

## Section 7.2.11:

**MISSION HILL**

For an explanation of the organization, content and maps in this section, please see the Introduction to Section 7.2: Community Open Space and Recreation (page 160).

## Background

Mission Hill originally developed as part of the town of Roxbury. During the 1700s, the Parker Hill area was divided into large estates. By the early 1800s, streets encircled lower Parker Hill, houses and farms had proliferated, with many still belonging to the area's early families. Development became dense in the Parker/Tremont Street area. Industry along Stony Brook included dye works and the largest concentration of breweries in Boston.

In the 19th century, the Mission Hill neighborhood gained much of the character and form it retains today during a period which brought rapid growth to Roxbury. Part of lower Parker Hill was laid out with subdivisions before the Civil War. The neighborhood became firmly defined after the war with the annexation of Roxbury by Boston in 1867 and the establishment of the Mission Church on Tremont Street, completed in 1878. The extension of streetcar and sewage service in the period from 1860 to 1880 increased development and population in this area. A new building boom occurred in the 1885 to 1895 period, primarily low-cost wood frame houses.

Today, Mission Hill's residential streetscapes are set among large institutions. After 1900, institutions began to move from cramped downtown locations to this area where low-priced vacant land and public transit accessibility matched their need for larger facilities. The New England Baptist Hospital has been located on top of Parker Hill since 1895 and its present-day Old Main building was constructed in 1924. The Robert B. Brigham Hospital was built in 1914.

The Wentworth Institute of Technology was built in 1916 on a site formerly occupied by cordage works. The Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England was built in 1923. The institutions in the Fenway/Longwood community have expanded into some portions of the Mission Hill neighborhood.

Mission Hill has seen several large-scale residential developments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Mission Main and Mission Extension BHA public housing projects; the Whitney Redevelopment Project, which includes the Charlesbank Apartments, Back Bay Manor, and Franklin Square Apartments; Mission Park, a publicly-subsidized mixed-income project near the Riverway and Huntington Avenue; and the Back of the Hill Development, sponsored by the Boston Bricklayers Union.

The commercial centers of Mission Hill are along Huntington Avenue and Tremont Street, with the heart at Brigham Circle where these two arterials meet. Recent work at the Brigham and Women's Hospital has created a new publicly accessible passive open space that helps define the hospital entrance as well as Brigham Circle.

## Open Space Access & Equity/ Future Development

Mission Hill is one of Boston's smallest neighborhoods by acreage, and is also one of its densest (Mission Hill Map 1). Nearly half (48%) of Mission Hill's population is between ages 20–34, many of whom are likely students from one of the neighboring colleges and universities. Population is increasing in Mission Hill, the neighborhood saw a 17% increase between 2000 and 2010. At 1.74 acres of protected open space per 1,000 residents, this community has the second lowest open space ratio in the city, far below the average of 7.59 acres per 1,000 residents.

Nearly all of Mission Hill meets at least one of the state's criteria for Environmental Justice populations. Park need scores are highest in the Boston Housing Authority properties and in the Mission Park development (Mission Hill Maps 2 and 3). Because these properties dominate the land area in this compact neighborhood, it is critical that some of the open space needs for these residents are met within the developments. Active facilities should complement small passive areas.

Public park facilities in this compact neighborhood are not abundant. McLaughlin Playground, Mission Hill Playground, and Gibbons Playground are the three developed public parks. Private open space exists in the large Kevin Fitzgerald Park off of St. Alfonsus Street, Parker Hilltop owned by New England Baptist Hospital (but protected by a conservation restriction), and small pocket parks throughout the public housing properties. Both Mission Hill Playground and Gibbons Playground are well co-located with community facilities along Tremont Street. McLaughlin Playground is at the top of the hill alongside Baptist Hospital and offers long scenic views as well as a diverse mix of activities to park users (Mission Hill Map 4).

There is a need for improved access from Mission Hill to the Emerald Necklace parks; despite their proximity, institutional land owners and the Jamaica way traffic serve as barriers to this nearby park network. Connections between existing open spaces are achieved along institutional campus woodlands and other non-public lands, though these connections may not be publicly accessible. Woodlands constitute 15 acres of open space in Mission Hill of which only 5.3 acres are protected as Urban Wilds to assure their preservation and continued public access. This green space woven into the fabric of the Mission Hill neighborhood is a distinctive and important neighborhood attribute. The protection of such non-publicly owned open space will be a challenge as development pressures increase for both housing and institutional expansions (Mission Hill Map 6). The potential relocation of Baptist Hospital from their Mission Hill property will offer opportunities to protect, connect and expand open space in this neighborhood.

In 2013, the BRA developed a set of guidelines for review of large development projects in the South Huntington Avenue Corridor, between Huntington Avenue and Perkins Street. This area is experiencing a shift from institutional uses to residential, so the guidelines will assist BRA staff as they oversee individual projects undergoing Article 80 review. The guidelines call for improvements in open space and the public realm to increase

pedestrian and bicycle access from the Mission Hill community to the Jamaicaaway and Olmsted Park, reduce potential shadow impacts on these open spaces, add open spaces, and create a wayfinding system.

## Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

### MISSION HILL

Population	
2010 Census	16,305
2000 Census	13,935
<b>Population Growth/Decline, 2000–2010</b>	<b>17.0%</b>

Population Density	Persons per Acre
2010 Census	46.5
2000 Census	39.7
<b>Density Change, 2000–2010</b>	<b>6.8</b>

Age	Persons	Percent of Population
0 to 9	995	6%
10 to 19	2,362	14%
20 to 34	7,832	48%
35 to 54	2,551	16%
55 to 64	1,088	7%
65 and over	1,477	9%

Teens, City to Community Comparison	Total Population	Total Children 12-17	% of Boston's Children 12-17	Children 12-17 as % of Neighborhood Population
Boston	617,594	33,920	100.0%	5.5%
Mission Hill	16,305	721	2.1%	4.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census, BRA Research Division Analysis

Race/Ethnicity/Latino Status	Persons	Percent of Population
White alone	7,674	47%
Hispanic or Latino	3,211	20%
Black or African American alone	2,558	16%
Asian alone	2,406	15%
Other	456	3%

Median Household Income
\$33,291

Source: US Census Bureau, 2008–2012 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	52%
1 vehicle	37%
2 vehicles	9%
3 or more vehicles	2%

Source: American Community Survey 2006–2010; BRA Research Division Analysis

Population* with Disability	Persons	Percent of Population
Boston	72,390	11.6%
Mission Hill	1,923	12.1%

\*Civilian Noninstitutionalized

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

N.B.: “0%” means “less than 1%”

All Tables 2010 U.S. Decennial Census, unless otherwise noted































