

Section 7.2.15:

SOUTH END

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

As originally conceived in the 1850s, the South End was to be a neighborhood of townhouses for wealthy merchants. In laying out the streets, the planners followed the English park model of residential squares, each with a large oval grass plot defining the center of the street. At the turn of the century, however, the more affluent residents had become more attracted to the fashionable Back Bay. The South End instead became the port-of-entry to more than 35 distinct linguistic groups as the dense residential fabric was inherited by wave after wave of primarily working class immigrants. The neighborhood maintains much of this richly diverse and complex character.

Urban renewal in general and the Prudential Center and Copley Place developments in particular, attracted powerful market forces to the South End. Starting in the mid-1960s, gradual smaller-scale private reinvestment and an accompanying gentrification resulted. Along with market developments, innovative projects like the Villa Victoria housing development, the Southwest Corridor Park, and Tent City have had a positive impact on the quality of life in the community. With the location of biotechnology-related light manufacturing in the area, the expansion of the Boston Medical Center, and the re-focusing on Washington Street resulting from the City's Main Streets program and the MBTA's Silver Line project, the more eastern sections of the South End have seen a revitalization that is likely to continue into the near future.

Open Space Access & Equity

The South End is the densest of any city community, yet with just over 18 acres, has the least amount of protected open space. The ratio of 0.74 acres of open space per 1,000 residents is dramatically lower than the city-wide average of 7.59. These numbers reflect the reality that the South End neighborhood doesn't have any large parks within its boundaries (as currently drawn by the BRA).

Much of the neighborhood meets the state's criteria for environmental justice populations and some sections of the neighborhood meet all of the criteria. The neighborhood has seen 12.27% growth from 2000-2010 and this growth will continue as large portions of the Harrison/Albany corridor are redeveloped. (South End Maps 1, 2 and 3).

The South End's open space system is dominated by small passive parks and squares, and the few active recreational, mixed-use facilities are in such high demand that they are subject to overuse. This is exacerbated by the fact that most of the neighborhoods adjacent to the South End (Lower Roxbury is the exception) are lacking in active recreation facilities as well.

The limited larger active facilities tend to be located at the fringes of the South End, while the residential squares tend to be more fully integrated into the fabric of the neighborhood.

The South End's population of children and teens is fairly low compared to other city neighborhoods. Distribution of playgrounds is favorable throughout the established residential portions of the neighborhood (South End Map 7). There are a high number of passive squares and pocket parks that contribute to character of the neighborhood but only support passive uses (and in some cases have limited or no public access). Eight ornamental fountains outnumber two children's water play features which is a proportion unmatched elsewhere in the city.

There is only one regularly accessible athletic field in the neighborhood, the baseball field at Peters Park, which cannot possibly meet all of the field needs of this community. Rotch Playground, which is currently maintained by Emerson College, accommodates some neighborhood use, but is largely permitted by Emerson. Public basketball courts are reasonably abundant (given the neighborhood's overall open space constraints) and some additional publicly accessible courts are located at Blackstone Community Center and the D-4 Police Station (South End Map 8).

Park service areas and equity show great walkable access to parks throughout the neighborhood in the established residential areas (South End Maps 10 and 11). Where more recent redevelopment is occurring, along Harrison Avenue and Albany Street where industrial uses are being converted to residential uses, there is insufficient existing open space. These new residents will have no choice but to vie for the facilities in Peters Park, which is already oversubscribed. Small scale private open spaces can be provided within these new developments with roof decks, balconies or courtyards. These are meaningful private amenities, but the pressure on shared, active, public facilities will continue to be an issue until a large (1 acre +) space is designated for public open space needs.

Future Development

As the South End's population of young adults continues to increase there will be excessive demand on existing limited park facilities. There is a need to identify new sites for active recreation as public and private housing developments are planned and as the number of organized leagues and clubs increase. Car ownership in this neighborhood is lower than in many outer core neighborhoods, which re-emphasizes the importance of providing close-to-home recreation opportunities for South End residents.

The 2011 BRA Harrison-Albany Corridor Strategic Plan looks at this corridor as a means for expanding housing opportunities as the industrial properties convert to residential uses. While it recognizes the need to create pedestrian/bicycle corridors to connect to the rest of the community, it provides little guidance to address the need for new sites for active recreation for the population growth it is encouraging. The small passive parks throughout the neighborhood and lively street network help sustain a high quality of life in the South End, but cannot wholly satisfy active recreational needs. The quality of existing open spaces will be increasingly challenging to sustain as the continued influx of new users add new demands on limited resources.

Improvements to the South Bay Harbor Trail will help with South End residents' need to access open spaces in other communities, such as South Boston and the Fenway/Longwood area, just as the Southwest Corridor Park currently provides access to Roxbury and Jamaica Plain.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

SOUTH END

Population	
2010 Census	30,446
2000 Census	28,755
Population Growth/Decline, 2000–2010	5.9%

Population Density		Persons per Acre
2010 Census		52.1
2000 Census		46.4
Density Change, 2000–2010		5.7

Age	Persons	Percent of Population
0 to 9	1,974	8%
10 to 19	1,453	6%
20 to 34	8,303	34%
35 to 54	7,665	31%
55 to 64	2,571	10%
65 and over	2,611	11%

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 End	24,577	845	2.5%	3.4%

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

Race/Ethnicity/Latino Status	Persons	Percent of Population
White alone	13,574	55%
Hispanic or Latino	3,276	13%
Black or African American alone	3,083	13%
Asian alone	3,982	16%
Other	662	3%

Median Household Income

\$57,669

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

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	45%
1 vehicle	45%
2 vehicles	8%
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%
South End	3,551	11.4%

*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





















