its original wrap-up date of the summer.

In the fall of 2016, Keep it 100 allied with the Neighborhood Alliance, a collective of local neighborhood groups largely concerned with height and density but with affordability as well (see Appendix A for map of constituent groups). Collectively, these two groups met with BPDA and DND to discuss plan details and push their demands for higher affordability, resulting in significant changes to the final JP/Rox plan. These meetings were technically open to any community members, but were not advertised and therefore effectively private meetings between the Neighborhood Alliance and Keep it 100 members and city officials.

By February of 2017, Keep it 100’s demands shifted to affordability at 40% AMI, increasing the percentage of affordable units in new developments to 55%, up from 36% proposed in the final plan, and setting a concrete goal of converting 250 market-rate units to affordable over the next 15-20 years, presumably through additional commitment of resources to its new program to convert market-rate units (see Appendix C for Keep it 100’s final set of demands).

**Table 4: JP/Rox Block Group Incomes**

Less than \$25,000	42.2%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	7.5%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	9.5%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	9.8%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	11.6%
\$100,000 to \$149,000	13.0%
\$150,000 or More	6.5%

Source: 2011-15 5-Year ACS; Social Explorer

In response to the affordable housing advocate protests, a small group of community residents organized in favor of mitigating displacement and gentrification, but by encouraging more development rather than limiting it through higher

affordability requirements or limited building heights. Since these residents actively encourage more development as a means to achieve their stated goal, they call

themselves “YIMBYs”, or “Yes In My Back Yard” (as opposed to Not In My Back Yard “NIMBYs” who oppose new development). In an Op-Ed for the Jamaica Plain News on January 11<sup>th</sup> (see Appendix B), a YIMBY group member and neighborhood resident Tim Reardon expressed concern that new amendments to the plan would make affordable housing infeasible and would lead to only the most expensive market rate housing and a smattering of privately financed affordable units. In particular, he laments a process that originally reached hundreds of members of the community, but gradually became dominated by the protests, which eventually led to private negotiations with the city behind closed doors: “What started out as an inclusive, transparent, modern process grew to resemble the shadowy dealings we hoped the city had abandoned, where narrow interests are advanced through political connections, exclusion of newcomers, and personal meetings with the mayor” (Reardon, 2017).

#### Plan JP/Rox: The Final Draft

In the end, the BPDA voted to approve the plan despite an overnight sit-in conducted by the protestors and lingering discontent among many involved parties. Given the controversy throughout the process on housing development and affordability, it is unsurprising that a prominently stated goal of the plan is “addressing housing affordability and preventing displacement of low- and moderate-income residents, particularly people of color.”

In order to advance this goal, the plan proposes five strategies:

- Strategy 1: Doubling the number of affordable and income-restricted units in the study area, adding around 1,300 total affordable units to an area that currently has a little over 1,000
- Strategy 2: Stabilizing rents by expanding the supply of market-rate housing by 2,405 units to better meet growing demand in the area
- Strategy 3: Providing immediate legal, financial, and any other type of assistance to individuals facing imminent displacement
- Strategy 4: Promoting homeownership among low and moderate income residents
- Strategy 5: Fostering ongoing community dialogue and collaboration

The strategy of providing immediate support to vulnerable residents in particular is an important approach employed by the plan to mitigating displacement. While strategies focused on the creation and preservation of affordable housing is important, the benefits of such strategies will only be realized in the medium to long-term. By providing immediate resources to at-risk households, the plan hopes to address existing pressures and to ensure “development without displacement.” As the plan states, “the City understands that the promise of future affordable housing and stable rents does little immediate good for JP/Rox residents currently in crisis.” The plan attempts to delineate population risk groups by parsing Census data on household tenure and income, as well as city data on location of deed-restricted affordable housing. By the plan’s reasoning, the households at the most elevated risk are households in market

rate rental housing earning less than \$75,000 per year, an estimated 381 households in the study area. In order to protect these most vulnerable households, the plan proposes several resources. Most prominent is the newly created Office of Housing Stability, which provides eviction assistance and coordinates services for individual households at risk of displacement. In addition, it is not mentioned in the plan, but the Mayor has proposed a package of anti-displacement legislation at the State House which includes the Jim Brooks Community Stabilization Act that specifies under which conditions tenants can be evicted, as well as an act to make legal representation a right in eviction proceedings.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the related goals of increasing supply of both market rate and affordable housing, the plan forecasts a potential build out of 2,487 new units: 1,010 income

**Table 5: Projected Study Area Buildout, by Household Income Group**

UNIT CLASSIFICATION AND INCOME CAP	RENT CAP FOR 2-BEDROOM UNIT	IDENTIFIED PIPELINE PROJECTS	POTENTIAL FUTURE PROJECTS	TOTAL NEW DEVELOPMENT
Very Low Income (<30% AMI)	\$608	48	109	157
Low/Moderate Income (<50% AMI) <sup>(4)</sup>	\$1,013	76	39	115
Moderate Income (<60% AMI) <sup>(5)</sup>	\$1,216	39	693	732
Moderate/Middle Income (<70% AMI)	\$1,419	186	169	355
Middle Income (<100% AMI)	\$2,027	19	0	19
Total Income-restricted Affordable Housing Units	-	368	1,010	1,378
Total Market-Rate Housing Units	Market Rate	928	1,477	2,405
Total Housing Units	-	1,296	2,487	3,783

Source: (JP/Rox Plan, 2017)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.boston.gov/news/mayor-walsh-unveils-anti-displacement-legislative-agenda>

restricted affordable at 30%, 50%, and 70% AMI, and 1,477 market rate units. This number is far below the original possible projected build out of well over 3,000 units, which was reduced after community feedback regarding building heights, massing and affordability levels. When combined with units currently in construction and permitting, the area is projected to add 1,378 affordable units and 2,405 market rate units, for a total of 3,783 new units.

To achieve this level of affordability, the plan relies on a low base zoning (building height limits and FAR limits were unchanged from the current base zoning), which necessitates a variance request from developers. As part of a density bonus to build higher, additional construction must be between 30-35% affordable, depending on the underlying FAR. These figures are higher than the 20% bonus density initially determined by a financial feasibility study, a result of what the plan calls “considerable feedback from the community.” A risk in this strategy is if developers deem the density bonus and affordability requirement insufficiently profitable, they can build 100% market rate units at as-of-right FAR allotment. Boston is currently restricted by Massachusetts Home Rule law from writing affordability requirements directly into its zoning code, but the city submitted a Home Rule petition to the state legislature in January of this year to allow this discretion. Such a requirement would not change the low-density market rate option for developers, but it would remove the necessity of acquiring a variance, making the process easier for developers and neighborhood residents alike.

Of additional note is the launch of the Acquisition Opportunity Program, which makes \$7.5 million from the Inclusionary Development Program fund available to local community development organizations to take market rate housing off the market and convert them to income-restricted affordable housing. While \$7.5 million dollars does not stretch far in a neighborhood where triple-deckers might sell for nearly a million dollars, it is a promising program to target particularly vulnerable households or properties that can be secured as affordable at a cheaper per unit cost than new construction. The problem is that state and federal funding sources are not tailored to this type of policy intervention and the city is unable to leverage these local funds in the same way that it can for new construction of affordable housing.

Furthermore, the city is implementing a Diversity Preservation preference program, which will allocate up to 50% of new affordable units in the plan area for income-qualified, at-risk households within a defined radius of the project. In order to comply with Fair Housing rules, the project must demonstrate that such an action will not perpetuate existing racial segregation. If so, the City must expand the radius so as to diversify the applicant pool, until a segregating impact is unlikely. Such an action will help ensure that newly created affordable units will preserve current households in the neighborhood.

In total, the plan aims to leverage numerous new and existing programs and funding sources to provide a greater percentage of income-restricted new affordable units than



nearly any other plan in the country<sup>3</sup>. Despite the trials and tribulations, and a worry that affordability and dimension requirements might make more projects than anticipated unfeasible, city officials were pleased with the final plan, even if the reception among neighborhoods was tepid.

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<sup>3</sup> As related in an interview with a DND housing official

## Analysis of Neighborhood-level Process

As detailed in the literature review chapter, there are numerous strategies that can mitigate gentrification and displacement in neighborhoods similar to the JP/Rox corridor. Broadly, these policies aim to preserve and build new affordable housing in the neighborhood, while protecting existing vulnerable residents. Lubell (2016) gives the most comprehensive overview of these goals and the individual policy initiatives to achieve them. As he writes, “The ideal solution would preserve opportunities for low- and moderate-income households to continue to afford to live in these neighborhoods, even as higher-income households move in, increasing income, race and ethnic diversity, and affirmatively furthering fair housing.” Furthermore, “A successful strategy will generally require the adoption of multiple policies or programs to address different aspects of the challenge and achieve a larger cumulative impact as well as advance planning to anticipate areas where rising rents and home prices are likely so the needed policies can be adopted early in the trajectory of neighborhood change.”

What is striking about these words is their apt description of the goals and ambitions of the JP/Rox plan. As described in the background chapter, the housing component of the JP/Rox plan presents five strategies that aim to create and preserve affordable housing through a variety of methods, as well as identifying and protecting at-risk households currently in the neighborhood. However, this comprehensive plan and the process to create it still received plenty of pushback and outright rejection from community groups, illustrating a key missing link between the policy literature and its implementation by securing the support of its intended recipients. Certainly, in communities as diversely

opinionated as Jamaica Plain and Roxbury, people will disagree on core proposed outcomes and some amount of contention is expected. However, interviews with stakeholders on various sides of the process reveal an absent component from the 18-month planning process: a higher-level conversation about why the city is interested in JP/Rox, how the goals within the plan fit within the larger context of city-wide housing policy and goals, and why residents should view the plan as a benefit rather than a burden, as well as an adequate forum to engage in such a conversation. As Tim Reardon, a Jamaica Plain resident, YIMBY member and planner at MAPC, stated in an interview, “I don’t think the city contextualized why do it here? And why should we bear the brunt of all this housing, and the city never really answered those questions satisfactorily. Because housing here can be more efficient and do more to prevent displacement than housing in other places.” The forum that policymakers provided for interaction with local residents made it difficult to initiate this necessary conversation and sustain two-way communication between residents and policymakers. Coupled with prevailing high levels of distrust, disagreement on who should be considered vulnerable, an imbalance of representation among voices in the process, and suspicion of an ulterior agenda from the city, it is unsurprising that such a conversation did not transpire.

### A Legacy of Distrust

A large number of residents of Jamaica Plain share a distrust of city policymakers’ plans for the neighborhood, and whether they have the interests of the community in place, as evidenced by the quotations in the local paper cited above. Partially, this distrust stems

from low-income and minority residents, who might be living in that particular community originally due to prior discriminatory policies of both policymakers and neighboring communities<sup>4</sup>. After decades of disinvestment, these residents are suspicious of the newfound attention bestowed to their neighborhood as it becomes ripe for new development for new residents. Part of the distrust also comes from missteps of city planners during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century urban renewals efforts. As one city housing official stated, “The BRA has a multi-generational legacy of bad planning decisions. The communities of Boston are still getting over bad planning decisions that happened in the 50s, 60s and 70s...that makes it harder for people to believe when people like me come in and say ‘our number one priority is to protect the people of this community’ that we actually mean that.” Many low-income neighborhoods with primarily residents of color faced displacement during this period for purposes of blight removal and large urban infrastructure projects. Residents today may view the current JP/Rox plan as a similar effort to primarily benefit people not from the neighborhood. The issue of urban renewal is particularly salient in the JP/Rox corridor where the community waged a similar battle with city policymakers and planners over the proposed highway where the Orange T Line now exists. Many of the activist residents in today’s fight also lived and fought through the highway battle, and many interviewees speculate that these residents view the centralized planners in the JP/Rox plan to be similarly misguided in their push for progress over the behest of the community.

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<sup>4</sup> For more info, see 1963 United States Commission on Civil Rights housing report for Boston: <https://www.law.umaryland.edu/marshall/usccr/documents/cr12h812.pdf>

Distrust between local community residents and city officials and planners is not limited to the urban renewal period. In particular, many residents are suspect of the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), formerly known as the Boston Redevelopment Authority, which residents view as a political arm of the Mayor and the subject of private negotiations over redevelopments among powerful constituents that are not necessarily in the best interests of the neighborhood. As one Jamaica Plain resident stated, “With the Menino administration, everything was based on a political exchange. It was all transactional.” A BPDA staff member expressed a similar take on the agency’s historical involvement in politics. Regarding zoning codes that do not match existing neighborhood development, “In my opinion, subsequent administrations either, one, weren’t dealing with overwhelming development pressures so it didn’t really matter what the zoning was...or mayors that were dealing with robust [development]...liked it that way because they got to control who built what and it was used really more as a political tool than as a zoning tool.” After decades of these closed-door deals with the Mayor, neighborhood residents are not convinced that a name change and new logo will necessarily change the modus operandi of the BRA.

For community members who fear displacement, or a cultural change that wipes out existing stores and institutions, a natural heuristic is to observe a brand-new luxury tower and to link its development with higher rents and the emergence of higher-end stores. In addition, it does not help that the language and metrics of housing policy are complex and difficult to grasp intuitively. Residents need to comprehend how percentages of new units are deemed affordable for what level of household income,

which itself is based on Area Median Income, another foreign term. Moreover, given that it is empirically difficult to measure the marginal impact of that luxury development on neighboring housing prices due to endogeneity, fear of the unknown impact heightens the resolve of neighborhood residents. This knowledge vacuum and distrust of city intentions understandably cements residents' opinion that new luxury development will only raise housing prices, along with bringing congestion, shadows and other ills of development. This tension was acknowledged by city housing policymakers, "On a micro scale, they're probably right - if we only built one luxury apartment in the neighborhood, then it is probably true that the houses next door the rents would go up. But if we build 53,000 new units [across the whole city], not all luxury, then rents will go down. We have empirical evidence of that happening in Boston. That's the fundamental disagreement."

### Defining the Vulnerable

One of the cornerstones of city policymakers' approach in the JP/Rox plan is the effort to quantify the most-at-risk households, rather than refer to a whole neighborhood as at-risk. The plan groups residents by risk of displacement, with the most-at-risk households defined as those in market rate rental housing earning less than \$75,000 per year, or a little under 80% of AMI for a family of four. According to the city's calculations, of the 2,579 households in the study area, 381 households met this definition of elevated risk. The strategy is a novel one in its targeted approach to gaining a more nuanced and specific understanding of neighborhood risk. As Chief Sheila Dillon of DND stated, the plan defines "who is at-risk, versus this [idea that] 'everybody is at-

risk'. No, not everybody is at-risk. These people are at-risk. And what is the plan for these [381] households?" Given limited resources, the city believes that it needs to target the households most in need. However, a prevailing problem with our current system of apportioning affordable units by lottery is the inability for policymakers to discriminate and prioritize by economic need or by location due to fair housing concerns, hampering their ability to make targeted policy interventions. The JP/Rox plan's attempt to at least identify the number of most at risk households, along with the Diversity Preservation program described above, are targeted steps to address the most vulnerable. As a housing official stated, "The premise that we were building on was if you live in income restricted housing you are safe from displacement because your rent is not changing from market pressure."

The methodology to arrive at this number is quite complicated though, making it difficult to interpret even for a student researcher intimately familiar with ACS tables, and such a calculation entails a large margin of error. In order to arrive at this number, BPDA used the 2011-2015 5-year ACS block group data table "B25074. Household Income by Gross Rent as A Percentage of Household Income in the Past 12 Months," which captures income levels for renter households. Then, since the block group areas are larger than the size of the study plan area, it uses the actual count of households in the study area from the 2010 short form Census to determine that 60.16% of households in the block groups fall within the corridor, and adjusts the number of renters earning below \$75,000 accordingly. Finally, using DND data on affordable housing sites, BPDA subtracts the number of income-restricted affordable units within the study area from the

low-income renter number to arrive at the final number of 381 households<sup>5</sup>. Certainly, this is not a methodology and resultant number that an average neighborhood resident can intuitively grasp or verify and therefore that member would need to simply take BPDA's word that this number represents the most-at-risk households in their neighborhood. As one housing expert who worked on the plan stated, "What I just outlined [identifying and targeting most at-risk households] never really resonated with the advocates in the community. It was almost like they didn't really acknowledge those facts. They wanted to base the advocacy around the fact that 2,000 low income households live in that neighborhood, which is true, but most of them are safe from displacement [by living in income-restricted affordable housing that is not nearing expiration]. It just became this war of competing information...At the end of the day we lost that battle. Most people in the neighborhood were supportive of the advocacy of their neighbors."

However, this disconnect may be more than a disagreement about facts and methodology but may represent differences in the conceptual framing of policy goals. As Alex Ponte-Capellan, a neighborhood organizer for both Keep it 100 and City Life/Vida Urbana, stated, "I think for [Keep it 100] what was more important [in the JP/Rox plan] was the percentage [of affordable housing] over the total [number of affordable units]. Because keeping the percentage maintains the community balance. If we were to increase the number of affordable of units but also increase the number of market rate units by much more, the whole dynamic of the community would change."

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<sup>5</sup> Based on correspondence with BPDA data analyst



Elaborating on this point, Keep it 100 leaders responded to questions exchanged over email by stating, “In our logic, protecting the diversity of the neighborhood slows gentrification, decreasing pressure on the rents of existing residents. Protecting existing residents and protecting diversity are interconnected goals, not competing goals.” In their view, there is no trade-off between protecting current low-income residents today and ensuring that JP/Rox remains economically and racially diverse in the future: pushing for higher affordability percentages both maintains current diversity while minimizing the development of new market rate units that are the driver of gentrification and higher rents for all units in the neighborhood.

#### Competing Voices to Influence Outcomes

Another noteworthy component of the JP/Rox process is Keep it 100's activation of residents who are typically less likely to be involved in a neighborhood planning process. Numerous interviewees from various factions of the JP/Rox process expressed enthusiasm for the fact that younger and lower-income residents of color were organized and involved in the process, even if they disagreed with the policy interests and method of engagement of these organized residents. The inherent structure of these participatory processes, with open community meetings at designated times and engagement stretching over months and years inherently biases the viewpoints of a sector of the community who have the time, resources and heightened interest in the outcomes of the process. Marie Mercurio, the BPDA lead planner for JP/Rox, acknowledged that her organization could make some process adjustments to diversify

this representation such as providing child care or better language translation. But the larger impediment to full representation and participation from the wider community in a participatory process stems from underlying mistrust, and requires deeper considerations of the structure of the participation process, as well as the city's engagement with residents as part of this process. As Tim Reardon observed, "There was a level of rejection of the process itself even before the process had had a chance to get started. And a lack of acknowledgement that the city was actually listening. And there is 50 years on which those suspicions are based."

Ironically, the efficacy of the organized protestors resulted in a process where their interests and priorities received an undue amount of attention from city policymakers and planners. During the three-month delay in the fall of 2016, Keep it 100 organizers met with city officials in the closed-door meeting that Reardon decried in his op-ed to negotiate housing affordability numbers and policy details. The resultant changes in the plan announced in the beginning of 2017 were a surprise to the Advisory Group members, who were largely absent from the negotiations, as well as process participants at large. As a BPDA member put it, "This is a study area of 6,000 people and we gave hours of our time to 12 people."

Furthermore, the affordable housing advocates' efforts to disrupt scheduled community meetings throughout the process with "die-ins" and protesting also discouraged participation and input from both casual participants and residents with differing viewpoints at these open meetings. As YIMBY member Tim Reardon elaborated in an

interview, “Political dissent is an important part of our democracy. But at the same time, how do you make sure there is a venue where people who want to engage in a process have an opportunity to do so and are not discouraged from it? A lot of [YIMBY members] came to one or two JP/Rox meeting and got yelled at.” The rub then is how the city can encourage a public participation process where historically marginalized voices are included and no single vociferous interest group receives disproportionate attention from policymakers or discourages competing community viewpoints.

### City as an Agent

The final and most crucial component to an analysis of JP/Rox is understanding the city’s role in crafting the policy outcomes of the plan, given its responsibility to all of Boston’s residents. As seen in the Jamaica Plain News quotations and reinforced by interviews with neighborhood residents who opposed the plan, many residents opposed the process because they believed the BPDA and the city had an agenda going into the process and that resident engagement was a perfunctory act of token community participation. City policymakers who worked on the plan stated that they “had no specific goal and the purpose of the planning process was to determine what kind of growth the area could support,” and given the changes to the plan over time that reflected the interests of the most influential participants, it is clear the city sought to craft a plan that reflected community input, at least from its most vocal members.

However, it is also true that the city had preconceived ideas of what outcomes would be best for the JP/Rox corridor, as well as the city at large. Indeed, they produced a whole

housing plan outlining these ideas and the residential rezoning processes around transit nodes that would help achieve these outcomes, where JP/Rox is one of the first of these processes. This friction between the city presenting itself as a neutral facilitator in a process to generate community ideas and vision, versus as an actor in the process with its own knowledge and opinions fuels the distrust and animosity illustrated in the quotations above. Furthermore, structuring meetings with city officials presenting data and information to uninformed community members exacerbated this distrust and solidified a dichotomy between the city and the community that amplified the influence of protestors and advocates among the community writ large. A city housing official recognized this impact towards the end of the planning process, “It always seemed like the city was driving the agenda. If it felt more like the community was driving the agenda, and there was a broad cross section of community members that were driving that, then I think it might have been more effective and it might have able to neutralize angrier voices more effectively.”

#### Housing in Boston: A Collective Action Problem

The source of this tension is the crux of the housing affordability and gentrification problem in the city and region at large: a collective action problem. The city and region operate within a single housing market and new supply in any one area should help to mitigate rising prices everywhere, to varying degrees. However, while there are diffuse benefits to building lots of new housing in any one neighborhood, there are concentrated costs to that community: traffic, shadows, cultural and aesthetic change in the neighborhood, and impacts on housing prices. Therefore, as Michael Hankinson

shows in his research, while any one neighborhood resident might agree that the city as a whole needs to increase its supply of housing, they would prefer it not occur in their neighborhood (Hankinson, 2017). As Keep it 100 stated in an email response, “Adding supply across an entire city or region may slow rent increases on a citywide or regional level, but by targeting low- and moderate- income neighborhoods of color for development, the city is solving a wider housing crisis by concentrating the burdens of gentrification in the same communities that were redlined and disinvested from for decades.”

Hills and Schleicher (2011) propose one method of tempering this collective action problem: enacting a ‘zoning budget’, or setting a mandatory target for new housing development within the jurisdiction such that any downzoning in one neighborhood would require upzoning in another. The Mayor’s housing plan to construct 53,000 new housing units more or less embodies this concept, albeit without a binding or distributional element. In the absence of such a component, the city needs to make a convincing case for why the construction of new housing is a necessary and beneficial policy goal, both for individual neighborhoods and the city as a whole.

**Figure 6: Neighborhood Development Prisoner's Dilemma**

		Other Boston Neighborhoods	
		Build	Don't Build
JP/Rox	Build	+                      +	- -                      + +
	Don't Build	+ +                      - -	-                      -

This collective action problem also fits the classic Prisoner's Dilemma game theory model, as illustrated in Figure 6. From the point of view of JP/Rox residents, if other Boston neighborhoods decide to build housing, then JP/Rox is best off with decreased housing prices and none of the local negative externalities. If other Boston neighborhoods collectively decide to not build new housing, then it is also in JP/Rox's interest to avoid building new housing and bearing the brunt of city-wide demand for new housing. Therefore, JP/Rox has a dominant strategy to not build, and since other neighborhoods face the same incentive structure, the Nash equilibrium will result in limited new housing production across the city. As with all Prisoner Dilemmas, all parties would be better off if they cooperated and both decided to build, resulting in diffuse costs across the city and widespread decreases in housing costs. However, such an action would require trust that other neighborhoods would follow suit, a role that city would need to play to ensure cooperation.

## The Problems with the Process

As Tim Reardon explained in the beginning of this chapter, this case for why new housing is both necessary and beneficial within a city-wide context, as well as how other neighborhoods would also contribute to a city-wide housing goal, was not made in JP/Rox. Absent any meaningful engagement with local residents about this overarching policy goal in future comprehensive planning processes, it is likely that the same contentious and drawn out process will repeat itself in other neighborhoods. This absence of dialogue is largely attributable to the participation process itself, which emphasizes open public hearings supplemented with review and public comment procedures. As Innes and Booher (2004) write, these current practices of public participation “often pit citizens against each other, as they feel compelled to speak of the issues in polarizing terms to get their points across,” eliciting anger and mistrust from the public, as well as making it difficult for the planners to parse through and arrive at any sort of meaningful final choice. They go on to summarize the key problems with such a process, which reads as a summary of much of the JP/Rox planning process, “Anyone can participate, but in reality, the powerful and the organized drown out other voices and succeed in private deal-making processes. Planners and public officials may believe in democracy, but be sceptical [sic] about participation...The more open the process the more polarized an issue can become. Participation is the right thing to do, but it causes delays, and if citizens are listened to, it may result in bad decisions.” (Innes & Booher, 2004).

Based on analysis of stakeholder interviews, there is a difference between city officials and Keep it 100 in both their underlying goals and the policy means to achieve them. For city officials, the key goals were to identify and protect the households most vulnerable to displacement and to increase the amount of market rate housing for a new city-wide influx of residents. These two goals were interrelated for them, as the key policy strategy for protecting the most vulnerable relies on maximizing the number of affordable units generated by inclusionary zoning through development of market rate housing, as well as the construction of market rate housing itself, which alleviates rental pressure. As one city housing policymaker stated, “one of the reasons the Washington Street corridor was prioritized right out of the gate is because there was so much displacement pressure there.”

For Keep it 100, the key goals were protecting current low-income households from displacement, as well as maintaining existing economic and racial diversity in the planning area. Similarly, the policy means to achieve both goals are interrelated, as protecting existing low-income households requires maintaining current neighborhood diversity, limiting the amount of new market rate production that would have a localized inflationary impact on housing prices.



**Figure 7: Goals of JP/Rox Actors**

**Neighborhood Alliance:**

- Ensure design and height restrictions so that new development conforms to neighborhood character
- Provide more affordability for the neighborhood

**Keep It 100 for Real Affordable Housing and Racial Justice:**

- Protect current low-income JP/Rox households from displacement
- Ensure development that reflects current neighborhood economic composition

**YIMBYs:**

- Build as much as possible to maximize affordable units and take pressure off market rate units

**City:**

- Maximize affordable units without diminishing financial feasibility
- Provide middle income housing for new city residents in TOD areas that are efficient to build

This fundamental disagreement over the goal and role of market rate housing in JP/Rox as it pertains to protecting low-income residents is the contentious kernel of the debate. Both sides could have benefitted from a forum that allowed for more substantive and reciprocal dialogue that explored prevailing knowledge on policies and resulted in a compromise that allowed the city to achieve its goal to produce more market rate housing to meet its housing plan goals, while adequately ensuring robust protection of low-income households for Keep it 100. Unfortunately, by the time the two sides were negotiating on affordability percentages for the final version of the plan in the fall of 2016, they were each too entrenched in their positions to foster any creative or productive dialogue.

Limitations in the planning process itself amplified existing distrust among JP/Rox residents, based both on historical missteps from city planners, and suspicions of a

concealed housing agenda for JP/Rox specifically. The nature of this process privileged certain organized groups over others, resulting in disillusion from many participants and outsized influence for particular voices. Any process that seeks to successfully overcome the collective action problem would need a more robust process that allows for more thorough dialogue around broader questions such as who is most vulnerable, whom should the future JP/Rox be for, and how does this plan fit within a greater housing plan for the city and region?

## Recommendations for Neighborhood-level process

The analysis of the preceding chapter raises a number of dualisms that lie at the heart of planning: centralization of decision-making power vs. local control; the local lens vs. the regional lens; an epistemological orientation of technocratic, rational knowledge vs. lived, experiential knowledge; citizens vs. government; and individual vs. collective interest. In addition, the decision of any one community to develop housing generates externalities locally from increased traffic, altered physical environments and housing price fluctuations. But the decision to not develop new housing generates externalities for the entire city and region through higher housing prices. In Economics, externality problems are ameliorated by granting power to a higher-level decision making authority, but this action runs counter to our contemporary practice of planning which grants local control to grassroots planning efforts. Combined with the deeply embedded distrust between residents and the city, these dualistic tensions inherent to the neighborhood planning process are what generated the conflicts described above.

Given the tribulations of the process and the analysis of the challenges inherent in undertaking it, what are city policymakers to do, given that they need to act? The city was successful in passing a plan that BPDA planner Marie Mercurio described as “a kind-of balance – no one loves it and no one hates it either.” While there is no legal requirement for minimal public participation in Boston, the BPDA should have greater goals than simply passing a plan. Ideally, a plan should improve the outcomes of each stakeholder relative to a status quo of case-by-case battles over individual parcel redevelopment, providing a unifying vision for development in JP/Rox into the future.

Perhaps the outcomes in the final version of the JP/Rox plan are the best possible outcomes achievable given the aforementioned challenges, but the analysis above suggests that this is not necessarily the case, and the lack of strong support from the community indicates that this final plan, and the process to achieve it, falls short of the ideal.

Some argue that not engaging in a neighborhood planning process could actually help cities maximize their new supply more effectively. New York City is currently undergoing a similar process of rezoning neighborhoods to increase density and generate more affordability, and is running into similar community pushback as JP/Rox. One planner in New York City's Department of City Planning compared this new neighborhood-based approach of Mayor De Blasio with the more case-by-case negotiating of Mayor Bloomberg, in which the city would trade off incentives to maximize affordability in individual projects. He argued that this less transparent, more transactional method ultimately created more affordable units faster for communities, rather than the existing process of neighborhood rezoning and planning, which is currently bogged down with local protests while market rate developments continue apace.

But as several stakeholders and officials explained in interviews, everyone in JP/Rox would like to move away from this transactional and less-transparent method of planning in favor of a broader vision with clearly delineated parameters for development, so that communities aren't engaging in the same fight week in and week out. However, in order for the city to produce a neighborhood plan that has broad

community buy-in and support, it will take a sustained effort of working with community members to educate them about the relevant details of housing policy, as well as build trust that the city is committed to the shared goal of gentrification mitigation and anti-displacement. City officials need to work with local neighborhood residents on policies that are beneficial to both their community and to the city as a whole. Furthermore, the city needs to provide appropriate foundation and support for residents to adequately engage in such a conversation.

### The Potential of Collaborative Planning

What might such a process of public participation and engagement look like? To start, it is helpful to review the key purposes of a planning process. Returning to Innes and Boorhes (2004), at the bare minimum a planning process might be required by law. Ideally though, it also incorporates local knowledge unavailable to centralized planners, producing a set of goals and outcomes that accurately reflect local preferences, particularly for more marginalized community voices, in a manner that grants legitimacy to the final set of public decisions. To achieve these overarching goals of the planning process itself, Innes and Boorhes argue that a process requires “a multi-dimensional model where communication, learning and action are joined together and where the polity, interests and citizenry co-evolve. The central contention is that effective participatory methods involve collaboration, dialogue and interaction.” As practiced now, the “open meeting” format, involving short presentations from experts and city officials to residents who are able and interested in attending, results in “one-way communication with no opportunity to clarify” or elaborate on key issues. The authors

summarize the difference between the status quo approach and the collaborative planning approaches as a new set of dualisms: “one-way talk vs. dialogue; elite or self-selected vs. diverse participants; reactive vs. involved at the outset; top-down education vs. mutually shared knowledge; one-shot activities vs. continuous engagement; and use for routine activities vs. for controversial choices” (Innes & Booher, 2004).

A collaborative planning model relies on robust civic capacity to formulate and organize a pluralistic set of stakeholders, including more marginalized voices from communities with less power and resources. As the authors note, “One of the biggest issues in participation is information, who controls it and whether it is trustworthy.” Therefore, it is important that these marginalized groups receive the necessary technical assistance when formulating their interests and policy goals, so that can make the most informed decisions and can have an equal voice with more organized and better resourced interest groups. Through authentic, well-informed dialogue where all groups “are equally empowered and informed and where they listen and are heard respectfully,” all groups “learn new ideas and they often come to recognize that others’ views are legitimate.” Furthermore, in conventional planning processes, “citizens and interests make demands, but are not accountable for where the money will come from.” A forum with authentic dialogue enable groups to more concretely “see what the trade-offs are and work through the choices,” ultimately creating a greater understanding of others’ perspectives and goals, building trust between participants and generating a final set of outcomes that is viewed with greater legitimacy (Innes & Booher, 2004).

## Utilizing a Consensus Based Approach Framework

One particularly useful form of collaborative planning is Larry Susskind's Consensus Building Approach. The key component of this approach is a new framework of procedural rules that breaks conventional frameworks of public discussion that fosters divisions and partisanship and settles for majoritarian power, as exemplified by Robert's Rules. A consensus approach identifies and convenes all relevant stakeholders to an issue, ensuring that they have an equal voice at the negotiation table and collectively craft an agreement that mutually benefits all parties' individual interests, as compared to their alternative outcome in lieu of negotiation. The group reaches an informed consensus when the parties involved have overwhelmingly agreed that they understand the proposed outcomes, and can live with them.

As described in (Susskind & Cruikshank, 2006), the philosophical underpinnings to this approach rely on a handful of key concepts:

- Identify key stakeholders to the issue and have them nominate a representative for the negotiation
- Clarify the negotiation's mission, decide on an agenda and ground rules to abide by
- Engage in joint fact finding before decisions are made so that all parties are operating from the same body of knowledge
- Generate agreements that all participants feel leaves them better off than they would be if no agreement had been reached
- Share a written version of a draft agreement with constituents of each negotiation participant's stakeholder group

- Consider what might go wrong during implementation of proposed outcomes

Susskind and Cruikshank manifest these concepts in five stages of the negotiation:

- **Convening:** Map the range of stakeholders and ensure that they understand the issue at hand and elect a representative to negotiate for their interests
- **Assigning roles and responsibilities:** Determine the ground rules, the scope of the effort, what technical advice is needed, overall budget, timeline, and keeping track of agreements and disagreements that emerge
- **Facilitation:** Focus on creating a package deal that has mutual gains for all parties, rather than zero-sum bargaining over individual numbers
- **Reaching agreement:** Ask participants if they can live with the proposal, as currently formulated. If they say no, ask them how it can be improved
- **Implementation:** Formulate a package that has both a strong commitment from participating parties to stick to promised actions, as well as a mechanism for anticipating and dealing with the unanticipated challenges

Perhaps this approach is too academic and impractical given the description of the JP/Rox planning process and the discord between the parties involved. The planner from New York City was skeptical, stating that consensus-based planning is “ideal but not pragmatic.” One Boston housing policymaker was similarly despondent about the neighborhood planning process in JP/Rox, “What we did was pick neighborhoods where displacement pressure was the strongest – let’s go there. Maybe what we should have



done instead was – where is the most community acceptance for adding housing? And let's add as much housing as possible there because we have a supply/demand imbalance. That way, even in those communities where they don't believe new supply will help, it will still help and they won't have to be involved in the process. I may not stand by that in the long term but in hindsight that seems like it might have been a more productive use of time.”

Certainly, a consensus based approach of neighborhood planning can be tricky to envision - one could imagine each resident in the planning area as an individual stakeholder, focused on a minute aspect of the plan that would affect the immediate vicinity of their home. What might consensus look like with such a variegated group and how could it be achieved? However, even if this approach is not adopted wholesale in the next neighborhood planning process, interviews with participants reveal numerous components of Susskind's consensus approach that would apply to JP/Rox and could improve the next series of discussions. In particular, a consensus approach offers insights for improving the organization and actualization of marginalized voices in the decision-making process, ensuring equal levels of knowledge for effective goal formation through joint fact finding, generating collective value through trade-offs, and more robust implementation with joint tracking of agreed upon goal metrics.

#### Applying a Consensus Based Approach to JP/Rox: Convening Stakeholders

From the background chapter, there are a number of groups presented in the background chapter that would be clear choices as key stakeholders in a first pass

formulation: the Neighborhood Alliance, the affordable housing advocates in Keep it 100, and the YIMBY residents who want denser development and formed toward the end of the planning process. These were groups that largely self-organized and presented city planners with their interests either formally through participation in the process or informally through protestation of the process. But city officials could also have taken a more proactive role identifying individual interest groups and encouraging their formation to better formulate and present their particular interests. In fact, Marie Mercurio of the BPDA recalled speaking with future YIMBY members in the first visioning session vocalizing a pro-growth viewpoint, but did not make any attempt to coordinate the members. An early effort on the part of city officials to identify and form the YIMBY group would have led to a more robust and balanced debate among community members, rather than between Keep it 100 and city officials. In addition, there might be other interest groups who never self-organized and therefore did not have their goals reflected as thoroughly in the final plan, such as local small business owners or people concerned about transportation improvements. In particular, a noticeably absent group from this process were developers who have an interest in building the proposed housing units and presumably maximizing the value of their investments. While their exclusion from the process may seem understandable for city officials concerned about conveying their dedication to mitigating displacement, the developers are an equally key stakeholder to an effective consensus based method, as discussed below.

Given the disruption and perceived antagonism generated by Keep it 100 members during the official planning process, city planners and policymakers may be wary about a process that encourages such groups to form and vehemently propose positions that are at odds with the city's own viewpoints. However, as discussed above, activating low-income, younger residents of color to participate in a process that they might otherwise not feel a part of the planning process was an important accomplishment, acknowledged by a wide range of interviewees. Moreover, city officials recognized that these organized protestors ultimately led to a better plan. As Marie Mercurio stated, "I do believe the organizers helped us create a better plan. I firmly believe that...they made us think creatively and pushed our leadership." The key would be to identify and organize a wide variety of groups with individual interests so that discussion is not dominated by one group against the city but rather among numerous community groups with well-formed ideas and goals.

This discussion produces an additional dualism that is worth discussing due to its contradictory nature: consensus-oriented organizing vs. confrontation-oriented organizing strategies to develop civic capacity. A reasonable question for city planners is how a consensus-based collaborative approach might work given the confrontational approach utilized by Keep it 100. Isn't it Pollyannaish to assume that all groups will naturally come together peacefully if only given the appropriate venue? This skepticism is expressed in interviews with city officials, who are wary of Keep it 100 tactics and underlying goals, "it's unclear whether or not the 100% Egleston group, and the

leadership of that - of which there are 3 people - whether they were more interested in political victory over the city, then they were in the policies of the plan.”

A useful examination of this dualism is presented in Saegert (2006), who argues that both consensus-based approaches and conflict-based approaches are context-dependent approaches to building community capacity, and are not inherently at odds with one another. “While the organizing strategies of consensus-oriented and confrontation/competition-oriented approaches differ, successful development of community civic capacity depends on using the right approach at the right time, in the right place, and with the right people.” (Saegert, 2006). In other words, a confrontational approach may be a necessary step in the participation process that would ultimately lead to a consensus-based approach.

These ideas are echoed in the emailed response from Keep it 100 leadership, who explained their motives for protesting: “the City avoided asking questions that would result in answers that conflicted with the parameters and options that they already had. They also did a poor job reaching out to people of color and people most affected by displacement and gentrification. In addition, the City did not provide complete analysis or information to allow for the community to have full discussion and make decisions about issues. They provided partial information and analysis after being pressured to.” Since resident members of Keep it 100 viewed the JP/Rox planning process as merely reflecting the city’s own agenda, they felt compelled to push back confrontationally as a means of forcing a better process. “It was flawed primarily because it prioritized the

City's own agenda – and the interests of developers and wealthy white residents who want to move to Boston – over both the interests of the community and especially the interests of people of color, renters, and low- and moderate-income people. As a result, Keep It 100 for Real Affordable Housing and Racial Justice protested – not just to get changes in the plan, but because the City's process was deeply flawed.” As a result of these confrontational tactics, Keep it 100 forced the private negotiations with the city in the fall of 2016 – a step towards a consensus based approach but far from complete.

In addition to the self-organized stakeholder groups and newly identified and formulated groups, the city itself would participate as a stakeholder with its own interests and goals, on an equal plane to other community stakeholders. As discussed above, the strategy to present itself as a neutral aggregator of community input and ideas, while simultaneously pushing back against too little density or too high affordability percentages, rubbed many residents the wrong way. As Susskind posits, each participant in a consensus based approach is better off presenting their primary interests openly and honestly, so as to craft an agreement that is stable and offers the most mutual gains for each party. Therefore, if the city had more candidly presented their interests for a particular number or percentage of new housing as it conformed to their larger housing agenda for the city, the group as a whole could have weighed this goal with competing neighborhood interests and crafted a better final outcome. In addition, this more straightforward approach by city officials would engender more trust among neighborhood groups and residents and provide a better opportunity to share knowledge and make a case for pursuing their particular interests.

With the city acting as an equal agent to other individual stakeholders, the negotiation needs a facilitator to oversee the consensus process, ensuring that all parties abide to the agreed upon rules and steering them to think creatively about maximizing value for individual interests. This facilitation stage of the consensus based approach may be led by a professional facilitator, but the most important consideration is that the person facilitating is trusted by all participants in the process. In the context of JP/Rox, this role might fall to one of the numerous CDCs in the neighborhood or perhaps a member of the Neighborhood Council – an individual rooted to the study area but who can also understand the broader concerns of the city.

#### Applying a Consensus Based Approach to JP/Rox: Joint Fact Finding

One of the most striking findings from interviews with JP/Rox stakeholders is the extent to which Keep it 100, YIMBYs, and city policymakers share the same stated goal: preserving affordable housing in the study area and mitigating displacement of existing low-income residents. However, they disagree about which policy approaches best achieve this goal of limiting displacement, with advocates pushing for a higher mandatory percentage so as to minimize the amount of new market rate units while city officials and YIMBYs worry that too high of a percentage will discourage new development, leading to fewer affordable units and more displacement. In addition, the Neighborhood Alliance was concerned with building design and density and how the final plan would impact overall community character. This multi-dimensional array of goals and interests creates a complex web of trade-offs that would be important for all

stakeholders to fully comprehend and understand if they hope to achieve their stated goals effectively.

A facilitation process creates an opportunity to build this shared foundational knowledge base by engaging in joint fact finding with all parties, so that lack of knowledge does not lead to misguided goals and ultimately creates a more stable and successful agreement. Finding conclusive evidence on the localized impact of new development will likely be elusive due to the inherent endogeneity of new construction and rising housing prices, as well as context specific factors of time and place. However, taking the time to look through existing research and case studies on the issue, speaking with other cities experiencing similar issues as well as interviewing a wide range of experts will better inform the stakeholders and will serve as a trust building exercise. Rather than city experts simply informing neighborhood residents what the right policy is, the city and residents will explore the research together in pursuit of their shared goal.

As explained earlier, the current estimate to identify the 381 vulnerable households in the JP/Rox plan contains numerous assumptions of ACS data, resulting in a high margin of error. In addition, Keep it 100 argues that it doesn't take into account low-income households outside of the study area would nonetheless be impacted by new development, and it underemphasizes households at the lower end of the income spectrum by grouping all low-income households together: "The City groups all households making less than 50% AMI in the same category, when households making less than 30% AMI make up large amounts of the population in Jamaica

Plain/Roxbury/Egleston and across the city.” Jointly, all groups could work together to understand the knowledge and data available to them, and craft an appropriate number to represent at-risk and vulnerable households.

#### Applying a Consensus Based Approach to JP/Rox: Value through Trade-offs

Another important component in the consensus based facilitation is generating trade-offs to produce mutual gains among stakeholders. When stakeholder groups have different primary interests in a public conflict, it is possible for them to make trades that further their primary interests and results in a negotiated outcome that is better than fighting over each interest individually.

Interestingly, city officials working on the Dot Ave plan in South Boston, BPDA’s other neighborhood planning study, discovered the value of trades to promote individual interests independent of any formal consensus based process. In this case, South Boston residents wanted a rezoning that set a standard height and density for all new development, and most crucially, raised the parking ratio from 1.0/unit to 1.5. Long-time residents were concerned about the scarcity of parking spots near their homes and essentially wanted a barrier for new vehicles that might compete for these spots. In return, the city got support for their primary interest of higher buildings and greater residential density in the study area, running along Dorchester Avenue near the Red Line T stations.



At first glance, increasing a parking ratio in an area in need of more housing is a questionable move. Furthermore, the idea of fixing a parking problem with a housing tool rather than a better pricing mechanism, or the implication that existing residents have a privilege over newer residents to use public parking spaces, might also give one pause. However, while some future development of units in the existing residential area was diminished by a small factor as a result of the increased parking ratio, the city was able to achieve a much greater number of units in the Dot Ave planning area than they originally conceived. By engaging in trades that promoted their primary interests, both the city and South Boston residents crafted a creative package deal that supported each of their goals.

As BPDA Community Affairs Liaison Mark McGonagle explained the South Boston trade, “At the end of the day, it was a community driven process, and the community was very clear that they wanted a higher parking ratio, and the community was very supportive of our big picture plans in the growth zone as a trade-off...as much as [the Dot Ave plan and the South Boston rezoning] were two separate processes, they were married together...that’s how we got to [a building height of] 300 feet in the growth zone.” McGonagle also emphasized that this understanding took lengthy discussions between residents and the city, and also required building trust, which the city secured by rezoning first and following through on their promise.

Similarly, one DND official observed, “One thing that worked very well in South Boston is that at the same time that the Dot Ave planning was happening, the South Boston

proper rezoning process was happening and it was a very thoughtful trade. In return for support for this other planning process that was happening, where there was a lot of opportunity for dramatic density, we will agree to limit development in this existing neighborhood. I think that's a path forward that will work. And that's why JP was so much harder, because it was all infill." This last point is key to note – because JP/Rox does not have the same open brownfield redevelopment capacity as Dot Ave, finding a trade that will mutually benefit all stakeholders is less readily apparent, but that doesn't mean that such a result isn't possible through a well-run consensus process.

One additional detail that would be important in a consensus based negotiation that was absent in the JP/Rox process is the involvement of local developers. While their omission from the conversation may seem wise to avoid further conflict with advocates, as well as to undergird the city's commitment to residents at risk of displacement, it ultimately undermines the achievement of stated goals. Since private developers would ultimately produce the bulk of the new affordable units, it would be important to have their expert opinion on whether requirements are in fact feasible. In any case, it would be more transparent than the city relying on figures provided in private conversations with developers to negotiate with Keep it 100 leaders, which undermines trust; it would be better to hear it directly from the developers themselves.

Wouldn't developers lie about project feasibility, or use better negotiation techniques to lowball affordability requirements? First, it is better that developers have this discussion with all stakeholders rather than in private conversations with the city. Second, the

group as a whole can walk through financial pro formas and ask the same questions about underlying assumptions that advocates were questioning the city about. Finally, developers have very different interests from affordable housing advocates, namely maximizing their profits, which allows for a greater variety of trade-offs and value creation. For example, perhaps developers would allow greater affordability percentages if they could get assurance that a project will be streamlined, resulting in fewer soft costs and contingency costs. This is a trade-off that city officials would not be able to make on behalf of developers, and therefore could not create more value. Ultimately, the creation of new affordable units depends on developers' willingness to build, so any final plan will be more stable and reliable with their input and commitment.

#### Applying a Consensus Based Approach to JP/Rox: Implementation and Follow-through

The final important stage of a consensus based approach is implementation, where a negotiated agreement has both the strength to ensure that each party abides to its agreements, but also the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions and, if necessary, reconvene the negotiation group to determine anew how to best achieve individual interests. This is especially important in a public dispute such as JP/Rox, where there are many unknowns about future changes in the market, and it is therefore difficult to predict how that change will affect the achievement of key affordable housing goals for all parties. As part of the negotiated agreement in a consensus approach, all parties would agree on metrics and monitoring strategies to track achievement of key goals and to ensure that each party upholds their assigned responsibilities. Following the

negotiation, all parties will meet regularly to jointly check the status of these metrics and goals, and adjust as needed so that key interests are still achieved.

As the JP/Rox plan currently stands, there is no clear mechanism for adapting to unforeseen circumstances within the study area. Just as the city generated trust and buy-in for their goals in Dot Ave by rezoning South Boston first and securing residents' primary interests, officials in JP/Rox need to stick to their agreements in the final plan to build trust over time. If the city simply abandons these goals because they are unsustainable with changing conditions, it will erode any nascent trust from JP/Rox residents and will confirm their latent suspicions regarding the BPDA's commitment to community input. At the same time, the city should not be beholden to policies that no longer apply to a changed landscape and that undermine the key goals for all stakeholders, since that leads to worse outcomes for all parties. As of now, city officials expressed concern that the ambitious JP/Rox housing affordability requirements might not pan out as the plan details, but did not share a backup plan for addressing such concerns if they come to bear.

In an interview, a city housing official recognized the need to stick to the city's commitments in the plan and to continue tracking metrics, "This plan goes as far as possible to prevent displacement. Now we need to make sure we walk the talk and actually do all the things we said we were going to do and track how much displacement happens in the neighborhood." However, based on an interview with BPDA, now that the BPDA has officially passed the JP/Rox plan, it appears that this monitoring of

displacement metrics will not be in conjunction with local stakeholders. As one BPDA staff member who worked on the plan put it, “We’re committed to an annual check-in, probably winter of next year. We’d love it to be a memo, email notification... We’re not committing to what that looks like yet. Is that just another meeting for people to come out and yell at us? We’re a little shell shocked right now and we’re enjoying a little breathing room.” This sentiment is understandable from a staff stretched beyond capacity in weekly negotiations with advocates and community members over several months. It is also understandable within a mayoral election year to limit all interaction in an effort to subdue any additional neighborhood opprobrium. But this is precisely the wrong tact to take if the city hopes to build trust with residents and jointly identify policies that best achieve stated goals. If a policy is not achieving the stated goal, the city would want to work with residents to recognize this deficiency and adapt the plan to correct for it, rather than acting unilaterally under the assumption that the data justifies their actions.

This extended dialogue beyond the confines of the planning period is a feature that community residents might appreciate as well. One JP/Rox resident, who was largely critical of almost everything about the final plan, did praise Strategy 5 of the plan, which created a task force to engage in ongoing dialogue with the Office of Housing Stability on neighborhood vulnerability and displacement. Furthermore, numerous advocates and residents supported the idea for an Article 80 checklist to identify displacement risk, which is mentioned briefly in the single paragraph on this strategy in the JP/Rox plan. This community enthusiasm, combined with the monitoring needs described above,

indicate a need for expanding this particular strategy in future neighborhood planning processes. This venue for continued communication and dialogue would be a viable forum to utilize the early neighborhood displacement warning system as suggested by (Greene & Pettit, 2016), a tool that would allow policymakers and residents to track areas most at risk for displacement. Currently, DND is working on an early warning system for Boston that will highlight neighborhoods most at risk. A city-wide engaged and active task force group comprised of policymakers and residents can work jointly can more effectively form policies to address these localized challenges.

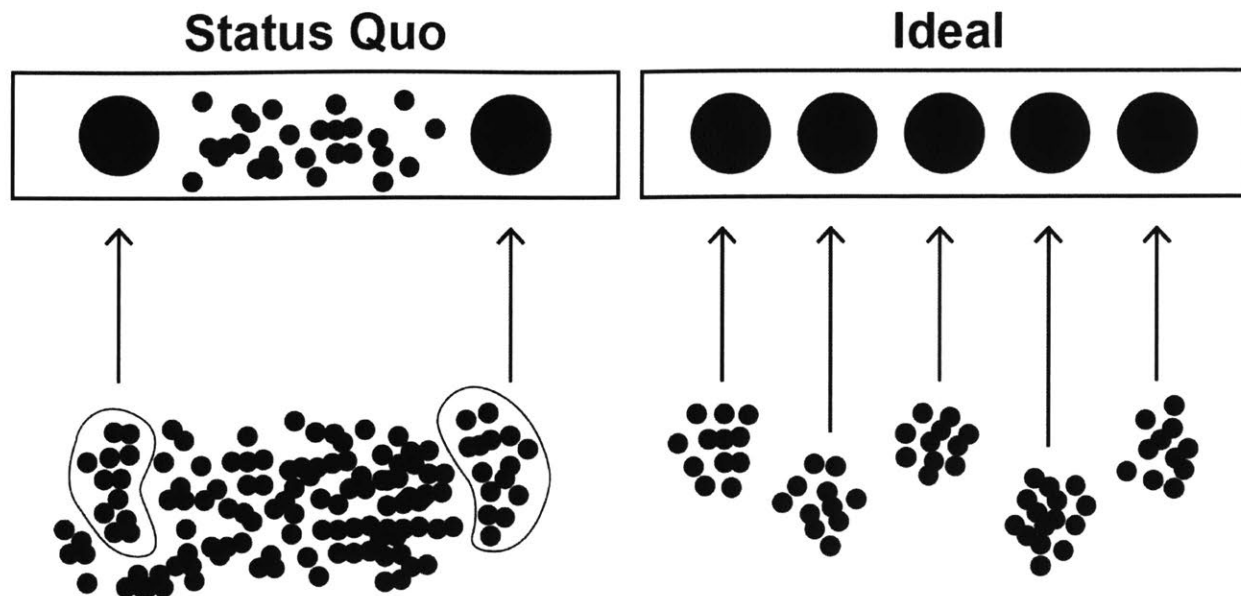
#### Towards A More Organized Society

Beyond simply monitoring plan metrics and communicating with the city, such a strategy would be a key component of the first recommendation in this chapter of identifying and organizing residents around key issues. The issues addressed in the JP/Rox plan existed prior to the planning period and will continue to exist now that the period is over, and therefore require an organized public to continually engage with them. Efforts from the city to organize and sustain a plurality of voices and interest groups will vary in difficulty, but will result in better planning processes when issues arise. Some groups, such as the JP/Rox YIMBYs were largely self-organized already and similar groups would require little effort on the part of the city to help formulate. Other groups in other neighborhoods, particularly more marginalized voices not as well organized as Keep it 100 participants, may require more effort and civic capacity building. This effort to generate and build greater civic capacity at the neighborhood and inter-neighborhood level can entail a great variety of investment and commitment from the city, depending

on existing capacity, city resources and the political will to take a more proactive role in the organization of civic affairs. The extent of this involvement and what it would look like on the ground are beyond the scope of this thesis, but (Briggs, 2008; Chaskin, 2001) provide a starting framework for understanding this goal.

Processes like JP/Rox are marathons, lasting months and requiring frequent meeting attendance, debates with differing viewpoints and digestion of the many documents generated. As with marathons, runners that are in-shape and constantly training do well in the marathon and make it to the end, while those that are out of shape begin but quickly drop out. City policymakers should seek out a plurality of community voices, help organize them into associational groups and support their efforts so that they can meaningfully contribute to the marathon that is community neighborhood planning. That way, planning processes like JP/Rox will more accurately reflect a robust debate between active community groups with competing interests, rather than simply the most organized community groups and the city, resulting in a stronger and more inclusive final plan.

Figure 8: Public Participation Process with an Organized Society



As illustrated in the figure above, under the current participatory system, some individuals within the larger society are better organized and/or informed, leading to an outsized role in the open participation process, and ultimately in the outcomes of the final plan. In an ideal process, all relevant stakeholder interest groups would be adequately organized and informed of relevant shared knowledge, so that they may contribute to the final plan outcomes as an equal.

Such an action would require a significant amount of trust on the city's part, as some of these organized groups will disagree with the city's interests or policy goals, resulting in conflict. But conflict can be good if it means a plurality of organized residents with well-formed goals passionately debating the right vision for the future of a neighborhood or a city. A dispassionate and complacent public concedes the formulation of policy outcomes that address our most intractable problems to only the most organized, well-resourced groups with the most to gain from such policies. If we have any hope of



making progress on our most pressing urban problems such as gentrification, city policymakers need to encourage organized local community groups to nominate problems and identify solutions together.

#### Addressing Housing at a Regional Level

The final section of recommendations expands the framework of analysis from the neighborhood to the city and regional level, since housing is a regional market and development anywhere in the region would have marginal impacts on neighborhoods like JP/Rox. As discussed in the literature section, this connection between exacerbated prices in gentrifying neighborhoods and constrained supply in exclusionary suburbs is a connection that is rarely made in the policy literature, but is nonetheless important.

Clark Ziegler, the Executive Director for Massachusetts Housing Partnership, echoed this observation in an interview, “If more housing were being built in general where there’s demand for it, not that gentrification wouldn’t happen, but it would be not nearly as extreme.” This observation is backed by research by Miriam Zuk and Karen Chapple, who find in their research in the Bay Area of California that “At the regional level, both market-rate and subsidized housing reduce displacement pressures, but subsidized housing has over double the impact of market-rate units” (Zuk & Chapple, 2016).

While influencing policy and land use decisions in town and cities outside of Boston is beyond the direct control of Boston planners and policymakers, the current neighborhood planning process framework should expand to include a conversation about overall city goals. As shown in the background and analysis chapters, there was a

clear tension in the JP/Rox process where the city had larger city-wide goals for housing development, for a wider range of household incomes, that was never explicitly proposed by the city. In addition, Keep it 100 advocates argued that a localized increase in development without a broader plan to increase supply across the whole city would place undue burden on JP/Rox without a significant decrease in rents in JP/Rox. Within a broader, city-wide conversation, the city could showcase its planned development across various areas of the city, to ensure that the proposed increase in development is widespread, not just in JP/Rox. At the same time, if all neighborhoods individually choose to minimize development, then all neighborhoods would be worse off. The goal therefore, is to ensure that development increases will be widespread, which, combined with robust local protections for vulnerable households, will best protect neighborhoods at risk for gentrification. Without this broader framework and buy-in from stakeholders across the city, the collective action problem will prevail, resulting in greater displacement across the entire city.

What such a conversation might look like in the context of a neighborhood planning process, or whether it could successfully convince local actors to consider city-wide goals, are valid questions. Under a more collaborative process focused on consensus-building, a city representative would ideally represent the broader city interests at the negotiating table, pushing for increased density to meet its housing plan goals in exchange for local benefits or protections. However, it is quite possible that such conversations would require inter-neighborhood negotiations, generating shared understanding and knowledge across localities, and allowing for trades on a city-wide

level between neighborhoods. This broader conversation could assemble under a directive to assess the Mayor's housing plan, examine the progress made so far, where the new units have been built, and discuss the distributional plan for future development that was omitted from the plan originally. Another path is encouraging greater coordination between groups like the YIMBYs or Keep it 100 in JP/Rox with like-minded groups in other neighborhoods, ultimately forming a broader coalition across the city. As a result, in a neighborhood level planning processes, local group members would inherently share a broader, city-wide interest due to the coalitional nature of their group.

There is little direct action that city policymakers can take to address development Beyond Boston's borders at the metropolitan level. In addition, various legal hurdles such as weak home rule (Barron, Frug, & Su, 2004) and a constrained fiscal environment due to Proposition 2 ½ and reduced state transfers (Horan, 2009) have created an environment that prioritizes fewer, more expensive homes in the suburbs. As a result, between 1980 and 2004, prices in the Boston metropolitan area grew between 179 and 210 percent, adjusted for inflation. Despite this increase in prices, only 84,105 new housing units were permitted in the 1990s, far fewer than the 172,459 permitted in the 1960s. Furthermore, the percentage of units that are single-family homes has risen from less than 50% to over 80% during this time period (Glaeser et al., 2006).

State level legislation such as 40R and 40S attempts to ameliorate this fiscal impact and encourage new development, but has limited success in the decade since it passed. Therefore, as Glaeser et al. argue, the state would need a local zoning override in

addition to fiscal incentives to spur an adequate amount of new housing production (Glaeser et al., 2006). Currently, there is a bill in the Massachusetts State House filed in January, 2017 that will require that “Within 3 years of the effective date of this section, zoning ordinances and by-laws shall provide a district or districts in which multi-family housing is a permitted use as of right” for all towns in the state (Honan & Forry, 2017). An earlier version of this bill passed the Senate but died in the House in 2016, and this bill attempts to pick up where the last one left off, but it faces intense opposition from politicians, who are responding to constituent anger.

Any significant change at the state level will require a commensurate amount of energy and organizing to counteract the opposition in low density suburbs and towns. Given the aligned interest of mitigating displacement in JP/Rox shared by affordable housing advocates, YIMBYs and city policymakers described in this thesis, a coalitional push featuring all three of these groups, plus additional stakeholders, is a possibility. Such a feat will be complicated, and these groups will need to learn to collaborate locally at the neighborhood level before channeling energy towards a collective vision beyond the boundaries of Boston. But it is necessary if we hope to balance the burden of new development across the broader region, rather than concentrated in neighborhoods, and make Boston a more affordable city for low and middle income households at risk of displacement.

The correct path for policymakers to pursue to mitigate gentrification in cities like Boston is by no means clear or easy. The inherent collective action problem, along with the

numerous tensions that arose in the JP/Rox process, showcase the main challenges policymakers face if they are committed to local planning processes. However, a reformatting of the current participatory process to a more collaborative process among organized interest groups shows a promising path to pursue. Following Susskind and Cruikshank's (1987) consensus based process recommendations, a new process would more proactively identify prospective interest groups within the neighborhood and help organize and educate them with technical assistance. Furthermore, assembled representatives from all groups would meet in a facilitated negotiation, engaging in joint fact finding to establish a shared knowledge base, and devise trade-offs and further the primary interests of groups. Finally, both city officials and local resident groups would commit to jointly monitoring progress on plan goals and agree to reconvene if necessary. This change in process would require a level of trust in local residents, and an investment in civic capacity, from city policymakers, but it is worth experimenting to enable a broader conversation about housing needs beyond the local level, ultimately building to regional level action.

## Conclusion

While JP/Rox is a unique neighborhood, the current struggle around questions of gentrification and affordability, and the best policies to address them, are emblematic of many neighborhoods in coastal cities in the United States. Like many of these cities, there is fundamentally an imbalance in the Boston metro area between supply and demand for housing that is complicated by a dynamic that grants local decision making power to an issue that has regional ramifications. In the modern era, urban planning has embraced the role of grassroots planning and local decision-making power, which admirably gives agency to local actors over how policies and plans will shape their lives. However, if policymakers are to make progress on the regional housing affordability while preserving their commitment to grassroots planning, then they will need to reform the public participation process so that it more effectively addresses the collective action problem that limits production on a local level, and subsequently, a regional level.

A close examination of the JP/Rox planning process and the stakeholders involved in it illustrate the social frictions that inhibit creative collaboration and trust building between city policymakers and local residents. A distrust of city policymakers' past actions and current agenda, combined with a process that allotted more attention to organized community voices, created an ill-suited forum for sparking a broader conversation about the city's housing needs broadly, and how they both impact, and are impacted by, the decisions within JP/Rox. Rather than the status quo approach to public participation, city officials would be wise to consider a collaborative approach to neighborhood planning, and in particular Susskind's consensus based approach to public dispute

negotiating. There are certainly limitations to the approach and it is not intended as a panacea to such a tough problem, but such an approach could ameliorate many of the problematic aspects identified in the JP/Rox process. A collaborative approach would ensure more robust organization and participation of marginalized community voices, generate knowledge jointly between residents and city planners, envision creative packages that maximize value for all participants, and a more robust implementation process that jointly monitors plan goals and intervenes as a group when necessary to reconsider the proposed policies. A successful dialogue will necessarily involve a framework beyond the local neighborhood to take into account the larger city-wide context and vision. Furthermore, a successful process at the neighborhood level can constitute a platform for seeking more ambitious changes at the state and regional level. As the city prepares to expand its neighborhood-level planning process to other localities in the city, it would be wise to consider experimenting with some of these ideas in its process.

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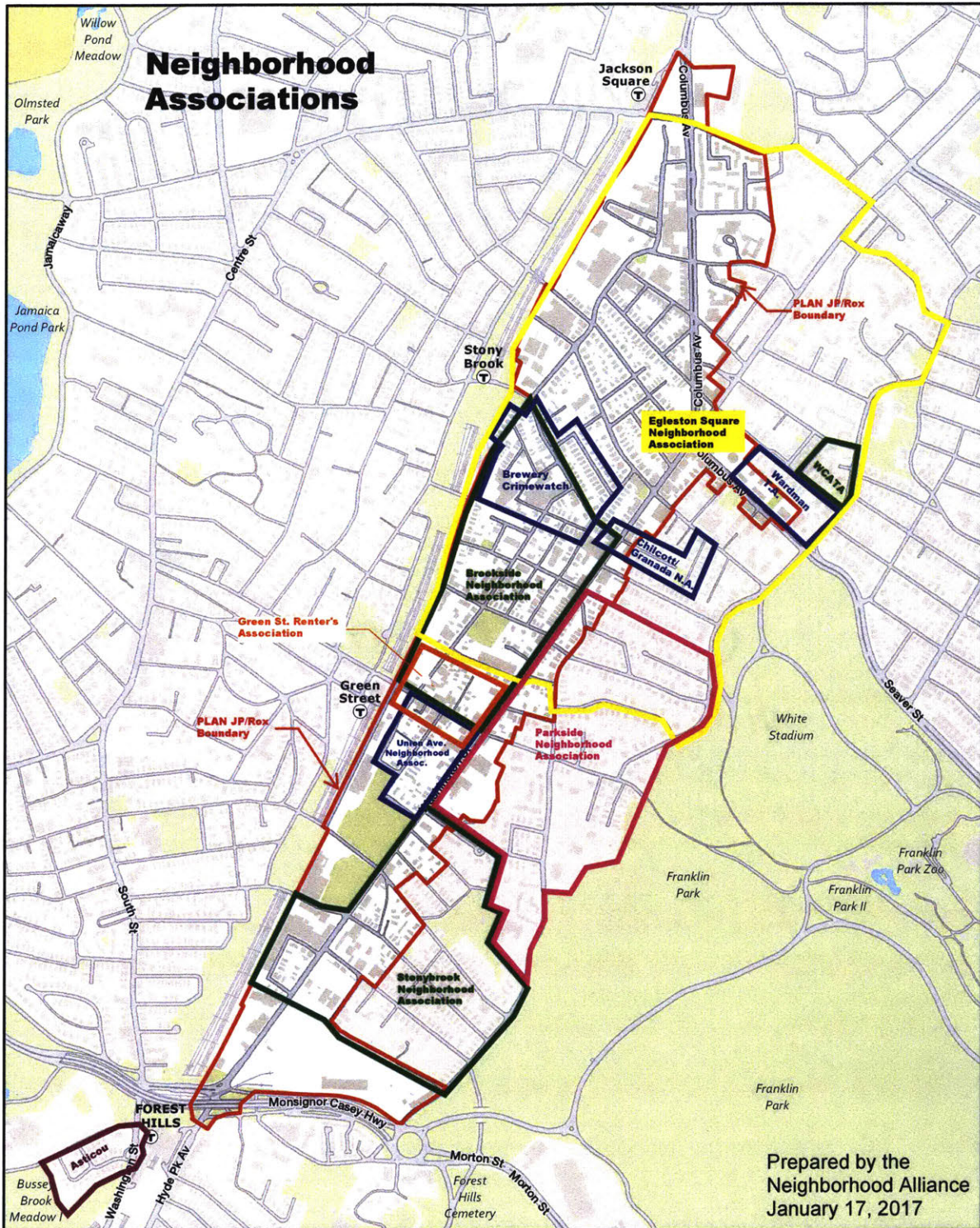
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## Appendices

1. JP/Rox Map of Neighborhood Associations in Neighborhood Alliance
2. Tim Reardon Op-Ed, Jamaica Plain News, January 11 2017
3. Keep it 100 Final Priority Asks – February 2017



## Opinion: Get PLAN JP/Rox Back on Track

By: **TIM REARDON** | January 11, 2017

*Editor's Note: Author Tim Reardon is on the Board of Directors of Egleston Square Main Street and a member of the PLAN JP/Rox Advisory Group.*

Since before Mayor Walsh's inauguration, community organizations in Jamaica Plain have been asking him to create a plan to guide development and expand housing opportunities along the corridor from Jackson Square to Forest Hills. Unfortunately, after an extended 18-month process, the city is on the verge of adopting a plan that may turn out to be worse than the status quo.

The draft of the plan released in October had its shortcomings, but it represented a reasonable, rational balance of our community's diverse views about housing and neighborhood change. Since then, city staff have been subject to intense, private lobbying by a small group of insiders and protesters intent on discouraging development. Sadly, these tactics seem to have worked. On Monday, Jan. 9, the city [released an amended plan \(http://bit.ly/planiprox\)](http://bit.ly/planiprox) that threatens to undermine the mayor's stated goals.

The amended plan actually reduces the amount of new housing that could be built, with some of the most significant reductions occurring adjacent to T stations and on parcels owned by public agencies and nonprofits. These changes will provide little benefit to the area's traffic challenges, which are mostly caused by through-traffic (not by residents). Plus, lower height limits and excessive suburban-style setback requirements will discourage creative designs and make it harder for new buildings to provide engaging, lively public spaces.

Other elements of the plan make it harder to build anything at all. The new plan increases the affordability requirements for the so-called "density bonus" units (those denser than current zoning) from 20 percent (in the October plan) to 30 percent. The 20 percent figure was based on robust financial modeling that struck a balance between strong targets and the fiscal realities facing developers. The new 30 percent goal is, by the city's own admission, based on wishful thinking about falling land prices and occupancy assumptions that will be rejected out of hand by any reasonable lender. As a result, new housing won't get built, or it will get scaled back so far that it will only be required to provide 13.5 percent of the units as affordable.

What's the likely result? Rather than having a plan that provides a clear and predictable framework to satisfy the growing demand for housing in the community (and providing a substantial number of affordable units in the process), we'll have a plan that discourages all but the most expensive market-rate housing and delivers only a few dozen privately financed affordable units. Its affordable housing goal, however lofty, won't be achieved without massive increases in public housing subsidies, a dim prospect in the Trump era. The cost of existing units will continue to skyrocket, and the neighborhood will become affordable only to those who can afford a million dollar home or qualify for an affordable unit. Instead of a plan for success, we have a recipe for failure.

How did we get here? After 18 months of work, how is it that the city is poised to adopt a plan that flies in the face of city policy, financial reality and hard evidence about how to solve our housing affordability crisis? The early stages of the process reached hundreds of residents through a variety of different formats, but participation waned when meetings were repeatedly disrupted by protests intended to discourage civil debate. Into this void stepped two groups with a shared anti-development agenda: the "Neighborhood Alliance" comprised of longtime homeowners principally concerned about height, shadows, and parking; and "Keep It 100 For Real Affordable Housing And Racial Justice," which views new market rate housing production as the cause of higher rents. These groups adopted the language of "preserving community character" and "maintaining diversity" yet the joint objective was clear: discourage new housing and the new residents it may bring.

With no accountability (and in the case of Keep it 100, not a single public meeting), these two groups nevertheless saw fit to represent "the community's" perspective in "negotiations" with city officials in a series of closed-door meetings that took place in city hall over the course of the last three months. What started out as an inclusive, transparent, modern process grew to resemble the shadowy dealings we hoped the city had abandoned, where narrow interests are advanced through political connections, exclusion of newcomers, and personal meetings with the mayor.

This is not what we were promised. PLAN JP/Rox was not supposed to stifle development and discourage economic growth while enriching some people fortunate enough to own property in the corridor. Fortunately, there is still time to get things back on track. On Wednesday, Jan. 18, the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) will hold another public meeting to solicit community

feedback on the draft. The BPDA needs to hear that enough is enough. Unless the plan drops the damaging and counterproductive changes that have been made since October, it shouldn't be approved.

If the fear and distrust that has been driving the recent plan changes doesn't represent your vision for the neighborhood, please attend the meeting Jan. 18. If you believe that we can build new housing while also preventing the displacement of low-income residents, please speak up. If you believe that new activity, new stores and new jobs on Washington Street would be a net benefit to the surrounding area, please voice your opinion. And if you feel that new residents will enrich—not diminish—the special character of our community, please say so. Let's adopt a progressive, forward-looking and realistic plan for the future of our community.

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With the goal of finding agreement with the City before March 2, the Alliance and Keep It 100 have prioritized three final issues around affordability and displacement that we are requesting new proposals from the City on. By prioritizing these issues and working with the City to structure conversations on additional issues in the future, we hope the City can create a plan with adequate affordability protections and displacement prevention measures. Additional notes are on the reverse side.

## LOWER INCOME LEVELS IN PRIVATE DEVELOPMENTS

**The City has suggested:**

19% affordability, with bonus units at 40% AMI

**We are proposing:**

25% affordability, with bonus units at 40% AMI

**We are asking the City for a proposal with bonus units at 40% AMI and an affordability level higher than 19% and closer to 25%.**

Rationale: Reducing income levels from 50% AMI to 40% AMI has a small financial impact on developments but double the number of units in the reach of households making less than \$35,000 a year. Only 5% of total new housing is at these income levels now.

According to the City's most recent models, most projects would still be financially feasible at 21.5% affordability with lower AMI's, and modest adjustments to the model show that 25% affordability is feasible as well.

## MORE NON-PROFIT UNITS & INCREASE AFFORDABILITY ABOVE 36%

**The City's plan includes:**

36% of total new housing is affordable, including 1020 non-profit units

**We are proposing:**

55% affordability, including 1683 non-profit units

**We are asking the City for a proposal with additional non-profit units and a higher affordability goal higher than 36% and closer to 55%.**

Rationale: 70% of the current population makes less than \$75,000 a year and will not be able to afford the new high-end units which go beyond today's market rate. Increasing the affordability goal would help the plan reflect neighborhood need, better protect diversity, and better stabilize the neighborhood. Most of the City's increase from 30% to 36% came from the City using the Alliance and Keep It 100's corrected analysis of parcels and factoring in units at Arborway Yard. Adding a modest amount of non-profit units would show a stronger commitment toward protecting the neighborhood.

## GOAL FOR CONVERTING MARKET-RATE INTO AFFORDABLE UNITS

**The City's plan:**

Does not include a concrete goal for converting market-rate units into affordable units.

**We are proposing:**

A goal of converting 250 market-rate units into affordable units.

**We are asking the City for a proposal with a concrete goal for converting market-rate units into affordable units, higher than 0 and closer to 250.**

Rationale: New affordable housing alone does not adequately protect tenants facing risk of displacement in their units now. The City has already begun a program to fund converting market-rate units into affordable units; we are simply asking for a more concrete goal for this neighborhood over the next 15-20 years. Setting a goal of converting about 15 units a year is very modest, and it boosts the City's 36% overall affordability goal even more than adding new construction. Also, many buildings that are candidates for converting into affordable units are in the "density bonus areas," giving developers an incentive to redevelop them instead of keeping them affordable.