
Open Space Plan 2008-2014

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

**Section 7.2.1 Community Open
Space & Recreation
ALLSTON-BRIGHTON**

Section 7.2.1: Community Open Space & Recreation ALLSTON-BRIGHTON

THE SETTING

History

Like many Boston neighborhoods, the Allston-Brighton area was established in the colonial era (1635) with land grants. A sparsely settled agricultural pattern prevailed until the filling in of the Back Bay and Kenmore Square areas in the late 1800s, by which time the Brighton stockyards had become the foremost cattle market in the region. Another important agricultural development in Brighton was the growth of horticulture: commercial gardens and extensive greenhouses covered many of the hills of Brighton. The Massachusetts Horticultural Society was founded in Brighton in 1829 and the area became well known for the many flowers and other decorative plants, fruit trees, and vegetables developed by Brighton growers. The grounds of Saint John's Seminary are the remains of an old estate orchard. In fact, some historians believe the first tomato in America was grown in Brighton.

In the late 1800s, the extension of streetcar lines – especially along the Commonwealth Avenue corridor – encouraged high quality residential development in Brighton, much of which remains today.

Proximity to the Charles River and the Boston & Albany Railroad encouraged construction of stockyards, slaughterhouses, and meatpacking operations in both Allston and the northern and eastern sections of Brighton. As the nation expanded westward and refrigerated railroad cars were introduced, regional stockyards, like those in Brighton, declined in importance. These cattle-related businesses were replaced over time by other industrial plants, commercial warehouses, and homes.

After World War II, the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension further divided this neighborhood. Wider than the existing railroad tracks, the Pike added more noise and air pollution as it severed pedestrian links on either side. Proximity to expanding universities on all sides resulted in a considerable influx of students, coupled with younger families and immigrants from many lands. These changing population patterns in turn spurred much conversion of large-scale apartments and 19th century single family homes to smaller rental units and condominiums.

Needs Analysis*Demographics/Housing*

Allston-Brighton's 2000 population of 69,648 was a slight decrease (-0.09%) from the 1990 total of 70,284, which in turn represented an 8.76% increase from the 1980 figure of 64,622. Allston-Brighton's ethnic makeup includes Irish, Italian, Greek, Jewish, and more recently, Asian, Eastern European, African-American and Hispanic ethnic groups.

While diversity is the order of the day as far as race/ethnicity is concerned in Allston-Brighton, two trends stand out: the decline in the black population and the rise in the Asian/Pacific Islander population. Allston-Brighton's 1990 population was 73% white, 7% black, 9% Hispanic, and 10% Asian/Pacific Islander. In 2000, 74% were white, 4% black, 9% Hispanic, and 14% Asian/Pacific Islander. In the year 2000, the Census for the first time offered the choice of "multi-racial." Four percent (4%) of the population identified themselves in this category. This new category and the new category of "some other race" may explain, in part, the 3% drop in the black population in this neighborhood from 1990 to 2000.

Socio-economic and demographic data bear out the image of Allston-Brighton as a neighborhood with a significant young adult-oriented population. The age group of 18-24 in Allston-Brighton was 30%, compared to a citywide figure of 16%. Allston-Brighton's age profile shows that in 1990 12% of the population was 17 years of age or younger versus 19% for the city as a whole [the comparable figures for 2000 were 9% in Allston/Brighton versus 20% in Boston].

Allston-Brighton's median household income was \$38,941, comparable to the citywide average of \$39,629. In addition, one-third (32%) of all Allston-Brighton households do not have a vehicle compared to 35% for the city as a whole. Some of these certainly are among the nearly 20,000 persons in the community who attend college.

The widespread presence of college students in the community, as well as the prevalence of rental housing -- from large, multi-dwelling buildings on the Commonwealth Avenue corridor, to triple deckers, to the more recent garden apartments -- means only 20% of housing is owner-occupied. This compares to 32% for the city as a whole. The impact of college students upon the community is further reflected by 51% of the population dwelling in non-family households, living as singles or roommates, compared to 29% across the city.

Demographic and Housing Profile

Population

2000 Census	69,648
1990 Census	70,284
1980 Census	64,622
Population growth/decline, 1990 - 2000	-0.90%
Population growth/decline, 1980 - 1990	8.76%

Age

0 to 4	2,165	3%
5 to 9	1,908	3%
10 to 14	1,459	2%
15 to 17	818	1%
18 to 24	20,655	30%
25 to 44	27,998	40%
45 to 64	8,060	12%
65 to 74	3,083	4%
75 to 84	2,568	4%
85 and over	934	1%

Race

	% of Total Population
White alone	74%
Black or African American alone	4%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	0%
Asian alone	14%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0%
Some other race alone	4%
Two or more races	4%

Latino Status

	% of Total Population
Not Hispanic or Latino	91%
Hispanic or Latino	9%

N.B.: "0%" means "less than 1%"

Demographic and Housing Profile

Households	
2000 Census	30,561
1990 Census	29,427
1980 Census	28,127
Household Growth/Decline, 1980-1990	4.62%
Household Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	3.85%

Population by Household Type

	% Persons
Family households	43%
Non-family households	51%
Group quarters	5%

Average Household Size

	Persons per Household Type
All Households	2.16
Family Households	2.96
Nonfamily Households	1.75

Persons Per Household

	Households	%
1-person households	11,067	36%
2-person households	10,748	35%
3-person households	4,345	14%
4-person households	2,463	8%
5-person households	1,211	4%
6-person households	513	2%
7-or more person households	214	1%

Demographic and Housing Profile

Population Density	
	Persons per Square Mile
1980 Census	14,821.6
1990 Census	16,120.2
2000 Census	15,974.3
Density Change 1980 to 1990	1,298.6
Density Change 1990 to 2000	-145.9

Housing Tenure in Occupied Housing Units	
	% in Occupied Housing Units
Owner occupied	20%
Renter occupied	80%

Total Occupied & Vacant Housing Units in Structure	
Single units	9%
Double units	17%
3-9 units	23%
10-19 units	18%
20-49 units	19%
50 or more units	15%
All other	0%
Single/Multiple Unit Ratio	0.2

Household by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	32%
1 vehicle	43%
2 vehicles	18%
3 or more vehicles	6%

Median Household Income
\$38,941

Civilian Unemployment Rate
5.3%

Poverty Rate
23.0%

Needs Analysis

Housing in Allston-Brighton includes one-to-six family structures, row houses, garden apartments, and medium-rise apartment buildings, all in substantial numbers. The main concentration of units per structure is the mid-range of three to 49 units. Allston-Brighton has 60% of units in these three to 49 unit structures versus 56% for Boston. However, within this range, the 10 to 49 unit structure is more heavily represented than the three to 9 unit structures in Allston-Brighton versus Boston. Therefore, with medium-range apartment units predominating, there is a greater dependence on public open space to meet the needs of a highly dense neighborhood: 15,974.3 persons per square mile versus 12,172.3 persons per square mile citywide.

THE OPEN SPACE SYSTEM TODAY

Equity and Investment

Allston-Brighton has 351 protected acres in its inventory of parks, playgrounds, squares, malls, reservations, community gardens, and other open spaces. This open space allocation gives this neighborhood a ratio of 5.03 acres of protected open space per 1,000 residents, compared to a citywide ratio of 7.47 acres per 1,000 residents. Urban wilds, college athletic fields, and other institutionally owned lands add another 158 acres of unprotected open space to this densely populated neighborhood.

The City of Boston has invested over \$2 million in improving and protecting 10 facilities in the past six years through the City's Capital Improvement Program (see table).

Allston-Brighton Capital Projects 2001-2006	
Cassidy Playground	\$122,150
Fidelis Way Park	\$178,150
Hardiman Playground	\$237,652
Hobart Park	\$366,018
Hooker / Sorrento Playground	\$366,018
McKinney Playground	\$264,267
Penniman Road Play Area	\$264,267
Ringer Playground	\$521,530
Rogers Park	\$83,643
Smith Playground	\$358,446
Total	\$2,762,141

