

Section 7.2.7:

FENWAY/LONGWOOD

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

The Fenway, Kenmore, and Longwood communities date from approximately a century ago, created on the last land to be filled for neighborhood growth in Boston. In the latter half of the 1800s, the tidal swamps and mud flats at the confluence of the Muddy River and Stony Brook had become a sanitary concern due to the city's tremendous growth.

Frederick Law Olmsted addressed this concern, simultaneously solving a major drainage/sewage problem and creating a park system for the city, now known as the Emerald Necklace. Tidal gates were installed for the Muddy River and Stony Brook, a sewage interceptor was built below the Fens Basin, and the surrounding land was reshaped to create parkland. Park and streetcar development stimulated the westward expansion of Boston proper. The Fens parkland divided the area: Kenmore and the west Fenway developed to the north and west; the east Fenway and Longwood developed to the south and east.

The Fenway/Longwood community includes three distinct geographic areas with their own history and identity:

Kenmore

This western portion of the neighborhood is generally bordered by Beacon Street, the Brookline town line, the Allston-Brighton community, the Charles River, and the Muddy River. Kenmore Square developed with fine hotels, shops, and professional offices flanking the streetcar tracks. Close to the river on Bay State Road, townhouses were built for affluent families. The Peterborough and Audubon Circle areas had large apartment buildings along Beacon Street and the streetcar line. The Back Bay West/Bay State Road Historic District and the landmark designation for Commonwealth Avenue Mall recognize the architectural and scenic qualities of this area, and afford these areas legal protection by the city.

West of Kenmore Square, Commonwealth Avenue was slow to develop. Temple Adath Israel stood virtually alone following the turn of the 20th century. Automobile showrooms began to line Commonwealth Avenue starting in 1910–1919. Boston University purchased the last unbuilt tract of land in 1920 and raised the residential height limit, but did not begin to build the campus for another 20 years. Many extant buildings, including car showrooms, have been converted to campus and support facilities as well as housing.

As in other parts of this neighborhood, in recent years there has been increasing development in the Kenmore area. Boston University has constructed classroom and administrative buildings and converted existing structures to university uses, a hotel has been built in Kenmore Square, and some moderately priced residential buildings have been converted to upscale condominiums.

Fenway

This is the central part of the larger community. It is generally bounded by Boylston Street, Massachusetts Avenue, the Southwest Corridor, Mission Hill, and the Brookline town line. Brownstone and brick residences typify the Symphony area and apartment blocks form the streetscape along the Fenway and Park Drive parkways. Institutions including the Christian Science Center, the Massachusetts Historical Society, Symphony Hall, Horticultural Hall, the New England Conservatory of Music, Simmons College, the Museum of Fine Arts, and the Isabella Stewart Gardner House (now Museum) were built starting in the 1890s and early 1900s.

The Fenway also has experienced development pressures in recent years. While the old Fenway Park remains, modified to increase attendance and revenues, other parcels in the area have been or are in the process of development. The former Sears building was converted into an office/retail/entertainment complex now known as the Landmark Center (and is being redeveloped as this is written): it stands at a critical node in the city's transportation and Emerald Necklace open space systems. In-fill housing, including new residential buildings on Boylston Street, has added population to an already densely settled residential community.

A long-paved-over portion of the Emerald Necklace, the infamous "Missing Link" in front of the former Sears building, reverted back to green space under the Parks Department's jurisdiction. The restoration of this 70,805-square-foot parcel was negotiated as part of the former Sears building's redevelopment into the Landmark Center. This parcel has restored this easternmost segment of the Riverway and its linkage to the Back Bay Fens, and is being re-engineered to be another segment of the Muddy River that is open to the sky and public view.

Longwood

The Longwood Medical Area, or Longwood, comprises the southern portion of this neighborhood. Bounded by the Riverway, the Fenway, Huntington Avenue, and Francis Street, Longwood has developed a large institutional presence since the turn of the 20th century. Notable facilities include Harvard Medical School, several major Boston-area hospitals and medical institutions, higher education institutions, including four stand-alone colleges, a private girls school, a public high school (Boston Latin School, America's oldest school), and Temple Israel. These facilities employ over 45,000 people. Longwood has a student population of over 10,000. The residential community here is mostly comprised of employees and students. Building and development also continues apace in this area as area hospitals and colleges construct or seek additional facilities.

Open Space Access & Equity

The Fenway Longwood community is the city's second densest after the South End and is dominated by non-profit institutions (Fenway/Longwood Map 1). Eight colleges and universities are located within (or immediately adjacent to) this neighborhood as well as the city's medical and research area and two major art museums. Games and special events at Fenway Park generate a

population jolt as well. Contrasting with this intensity of use, the neighborhood is also defined by the Back Bay Fens and Riverway sections of the Emerald Necklace, which wind through the neighborhood and meet the Charles River Reservation at Charlesgate at the edge of the Back Bay. The ratio of 3.68 acres of open space per 1,000 persons in this neighborhood is far lower than the city average of 7.59.

Less than 2% of the total population in Fenway/Longwood are children under the age of 9. Only 13.4% are over the age of 34. This is a neighborhood of young adults. About half of the neighborhood meets at least one of the state’s criteria for Environmental Justice populations and the areas with the highest need scores for access to open space are in the Symphony neighborhood west of Massachusetts Avenue and east of the Back Bay Fens.

Like Back Bay/Beacon Hill, most of Fenway/Longwood’s parklands and recreational facilities are located in either the Charles River Reservation (DCR) or within the Emerald Necklace park system. Commonwealth Avenue Mall, the Back Bay Fens, and the Riverway are designated Boston Landmarks and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Muddy River, the waterway connecting Jamaica Pond to the Charles River, is in the midst of a multi-phase restoration being led by the US Army Corps of Engineers. This project is detailed in Section 7.3.3, The Emerald Necklace. Improvements for the neighborhood and visitors to this section of the Emerald Necklace park system to be realized through the completion of the Muddy River project include providing flood control, improving water quality, enhancing riparian and aquatic habitats, and preserving historic landscape resources.

There are two community gardens in Fenway/Kenmore, the Symphony Road Community Garden and the sprawling Richard Parker Memorial Victory Gardens in the Back Bay Fens, believed to be the last surviving World War II Victory Garden in the nation.

The major open space resources near Longwood are the southern Fens and the northern Riverway. Smaller open spaces exist within the fabric of institutional buildings. Open space on member institutions’ property is coordinated by the Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization, Inc. (MASCO). This association works closely with public agencies such as the Parks Department, the Public Works Department, and the Transportation Department to help provide an open space system with maximum public access to, from, and within Longwood.

As institutions continue to build out onto their campus open space and recreational facilities, greater pressure results on the limited resources in this highly populated neighborhood.

Passive park uses dominate the neighborhood from the Back Bay Fens, to Ramler Park, Symphony Park and Evans Way. The Fens accommodates some active recreation facilities at on the west side of the parks at the Joseph Lee Playground, which includes Clemente Field and the Bradley Basketball courts, and on the east side of the park at Mothers’ Rest Playground, a children’s play lot (Fenway / Kenmore Maps 7 and 8).

Future Development

Redevelopment of Boylston Street and Brookline Ave between the Landmark Center and Kenmore Square is bringing additional young adults to this neighborhood. The Landmark Center redevelopment proposes to add two acres of passive open space to the area as well as a multi-use path connection between the Riverway and Fenway MBTA stations. A new commuter rail station at Yawkey Way provides additional public transit access to this busy neighborhood. A major development is proposed for parking lots west of Fenway Park combined with air rights over the Turnpike. These and other developments in this community will lead to sharply increasing total population, with consequent impacts on the Back Bay Fens and other parks in the community. Population increases will put pressure on existing park facilities. These open space areas will require additional resources to maintain their quality and level of service amidst increasing use.

A change that could directly impact open space in the Fenway Longwood community may result from the state Department of Transportation’s effort to ease growing congestion on city streets by adding Turnpike ramps in the Back Bay, Fenway/Longwood, and Seaport Districts, which would also enable use of bus public transit. One option being discussed within this study is the fate of the Bowker Overpass, which looms over Charlesgate and makes access to the Charles River Reservation (the Esplanade) difficult. An alternative may be the elimination of this overpass, but what takes its place may also have impacts for Charlesgate, the Back Bay Fens, and the Esplanade. A public review process of the alternatives is underway.

Another change that could directly impact open space straddles the Fenway/Longwood and Back Bay/Beacon Hill communities. Turnpike Air Rights Parcels 12–15 could introduce tall buildings that would create shadows on parklands north of their location, in this case, particularly the Commonwealth Avenue Mall.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

FENWAY/LONGWOOD

Population	
2010 Census	37,581
2000 Census	33,285
Population Growth/Decline, 2000–2010	12.9%

Population Density		Persons per Acre
2010 Census		50.2
2000 Census		44.4
Density Change, 2000–2010		5.7

Age	Persons	Percent of Population
0 to 9	448	1%
10 to 19	10,102	27%
20 to 34	21,976	58%
35 to 54	2,549	7%
55 to 64	963	3%
65 and over	1,543	4%

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%
Fenway/Longwood	37,581	225	0.7%	0.6%

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

Race/Ethnicity/Latino Status	Persons	Percent of Population
White alone	24,544	65%
Hispanic or Latino	3,057	8%
Black or African American alone	1,975	5%
Asian alone	6,741	18%
Other	1,264	3%

Median Household Income

\$24,707

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

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	68%
1 vehicle	29%
2 vehicles	5%
3 or more vehicles	1%

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

Population* with Disability	Persons	Percent of Population
Boston	72,390	11.6%
Fenway/Longwood	2,281	6.1%

*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





















