

Section 7.2.14:

SOUTH BOSTON

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

First connected by bridge to Boston Proper in 1805, the South Boston peninsula soon began the gradual process of reaching its current shape through landfilling. At that time the street grid was laid out and wealthy Yankee investors began to build wooden houses near Telegraph Hill. With the opening of the Old Colony railroad, the northern marshes began to be filled in to accommodate a thriving timber and foundry industry. Further landfilling created space for larger railroad yards, linking the rail system to the waterfront as the South Boston port developed into one of the busiest in the country.

By the end of the 19th century South Boston's residential development included many simple row houses and detached three-family dwellings. The early part of the 20th century saw the completion of Frederick Law Olmsted's vision to create a grand open space system along the water's edge to be enjoyed by residents.

The industrial waterfront's decline began after World War II as Boston's maritime industry was adversely affected by changing freight transportation technologies. Many of the piers were abandoned or turned into parking lots. However, in recent decades there has been an increase in maritime commercial use with trucking and containerized shipping utilizing the remaining piers. Investments by agencies like EDIC and Massport have revitalized the remaining port area.

Three major developments in the 1990s catalyzed reinvestment in the former industrial port area, remaking it as a new urban frontier. One was the decision by the federal government to construct a new federal courthouse on the Fan Pier. This provided a destination and an attraction—including a large, new open space on the waterfront—that gave people a reason to come across Fort Point Channel.

Another major decision was the one by the MBTA to construct a transitway that would connect the South Boston piers area with South Station. This transitway has created a mass transit line, now known as the Silver Line, from hubs in downtown Boston out to Logan Airport via South Boston, making this area more accessible and the surrounding land more attractive for development.

The third major decision was to develop a joint city-state project: the new Boston Convention and Exhibition Center and a companion hotel in the industrial area south of the waterfront. The Center, the largest convention venue in the northeastern U.S. with a building footprint of 1.6 million square feet, was completed in 2004.

Given such factors, the City through the BRA developed a plan for the South Boston Waterfront District, understanding that a major opportunity for growth of the city lay in this area. In 1999,

the BRA released The Seaport Public Realm Plan to outline the potential public realm assets of this newly emerging neighborhood that should be preserved or developed in the proposed build-out. The 2000 South Boston Waterfront Municipal Harbor Plan's primary goal is to ensure that the public has meaningful access to Boston Harbor along the Seaport's coastline.

The Fort Point area was first developed in the 1830s by the Boston Wharf Company and through the 20th century was one of the principal marketplaces for wool in the United States. Manufacturing and warehousing have since declined in Boston, but the buildings have been preserved as a Landmarks District. Artists have moved into the area, converting many of the structures to studios and lofts. The area is also home to the Boston Children's Museum, the Boston Fire Museum, as well as art galleries and design studios.

Open Space Access & Equity

South Boston—including the new waterfront-oriented Seaport District—is a transforming neighborhood. Between 2000 and 2010, the neighborhood population increased by 11.7%, and that growth is likely to be sustained as new high density residential development continues to come into the Seaport District. Adults between the ages of 20–54 are 67% of the community population, while only 14.7% are children or teens.

Population density is currently greatest in the older, established residential areas, but this may very well change in the coming years (South Boston Map 1). The current ratio of 5.97 acres of open space per 1,000 residents is somewhat lower than the city average of 7.59.

Current park need scores and equity maps indicate that the existing populations in greatest need for park access are centered in the Old Colony, Mary McCormack, and West Broadway Boston Housing Authority developments (South Boston Map 3). Each of these developments incorporates open space areas and recreational facilities on their property which are not included as part of the city's park inventory. As these developments are renovated, retention or expansion of these facilities is crucial.

Civic and community facilities are arrayed through the center of South Boston, on or near the Broadway corridor (South Boston Map 9). New development in the Seaport does not yet include many community facilities, which will limit the cohesive character of this as a neighborhood long term. Connectivity between the Seaport and the rest of South Boston will be important to develop and sustain over time.

Play areas at Buckley, Sweeney, Flaherty Parks (and likely the newly opened A Street Park as well) are high demand/high use facilities. These parks are all modestly sized and continued growth in this community will add pressures to these highly valued spaces. (South Boston Map 7)

Athletic field space in South Boston is largely provided at Moakley Park, which is a destination facility for park users citywide. Given the limited field space throughout Central Boston, and the opportunities afforded in South Boston with the redevelopment of large parcels not available elsewhere in the

city, development of athletic field space must become a priority in the planning and development efforts in this community. (South Boston Map 8)

Future Development

South Boston's greatest open space asset is its waterfront, the majority of which is publicly accessible. The beaches and reservations along Day Boulevard to Castle Island provide several miles of linear parklands within reasonable walking distance for many of the long-established South Boston residential areas.

The West Broadway, St. Vincent's, Fort Point Channel and Seaport communities are not as well served by this established interconnected system (South Boston Map 10). As residential and commercial development transforms these areas, creation of new open space resources needs to be considered in planning and development decisions. Because the South Boston neighborhood is already below the city average for open space acreage per thousand residents, it is important to be cognizant of the impacts that adding new residents will have on the quality of life in this neighborhood if creation of open space isn't prioritized.

New development the Seaport District have resulted in the creation of two new small parks with active recreation elements: A Street Park with a half basketball court and a children's play area, and Q Park, which is privately owned but publicly accessible, with a half basketball court, a small children's play area, and a lawn. Both of these new parks include off-leash dog recreation spaces which help meet a significant need for dog-owners in this community.

Additional active recreation space is necessary to meet the current and future needs of this growing district. The 100 Acres Master Plan provides a framework for transforming the existing surface parking lots to a vibrant 24-hour, mixed-use neighborhood anchored by over 11 acres of new public open space and almost 5.9 million square feet of development.

The expansion of the Conley Terminal and the development of a dedicated freight corridor by Massport is to be accompanied by the proposed development of a buffer open space along the northern side of West First Street, across from Christopher Lee Playground. Per 2010 state legislation, this 5.4-acre buffer open space is to be protected under Article 97, and built and managed by Massport. It will contain a multi-use pedestrian/bicycle path along most of its length that will connect to the Harborwalk, and enable this more interior part of the South Boston community, which is separated from the water (Reserved Channel) by a Designated Port Area, to reach the portions of the South Boston waterfront that are publicly accessible. Massport anticipates that construction of this new park will be completed in 2016. Once completed, the park will mitigate the effects of the port expansion on this southern section of the South Boston community.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

SOUTH BOSTON

Population	
2010 Census	35,200
2000 Census	31,514
Population Growth/Decline, 2000–2010	11.7%

Population Density		Persons per Acre
2010 Census		17.1
2000 Census		15.3
Density Change, 2000–2010		1.8

Age	Persons	Percent of Population
0 to 9	2,642	8%
10 to 19	2,537	7%
20 to 34	14,760	42%
35 to 54	8,853	25%
55 to 64	3,114	9%
65 and over	3,294	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%
South Boston	35,200	1,442	4.3%	4.1%

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

Race/Ethnicity/Latino Status	Persons	Percent of Population
White alone	26,869	76%
Hispanic or Latino	3,803	11%
Black or African American alone	2,279	6%
Asian alone	1,657	5%
Other	592	2%

Median Household Income
\$72,024

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

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	27%
1 vehicle	49%
2 vehicles	20%
3 or more vehicles	3%

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

Population* with Disability	Persons	Percent of Population
Boston	72,390	11.6%
South Boston	3,271	9.3%

*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





















