

# Whittier Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan



October 11, 2014



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On behalf of the Boston Housing Authority and our partners, I am delighted to present the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan. The plan is the result of two years of community engagement to develop a vision, goals, and implementation strategies for the neighborhood. The planning began with the residents of the Whittier housing development, but quickly broadened to include a vision for the entire community.

I'd like to thank the many residents, elected officials, city agencies, community organizations and neighborhood institutions that contributed their time, skills and vision to the plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Whittier Choice is supported by grants and contributions from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, The Boston Foundation, Northeastern University, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Roxbury Community College, Whittier Street Health Center, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, The American City Coalition, and the City of Boston.

Whittier Choice is a collaboration of the Boston Housing Authority, Preservation of Affordable Housing, Madison Park Development Corporation, and the Whittier Tenant Task Force. Technical assistance was provided by EJP Associates.

## Acknowledgements

### Planning Committee

Boston Housing Authority  
City of Boston  
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative  
Madison Park Development Corporation  
Preservation of Affordable Housing  
Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee  
Tenacity  
The American City Coalition  
Whittier Tenant Task Force

### Neighborhood Committee

Alice Taylor Tenant Task Force  
Boston ABCD  
Boston Bikes  
Boston Department of Neighborhood Development  
Boston Natural Areas Network  
Boston Parks and Recreation  
Boston Police Department  
Boston Public Works  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Boston Transportation Department  
Discover Roxbury  
Dudley Square Main Streets Revitalization Corporation  
Friends of Melnea Cass Boulevard  
Haley House  
Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
Madison Park Development Corporation  
Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Northeastern University  
Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation  
Orchard Gardens Tenant Association  
St. Katharine Drexel parish  
The American City Coalition  
United Neighbors of Lower Roxbury  
Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts  
Utile Design  
Walk Boston  
Whittier Resident Public Safety Work Group

### Housing Committee

Boston Department of Neighborhood Development  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
Madison Park Development Corporation  
Madison Park Village Special Projects Committee  
Preservation of Affordable Housing  
Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee  
The Architectural Team  
Tise Design  
Whittier Resident Design Committee

### People Committee

ARGUS  
Barr Foundation  
Boston Alliance for Community Health  
Boston Centers for Youth and Families  
Boston Opportunity Agenda

Boston Private Industry Council  
Boston Public Health Commission  
Boston Public Library  
Boston Public Schools  
Boston University Community Committee for Health Promotion  
Crittenton Women's Union  
Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative/Boston Promise Initiative  
Lower Roxbury Coalition  
Madison Park Technical Vocational High School  
Mayor's Office of Jobs and Community Services  
Northeastern University  
Nurtury  
Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School  
Roxbury Community College  
Smart from the Start  
Tenacity  
The Boston Foundation  
Thrive in Five  
Wentworth Institute of Technology  
Whittier Parents Committee  
Whittier Street Health Center  
Youth Build Boston

### Elected Officials

Mayor Martin Walsh  
City Councilor Tito Jackson  
State Representative Gloria Fox  
State Representative Byron Rushing  
State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz

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## Glossary

BHA – Boston Housing Authority

BPD – Boston Police Department

BPI – Boston Promise Initiative

BPS – Boston Public Schools

BRA – Boston Redevelopment Authority

BTD – Boston Transportation Department

CAD – Computer-Aided Design

CDC – Community Development Corporation

CIM – Community Impact Measurement

CNI – Choice Neighborhood Initiative

CWU – Crittenton Women’s Union

DSNI – Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

GED – General Educational Development

IMP – Institutional Master Plan

LISC – Local Initiatives Support Corporation

MPDC – Madison Park Development Corporation

NU – Northeastern University

POAH – Preservation of Affordable Housing

RCC – Roxbury Community College

RSMPOC – Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee

SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

TAT – The Architectural Team

UFAS – Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards

UNLR – United Neighbors of Lower Roxbury

VIP – Violence Intervention Program/Village In Progress

VOC – Volatile Organic Compounds

WIC – Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

WSHC – Whittier Street Health Center

WYSE – Whittier Youth Services Enrichment Program

## Chapter 1

# Executive Summary

The Whittier Choice Neighborhoods planning initiative, funded by a 2012 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant and partner commitments, has sparked a community conversation about the contradictions and un-tapped opportunities that characterize this area of Roxbury—its rich heritage, prime location, and strong community engagement, on the one hand—and its continued struggles to become stronger economically and more cohesive socially.

The Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan is the result of two years of community and partner engagement to develop a vision, goals, and implementation plan for the neighborhood. The planning process has served as the platform to develop strategies that will build upon the strengths of the neighborhood, capitalize on planned investment, and at the same time retain the fabric and character of the community. Community residents recognize that the significant development planned for the neighborhood—more than \$2.3 billion over the next decade—must be managed carefully to ensure that the benefits of investment accrue to existing neighborhood residents and support the neighborhood vision. Planned investment can amplify existing disparities and add to the pressure on low-income residents, or it can, as this plan envisions, catalyze opportunities for all neighborhood residents.

*Development can amplify existing disparities and add to the pressure on low-income residents, or it can, as this plan envisions, catalyze opportunities for all neighborhood residents.*



*Whittier Housing Vision*

*Source: The Architectural Team*

## 1.1 Target Site and Neighborhood

The Whittier neighborhood is roughly one square mile, with a population of 9,292 residing in 3,867 households. Racially and ethnically, the neighborhood is significantly more diverse than the city or the region, with 59% Black or African American and 34% Hispanic or Latino. The population is also younger than the city as a whole, with almost 30% under the age of 20. Female-headed households predominate at 63% compared to the City average of 16%.

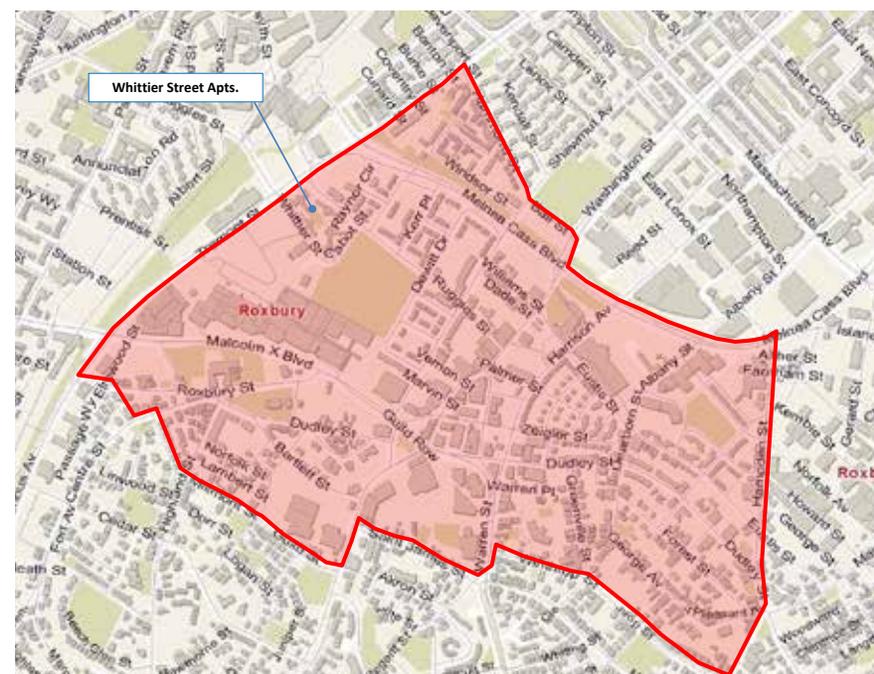
The majority of Whittier neighborhood households are low-income: 75% receive housing or other public subsidies and 47% are below the federal poverty level (compared with 21% citywide). The unemployment rate is almost double the city's rate at 19% compared to 10% citywide.

The Whittier Neighborhood is conveniently located about two miles from downtown Boston, with easy access by public transit to all points of interest within and beyond the city. The neighborhood is rich in amenities and home to some of the city's anchor educational, civic and cultural institutions: Northeastern University, Roxbury Community College, Wentworth Institute, the Reggie Lewis Athletic Arena, Boston Police headquarters, the Boston Islamic Center, Hibernian Hall and the brand new state-of-the-art Whittier Street Health Center. Over 200 non-profits work in the neighborhood, and major employment centers like Longwood Medical Area and Boston Medical Center are within easy walking distance. The City of Boston has initiated over \$130 million in investment in the commercial hub of Dudley Square and the Melnea Cass Boulevard transformation. Over \$2.3 billion in private funding for infrastructure, new housing and retail will be coming into the district over the next decade.

At the edge of the Whittier Neighborhood, across the street from the Ruggles Orange Line rapid transit station, stands the Boston Housing Authority's Whittier Street public housing development. Originally built in 1953, the housing has reached the end of its useful life. A physical needs assessment conducted in 2012 estimated capital needs at over \$40 million, a level that makes rehabilitation infeasible. Moreover, the structural, environmental, and design deficiencies at Whittier have

contributed to the pervasive sense of isolation that many residents feel. The Whittier community—both residents and neighbors—recognize that redevelopment plans must entail demolition and new construction.

Figure 1-1. Whittier Neighborhood Boundary



*The Whittier neighborhood has superb access to public transportation and can accommodate increased density. Preservation of affordable housing opportunities within new growth and development is critical.*

The underlying story of the Whittier neighborhood is the chronic struggle of the majority of its residents—including the residents at the Whittier public housing development—who are among the poorest in Boston, living with a crime rate twice that of the average Boston neighborhood, and disconnected from services and resources. The 363 public school students at Whittier Street and Orchard Gardens are, by several key measures, far behind in school and too often the trajectory for young adults fails to land beyond public housing. Families live with persistent unemployment and multi-generational poverty. There is a risk that the physical investment planned for the neighborhood will provide a mere face-lift for certain parcels and roadways without addressing these underlying conditions or better connecting the neighborhood as a whole.



Whittier Street Apartments looking north along Tremont Street.

### 1.2 Community Engagement

The Whittier Choice Neighborhoods team has organized and participated in more than 150 community meetings, surveys, focus groups, workshops, and other forums since October 2012. A variety of venues and formats has provided multiple entry points for residents and other stakeholders in a transparent and inclusive planning process.

Several community partners helped to complete a comprehensive Needs Assessment to collect key data about resident and neighborhood needs. The engagement process has strengthened relationships on many levels: among residents living within the Whittier Street housing development; between Whittier residents and their neighbors; among neighborhood institutions; and between the city government and its constituents in the neighborhood. The process is ongoing and iterative with continual outreach and information dissemination.



Boston Mayor Martin Walsh and members of the Whittier Street Tenant Task Force.

### 1.3 Priority Needs

An extensive Needs Assessment, including detailed surveys as well as information gathering with many community partners, identified the following priority needs:

#### Priority Neighborhood Needs

- Residents missing out on benefits of growth
- Difficulty accessing neighborhood services and resources
- Safety concerns limit mobility

#### Priority Housing Needs

- More housing choices, including paths to homeownership and out of public housing
- A more diverse and better balanced housing stock that provides both affordable and market rate units
- Replacement housing for Whittier Street Development

#### Priority People Needs

- Income generation and asset-building
- Education and training program opportunities
- Better access to English Language Learning programs
- Support for people with mental and physical disabilities
- Programs to promote health and wellness
- Better understanding about benefits of healthier eating and exercise
- Support for parents as educators and advocates for their children's academic achievement
- More quality programs to engage youth
- Public safety concerns that keep residents isolated



### 1.4 Vision Statements

Three vision statements were developed based upon these priority needs, which served as the basis for developing goals, strategies and outcomes:

**Neighborhood Vision**

The Whittier Neighborhood is a resilient community that celebrates its history and welcomes residents from all walks of life. Building on its rich heritage, the neighborhood is steadily modernizing into an attractive, innovative district that has quality, sustainable housing for a variety of income levels; safe, lively streets; excellent schools and economic opportunities for residents; and a thriving array of community services and amenities.

**Housing Vision**

The community is committed to building housing throughout the Whittier Neighborhood to the highest standards of quality and sustainability including preserving 200 units of deeply affordable housing currently available at the Whittier housing development, while expanding housing options for moderate-income and higher income families; and creating a vibrant new mixed-use district that will become the gateway to historic Dudley Square.

**People Vision**

The Whittier Neighborhood is a connected community whose members enjoy access to a broad spectrum of quality programs and services. Immediate and long-term needs related to financial stability, health, wellness, education, and youth development are addressed through a coordinated, accessible support network offering both on-site and off-site assistance. Through this support network residents experience greater financial stability, lower stress levels, fewer chronic diseases, better school outcomes, more out-of-school activities, and improved job skills. Moreover, they are engaged in the broader Whittier neighborhood and feel part of a vibrant community.

## 1.5 Goals, Strategies, and Outcomes

These high-level goals are distilled from the vision statements. More detailed goals, strategies, and outcomes for each of the three vision statements are described in separate chapters of the plan.

### Neighborhood Goals

Neighborhood goals focus upon breaking down barriers that keep residents isolated, and promote physical and social connections. There is a strong focus upon improving the reality and perception of public safety, and encouraging more pedestrian traffic. Several key transportation and streetscape Improvements are identified, including improvements to Ruggles Street, Melnea Cass Boulevard and the crossing at Tremont/Ruggles Streets. The neighborhood goals support the development of vibrant mixed-use districts at Tremont Street and Dudley Square.

### Housing Goals

The key housing goal is to preserve affordability in the neighborhood while expanding housing options in Lower Roxbury. Housing creation is also important to creating a vibrant mixed-use district. The community wants secure, energy-efficient, healthy and accessible homes, while at the same time minimizing the disruption of relocation.

Providing employment opportunities for community residents and contracting opportunities for local businesses is a key priority within the housing strategy.

### People Goals

While the housing and neighborhood goals deal primarily with physical “bricks and mortar” improvements, the People goals span a range of needed services:

- *Income and Asset-Building.* The Initial goal is to provide the necessary supports to help stabilize families; then to support and guide individuals along the most effective pathways toward educational, professional and income attainment.
- *Health.* Goals focus upon addressing and preventing chronic disease, and upon reducing stress, anxiety and depression. It is also a goal for adults and children to be physically active and have access to healthy, affordable food. The design of new housing must support better health outcomes.
- *Education.* Meaningful partnerships have developed through the planning process to improve educational outcomes for Whittier youth. Goals are aligned with those of the Boston Promise Initiative and include preparing children to enter school ready to learn, achieving age-appropriate literacy for all children, maximizing access to high-performing schools, and increasing the capacity of Whittier parents to serve as advocates and educators for their children.
- *Youth Development.* Young people are the key to the future of the Whittier Neighborhood. Providing activities and opportunities for children and adolescents has been a key focus of the planning process. Goals include maximizing access to quality after-school and summer programs, preparing youth for the transition to college and career, and providing supports that encourage healthy life decisions.

## 1.6 Implementation

The Whittier Transformation Plan provides a detailed roadmap for the neighborhood, to be implemented over the next decade with multiple sources of funding. A group of strategic partners will lead the implementation. A preliminary budget and schedule are presented in Chapter 7.

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## Chapter 2

# Setting the Context

The Whittier Neighborhood is conveniently located two miles from downtown Boston, with easy access by public transit to all points of interest within and beyond the city. Whittier lies within the broader neighborhood known as Roxbury, which emerged as the historical heart of New England's African American community following significant migration from the South in the 1940s and 1950s. This heritage is reflected in the cultural and arts history of the area, and is embodied in many buildings and organizations throughout the district. Dudley Square, Roxbury's main commercial district, is in the process of a major revitalization to celebrate and bring forward this rich heritage.

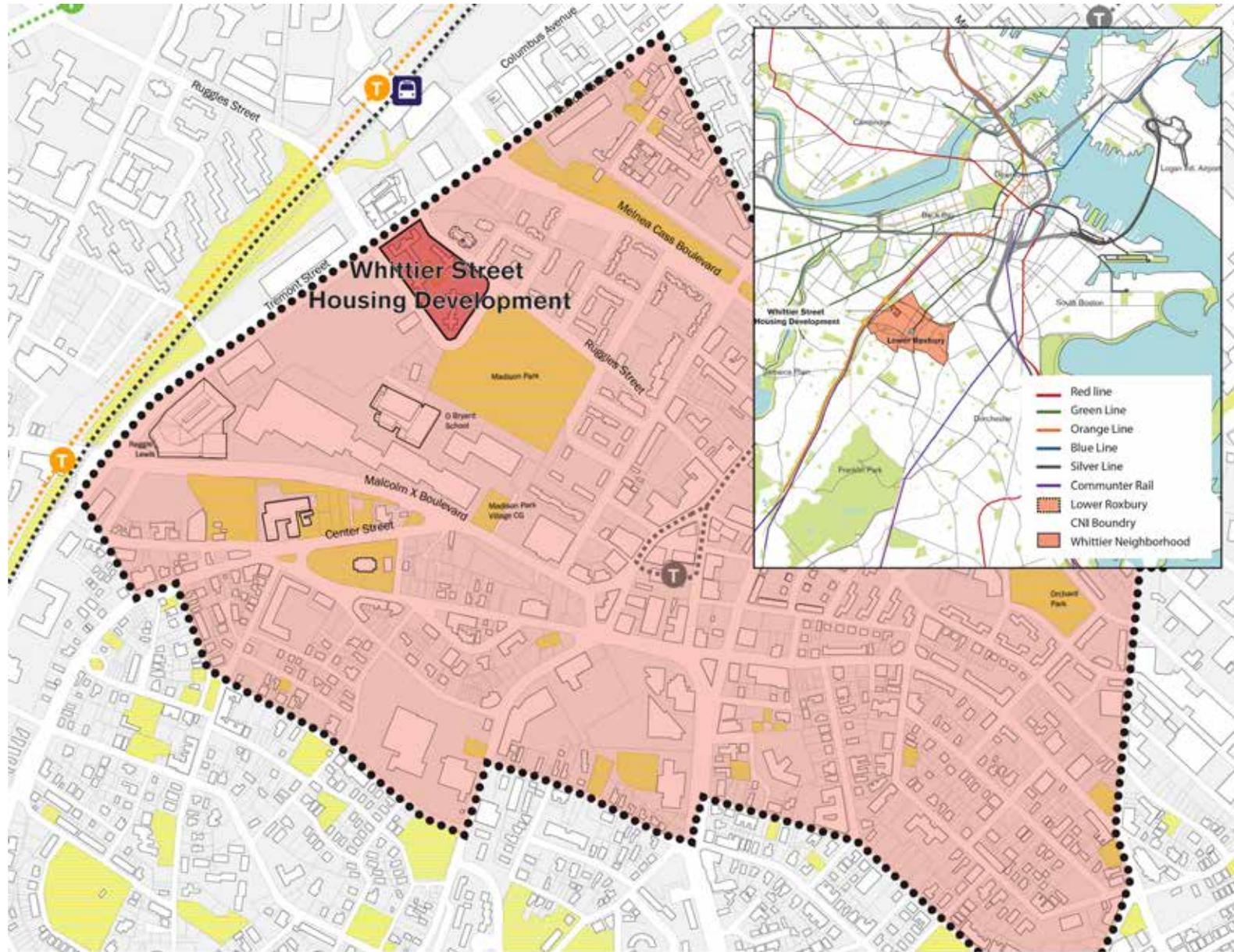
The neighborhood has superb access to public transportation, is rich in amenities, and is home to some of the city's anchor educational, civic and cultural institutions: Northeastern University, Roxbury Community College, Wentworth Institute, the Reggie Lewis Athletic Arena, Boston Police headquarters, the Boston Islamic Center, Hibernian Hall and the brand new state-of-the-art Whittier Street Health Center.

Over 200 non-profits work in the neighborhood, and major employment centers like Longwood Medical Area and Boston Medical Center are within easy walking distance. The City has initiated over \$130 million in investment in the commercial hub of Dudley Square and the Melnea Cass Boulevard transformation. Over \$2.3 billion in private funding for infrastructure, new housing and retail will be coming into the district over the next decade.

Yet, the central story of the Whittier neighborhood is the chronic struggle of the majority of its residents—including the residents at the Whittier public housing development—who are among the poorest in Boston, living with a crime rate twice that of the average Boston neighborhood, and disconnected from services and resources.

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the Whittier Street residents surveyed indicate they are not aware of two computer centers within one block of their homes. Sixty-two percent (62%) indicate interest in training or education programs, but are not accessing them now. The 363 public housing youth at Whittier Street and Orchard Gardens are, by several key measures, far behind in school and too often the trajectory for young adults fails to land beyond public housing. Families live with persistent unemployment and multi-generational poverty. There is a risk that the physical investment planned for the neighborhood will provide a mere face-lift for certain parcels and roadways without addressing these underlying conditions or better connecting the neighborhood.

Figure 2-1. City of Boston Locus Map



### 2.1 Legacy of Urban Renewal

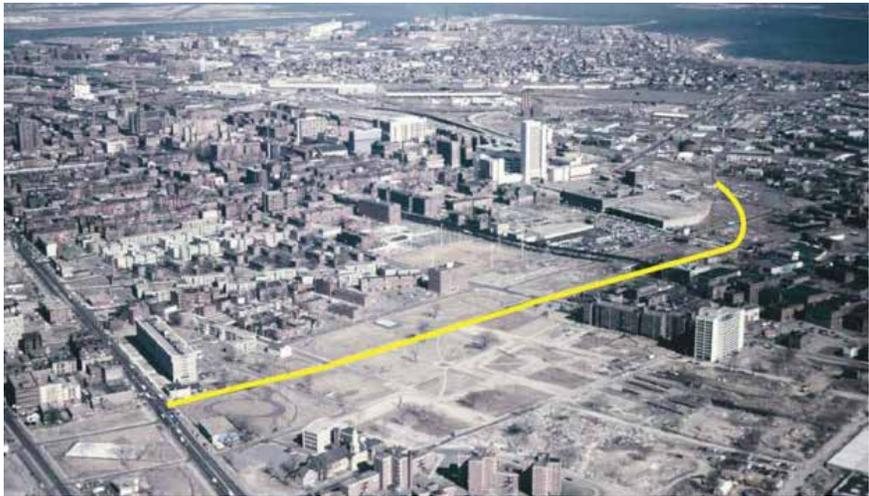
The Whittier Street Apartments opened in 1953, a brand new 200-unit public housing community in Lower Roxbury. Within ten years of its opening, the surrounding neighborhood had been leveled to make way for two new interstate highway projects: an extension of the north-to-south I-95 and a new “Inner Belt” I-695, proposed to divert traffic away from and around downtown. The planned interchange for the two new highways was to be immediately adjacent to Whittier Street. A process of land assemblage ensued, with the City and State accumulating and clearing significant swaths of land for the projects.

In the face of intense and well organized community opposition to the proposed highway projects, the governor of Massachusetts announced a moratorium on highway construction within the core metropolitan area in the early 1970s—but not before hundreds of homes, businesses and churches had already been demolished in Lower Roxbury. Large parcels of vacant land were left, creating a 40-year legacy of blight and abandonment in the neighborhood. Rampant arson in the 1970s surrounding Dudley Square added to the neighborhood decline and left more sites vacant and abandoned.

In the decades since the highway projects were canceled, the community has advanced its own vision and its own plan for rebuilding. The Lower Roxbury Community Corporation, one of the nation’s first community development corporations, renamed itself Madison Park Development Corporation to stake claim to the cleared land in and around the historical Madison Park between Whittier Street and Dudley Square. In the 1980s, the City of Boston built Melnea Cass Boulevard, a four-lane thoroughfare named for a local activist, connecting I-93 and Columbus Avenue. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts relocated the Orange Line rapid transit service to the Southwest Corridor right-of-way along Columbus Avenue that was originally cleared for I-95.



*The proposed Inner Belt alignment looking east prior to demolition. Whittier Street is at the center and to the left of the proposed interchange. The right of way was cleared in the 1960s.*



*After demolition and after the highway project had been abandoned. The yellow line shows the alignment of newly planned Melnea Cass Blvd. Whittier Street stands at the bottom of the photo.*

As a legacy of urban renewal in Lower Roxbury, vast tracts of vacant land still cut through the community and separate it from the rest of the city. Ten years ago, the community and the city created the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan to guide development of these vacant properties. Today these parcels present the greatest potential for transformative development in the Whittier neighborhood.

## 2.2 Whittier Neighborhood Today

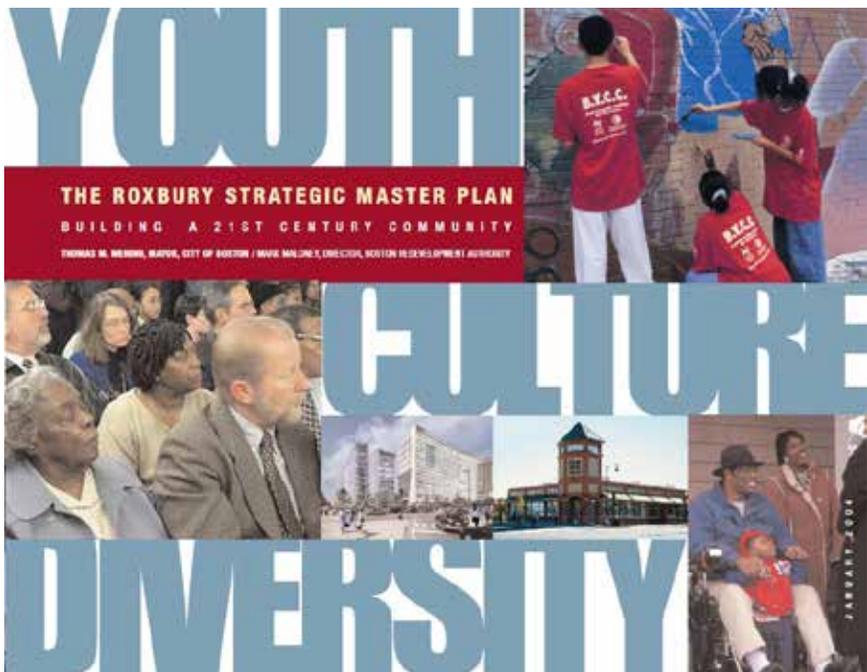
### Demographics

The Whittier neighborhood is roughly one square mile, with a population of 9,292 residing in 3,867 households. Racially and ethnically, the neighborhood is significantly more diverse than the city or the region, with 59% Black or African American and 34% Hispanic or Latino. The population is also younger, with almost 30% of residents under the age of 20, compared with 21% citywide. Female-headed households predominate at 63% compared to the city average of 16%.

Figure 2-2. Demographic Data

2010 Census	Whittier Neighborhood	Boston	Region*
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>9,292</b>	<b>617,594</b>	<b>4,552,402</b>
% White	16%	54%	79%
% Black/African-American	59%	24%	7%
% Other (including two or more races)	25%	22%	14%
% Hispanic or Latino	34%	17%	9%
% Not Hispanic or Latino	66%	83%	91%
% Under 5	10%	5%	6%
% 5 to 19	20%	16%	19%
% 20 to 34	25%	35%	20%
% 35 to 64	35%	34%	42%
% 65 and older	10%	9%	13%
<b>Total Households</b>	<b>3,867</b>	<b>252,699</b>	<b>1,760,584</b>
<b>% Female HH</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>12%</b>

\*Region refers to Boston/Cambridge/Quincy, MA-NH Metro Area  
Source: US Census Data 2010



The majority of Whittier neighborhood households are low-income: 75% receive housing or other public subsidies and 47% are below the federal poverty level (compared with 21% citywide). The unemployment rate is almost double the City’s rate at 19% compared to 10% citywide.

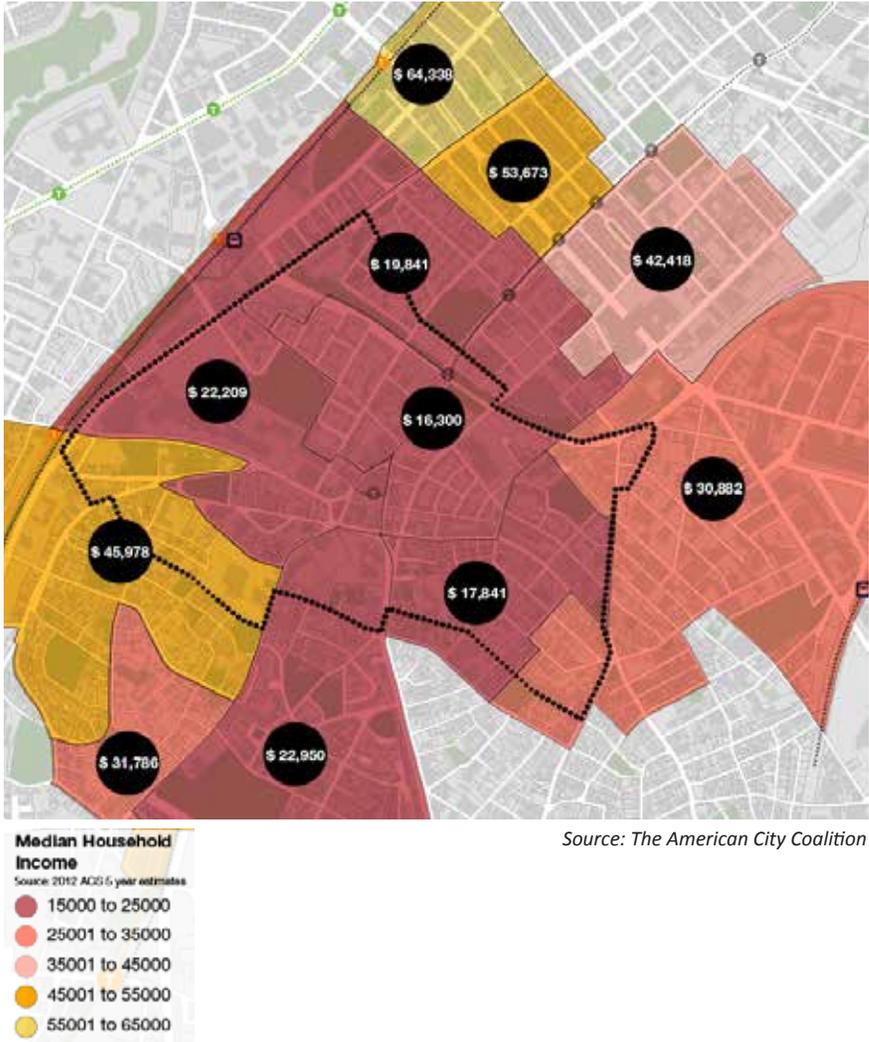
**Figure 2-3. Income Data**

2010 Median Income	Whittier Neighborhood	Boston	Region*
% under \$10,000	26%	15%	7%
% \$10-\$24,999	29%	16%	12%
% \$25,000-\$49,999	19%	19%	18%
% \$50,000-\$99,999	19%	26%	28%
% \$100,000 up	7%	24%	35%
Poverty Rate	47%	21%	11%
Median Income	\$17,462	\$52,065	\$65,981
Unemployment	19%	10%	8%
% Not in Labor Force	45%	31%	32%

Source: US Census Data 2010

There are also 608 public housing families within the neighborhood boundary, at the Whittier Street Development (199 households) and the Orchard Gardens Development (409 households); another 2,180 public housing families live within several blocks of the neighborhood boundary.

**Figure 2-4. Map of Whittier Neighborhood Household Income**



Source: The American City Coalition

### Land Use and Zoning

The Whittier Neighborhood is home to a mix of residential, institutional, retail, commercial and open space uses. The key commercial district is Dudley Square, with some additional retail existing and planned along the Tremont Street corridor. Institutional use in particular is heavy, with Northeastern University, Wentworth University, several BPS schools, Roxbury Community College, and significant City-owned vacant land. Religious and non-profit uses are also prevalent. Zoning varies widely across the neighborhood (Figure 2-5). A variety of re-zoning efforts are under way to allow for reclamation of vacant parcels in the neighborhood in accordance with the vision of the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Zoning Board of Appeals are the City's zoning authorities; however, at the community level and prior to any City approvals or variances, projects are vetted through the Roxbury Neighborhood Council generally as well as the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan (RSMP) Oversight Committee for specific parcels under the RSMP. The Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan is being routinely reviewed and vetted through the RSMP Oversight Committee in an iterative process as specific housing as well as transportation and community facility strategies are developed.



*Dudley Square*



*Roxbury Community College*



*Ruggles Assisted Living*



*Basketball Courts*

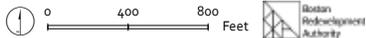
Figure 2-5. Land Use and Development Activity Map



**Land Use & Development Activity**

- Map Key**
- Current Building Use**
- Single Family Residential
  - Two Family Residential
  - Three Family Residential
  - Residential (4-6 units)
  - Apartment
  - Condominium
  - Mixed Use
  - Commercial
  - Industrial
  - Institutional
  - Government
  - Garage, Tanks, Other
- Current Development Projects (10/2013)**
- Board Approved
  - Under Construction
  - Under Review
- Other Symbols**
- City's Tax Foreclosed and Surplus Property (11/2012)
  - Publicly-owned Development Parcel
  - Assessing Parcel (FY'13)

Source: Assessing Dept., DND, BRA



Map prepared by BRA's Office of Digital Cartography & GIS, November 2013.

Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority

### Connectivity (Roads and Public Transit)

“Connectivity” is defined as the ease of traveling throughout an area in terms of directness of routes, safety, and convenience whether travelling by foot, car, bicycle or public transit. The Whittier Neighborhood scores highly on the national Walk Score scale. With the proximity of services and public transportation, the area is a “walker’s paradise”. The perception by neighborhood residents is very different, however; they describe parts of the area as unsafe and unappealing for pedestrian travel.

Routes between neighborhood destinations (e.g., Ruggles Station and Dudley Square) are not inviting, without signage and often traversing inactive or abandoned swaths of land that feel unsafe. The major streets for car traffic (Tremont Street, Melnea Cass Boulevard, Washington Street, and Malcolm X Boulevard) are generally effective for moving cars quickly around the edges of the neighborhood, but to the detriment of pedestrians and bicyclists who find the streets dangerous to cross.

Nonetheless, the area is served very well by public transportation, with major citywide transportation hubs at Ruggles Station (subway) and Dudley Station (bus). In addition, there are several Hubway Bike Stations in and around the neighborhood, a major bike path at the Southwest Corridor Greenway, and multiple bike lanes. Regional highway systems are also accessible within a mile of the neighborhood.



*Discover Roxbury Spring Garden Walk*

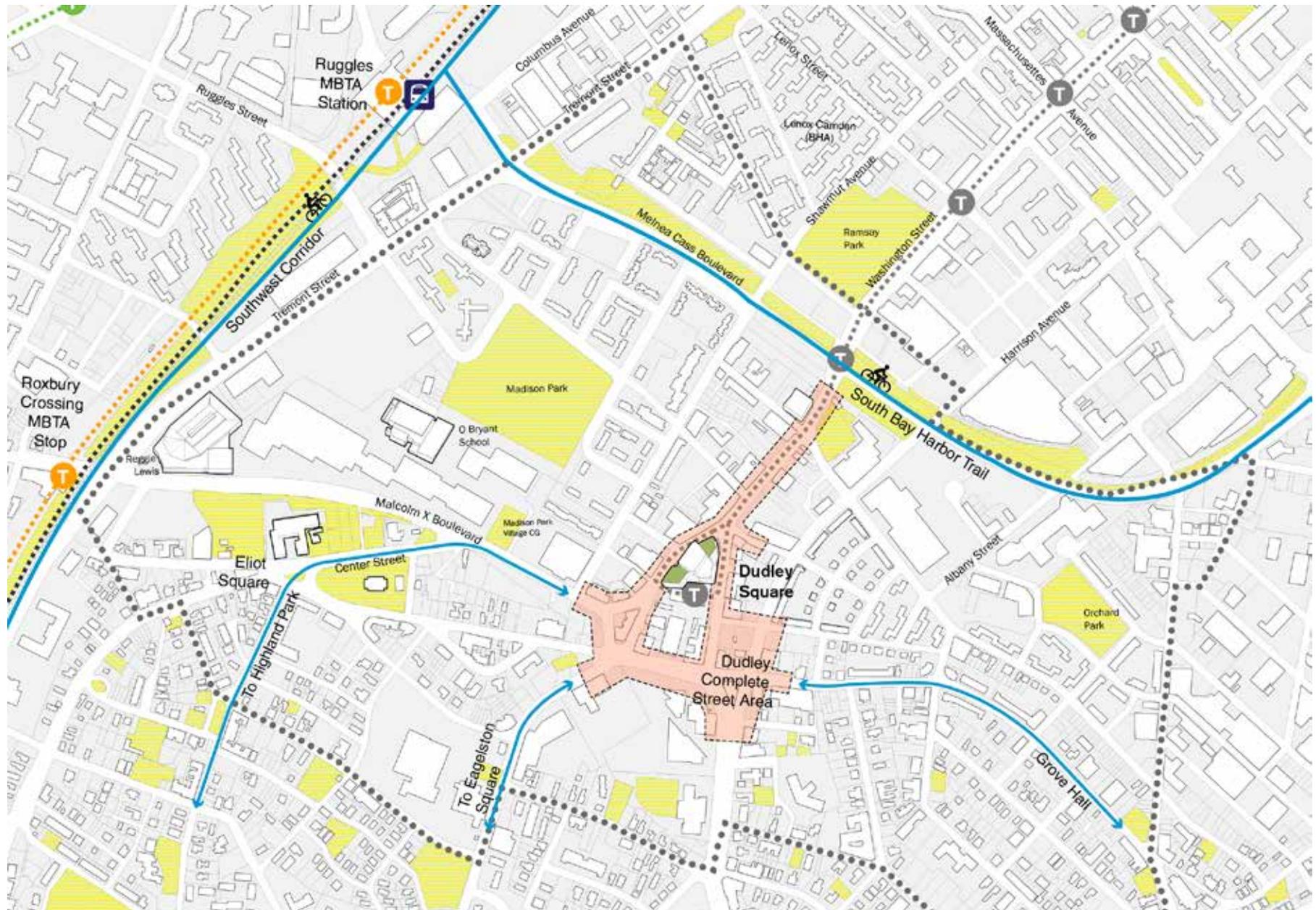


*Fall Forest Festival at Franklin Park*



*Franklin Park Kite and Bike Festival*

Figure 2-6. Roadways/Connection



Source: The American City Coalition / Utile

### Commercial and Retail

The main commercial district in the Whittier Neighborhood is Dudley Square, a major transportation and cultural hub for the region. The square, at one time a thriving retail center, fell victim to years of disinvestment, abandonment and arson in the 1960s and 1970s, and by the mid-1980s almost one-third of land in the neighborhood was vacant and/or abandoned. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and the community, with a growing commitment from the City of Boston and other partners, have been rebuilding the district from the ground up ever since. Despite this concentrated effort, retail and commercial uses have been slow to gain momentum.

Revitalization of Dudley Square has become a major city priority in the past decade with the development of the Dudley Vision and the redevelopment of the historic Ferdinand Building, which has stood vacant and blighted for decades. The Ferdinand will now be home to 500 municipal workers in addition to first-floor retail.



*Dudley Square Vision*

*Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority*

Through the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan, the goal to establish more retail and commercial uses along the Tremont Street and Melnea Cass Corridors is also now becoming more of a reality due to progress bringing longstanding vacant parcels at P3, P9 and P10 back into productive use. P3, which is 340,000 SF (nearly 8 acres) directly adjacent to the Whittier housing development, is planned for a mix of retail, office, arts center, hotel and residential uses (over one million square feet of total development); P9 at 57,238 SF will house a new hotel, ground floor retail, and 50 new residences; and P10 at 89,185 SF will include a new supermarket, offices, and warehouse space as well as new housing (66 units).

### Parks and Recreation

Roxbury has a total of 597 acres in its protected open space inventory of parks, playgrounds, squares and malls; this represents an overall ratio of 10.72 acres per thousand people, above the city average of 7.47 acres.

The Parks Department has invested several million dollars in recreational improvements over the past 15 years. Madison Park Technical Vocational High School received improvements to its ball fields and courts that benefit not only Madison Park High School and the adjacent O’Bryant School, but also the community at large in the surrounding area. Another important improvement was at Orchard Gardens, where the BHA completed a HOPE VI revitalization in the late 1990s which enlarged and restored Orchard Park. To help with the park’s renewal, the city was awarded state Urban Self-Help funds, enabling it to reconstruct the park adjacent to the public housing community.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Southwest Corridor Greenway borders the western edge of the neighborhood and provides pedestrian and bike paths connecting to neighborhoods to the north and south.

Figure 2-7. Open Space Map



Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority

### Crime and Public Safety

By any measure the Whittier neighborhood is a high-crime area, although the crime is clustered in certain hot spots. The neighborhood is located within the Boston Police Department Roxbury B-2 district, which has averaged 1.8 times the Part I violent crimes experienced in all Boston neighborhoods over the past 3 years. Within the Whittier neighborhood boundary the pattern of incidents varies from block to block, with the highest number of incidents reported at the Madison Park Vocational Technical High School (see Figure 2-9).

Public safety emerged as a key concern in the Whittier Street resident survey, with 55% of heads of households reporting discomfort with allowing their children to play in the neighborhood and 58% of teens reporting that crime, illegal drugs and fights occur often in the neighborhood. Crime causes people to avoid certain areas and crossings, restricts recreation and pedestrian circulation, and prevents those in need from accessing services in the neighborhood, according to the resident survey and feedback collected at community meetings. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the Whittier residents surveyed have known someone with first-hand experience of violent crimes, gun shots, bullying, gang-related activity, or sale or use of drugs.

The Community Impact Measurement Project led by Madison Park Development Corporation also cited neighborhood-wide safety concerns.

While crime watch activities have been increasingly successful near the Orchard Gardens and Madison Park Village developments, these efforts have not been replicated near the Whittier Street/Ruggles edge of the neighborhood. Historical efforts by the Boston Police Department to promote a crime watch group here have not been successful.

Figure 2-8. CIM Public Safety—Residents’ Safety Concerns

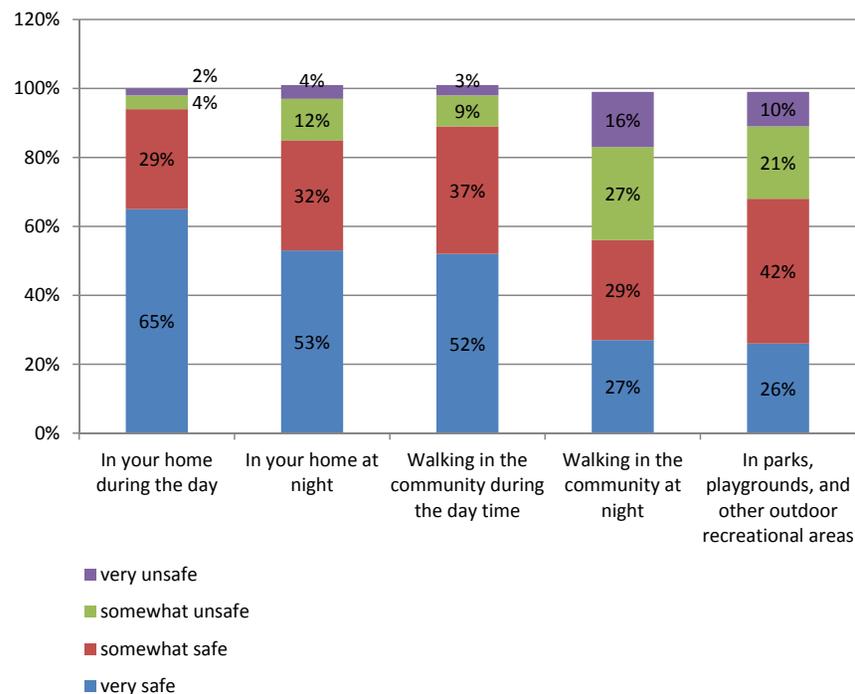
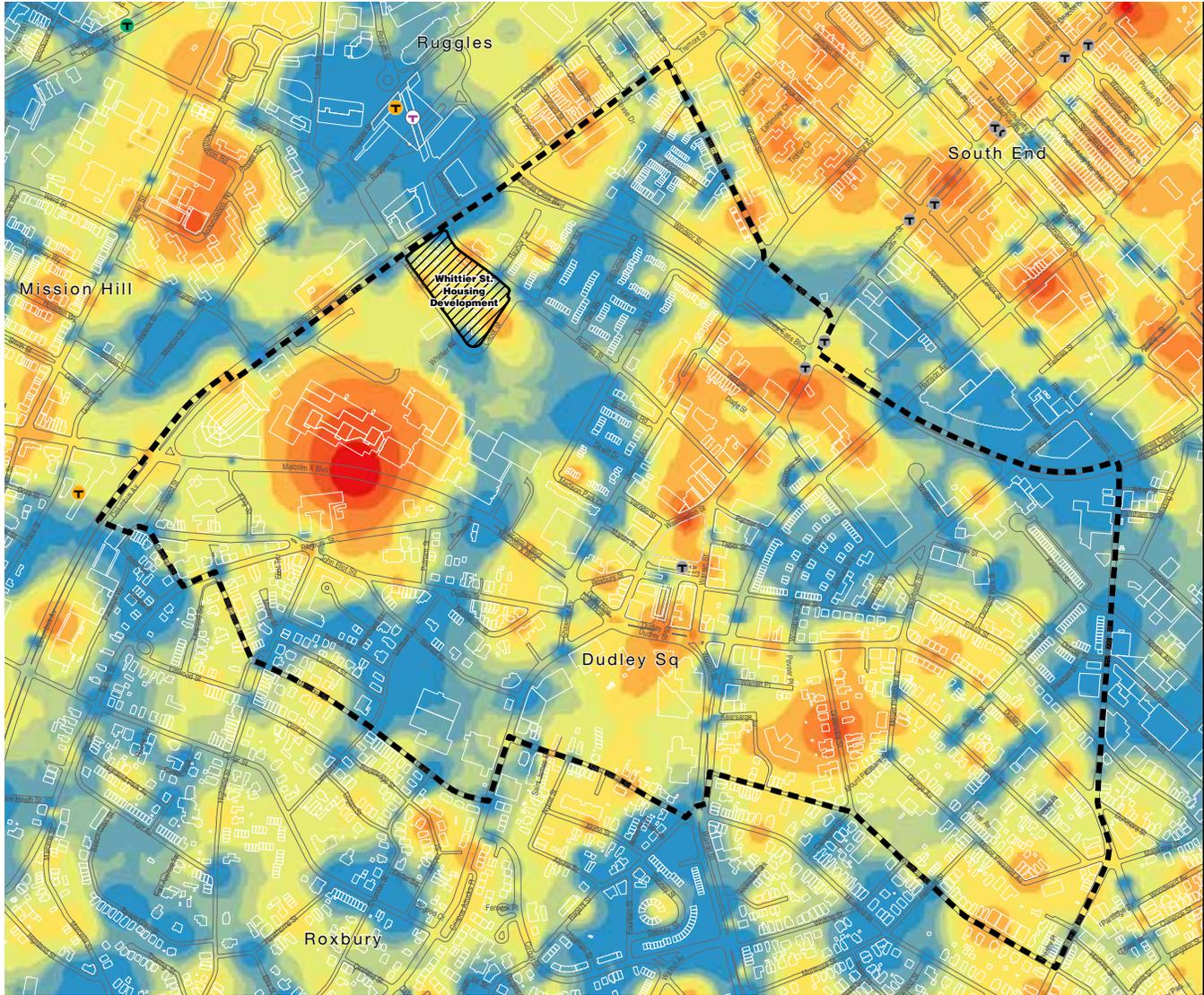


Figure 2-9. Crime Heat Map



Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority



Crime Heat Map

All Crime Types, 2007-2011  
 NUMBER OF INCIDENTS

- 1 - 4
- 5
- 5 - 6
- 6
- 7 - 9
- 10 - 15
- 16 - 27
- 28 - 56
- 57 - 119
- 120 - 259

Source: Boston Police Department.



### Housing Profile

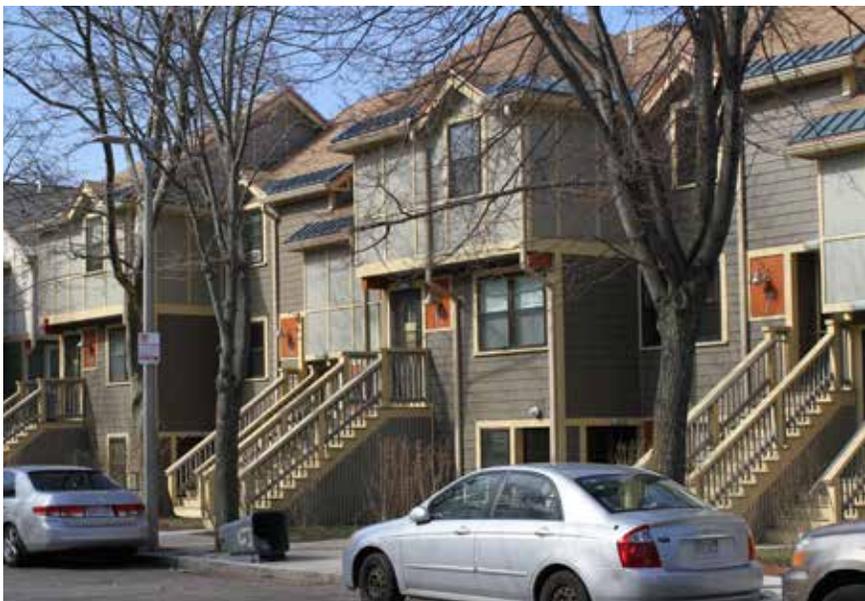
Boston has been ranked as one of the five highest-cost cities in the nation for many years by Forbes and Huffington Post, at times rivaling New York City and San Francisco for its soaring rents and growing lack of affordability. The Roxbury neighborhood has seen a 48% increase in median home values over the past five years. Yet, the Whittier neighborhood generally is lagging behind this resurgence.

According to the 2010 Census, there are 3,867 housing units in the neighborhood, averaging 2.2 persons per household. While vacancy rates are generally low in the high-cost housing market in Boston, there is a slightly higher than average vacancy rate in the neighborhood at 7.32% versus 6.6% for the region. Far fewer homeowners live in the neighborhood than the city or region, with only 9% homeowner households versus 34% citywide and 62% regionally. Likely for this reason, foreclosure rates are somewhat lower (less than 1%) than other parts of Roxbury (3.81%) or the City as whole (1.39%).

Median assessed home values in the Whittier Neighborhood (\$233,650) are lower than either the broader Roxbury neighborhood (\$246,300) or the City (\$379,000). At the same time, median rents, outside of subsidized housing in the neighborhood, are high: \$2025 versus \$1500 in Roxbury and \$2250 citywide. This strong rental market is an opportunity for potential improvements, but it is also an indication of the broadening gap between low-income residents and their neighbors.

Lower Roxbury—and the Whittier neighborhood in particular—has a very high proportion of affordable housing: 75% of the housing units in the Whittier neighborhood are public housing or other subsidized housing.

Housing stock in the Whittier neighborhood is typically multi-family houses, with some larger mid-rise and high-rise apartment buildings; only 9% of housing units are owner-occupied, compared to 34% for Boston and 62% for Massachusetts. There are three large developments



*Madison Park Village*



*Whittier Development*

within the neighborhood boundary: the 200-unit Whittier Street Apartments (the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan target site); Madison Park Village, a 546-unit community of townhomes and flats along with two high-rise apartment buildings; and Orchard Gardens, a 409-unit HOPE VI community of townhomes and one mid-rise. In addition, Roxse Homes is a 346-unit affordable site on the northern edge of the neighborhood.

The Whittier Street public housing development was built in 1953. Its deteriorated, institutional buildings are instantly recognizable as public housing, set apart and out of context with the surrounding mix of residential and institutional uses in the neighborhood. The severity of the distress and the inadequacy of the design across apartment units, site and infrastructure are detailed in Chapter 5: Housing Strategy.



*Orchard Gardens K-8 School*

## Schools

Boston does not currently have a neighborhood-based school system. As a legacy of the court order to desegregate the city's schools in 1974, Boston developed three school "zones" and an elaborate lottery process to assign children to schools citywide in recognition of—and in order to resolve—a longstanding issue of poorly performing schools in minority neighborhoods. The policy has created a unique dilemma, where kids often go to school outside their own community, and frequently go to different schools than their neighbors or even their siblings. At the Whittier development, the 153 school-age children attend 54 different schools; at the Orchard Gardens development, the 210 school-age children attend 62 different city schools. The School Committee formally voted to change this policy in 2013, and a multi-year transition has begun that will result in more local choices for each family in the future. However, even when the distance traveled to school is reduced, Whittier kids will continue to go to a number of different schools inside and outside of the neighborhood boundary. Hence, successful educational programming that is neighborhood-based must take this system into account.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) has five schools within the Whittier Neighborhood: The Orchard Gardens K-8 Pilot School, the Timilty Middle School, the Dearborn Middle School (in transition to a STEM-focused 6-12 school), Madison Park Technical Vocational High School and the John D. O'Bryant School of Math and Sciences. Together, these schools serve 23 (just over 15%) of the 153 children from the Whittier public housing development. The following chart summarizes the enrollment and performance data for these schools (with Level 1 being a high-performing school and Level 4 being a very low performing school).

Wherever Whittier kids go to school, dispersed within this complex system, in general public housing kids are not faring well in BPS schools. The average BPS student is already struggling with a 35% third grade reading proficiency, a 34% eighth grade math proficiency, 91.7% average attendance (14 days absent per year compared with the statewide average of 9 days), and a 66% graduation rate. BPS data confirms that BHA kids on average are performing worse than their non-BHA peers on

all of these measures. BHA kids are concentrated in poor performing schools (Level 3 and below). Of the 16 schools where BHA residents make up more than 20% of the student body, 11 are among the lowest performing 20% of schools, and only two are rated to be “meeting gap narrowing goals.”

Figure 2-10. Neighborhood School Profile

School	Grades	Enrollment	# Whittier Kids	Performance
Orchard Gardens	K-8	766	7	Level 1
Dearborn Middle	6-8	242	0	Level 4*
Timilty Middle	6-8	692	7	Level 3*
Madison Park High	9-12	1259	6	Level 3*
John D. O’Bryant	7-12	1313	3	Level 1

\* Level 3 is among the lowest performing 20% of schools. Level 4 is among the lowest achieving and least improving schools. See [profiles.doe.mass.edu](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu)

Current Market and Development Opportunities

A recent market study projected very strong residential market rents for the Whittier neighborhood, ranging from \$1750 for a one-bedroom to \$2750 for a 4-bedroom unit (\$2.19 to \$2.50 per square foot). Retail projections were more modest at \$24-26 per square foot. The City of Boston is planning to add 30,000 housing units by 2020 to meet the demand of a growing population. This aggressive goal highlights the need to build densely on remaining vacant or cleared land throughout the city.

The vacant parcels that have stood for decades blighting the area and representing the City’s disinvestment have more recently become viewed as the key to the neighborhood’s revitalization. A broad community engagement process led to the creation of the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan in 2004 to address the ongoing negative impacts of these abandoned properties. Three parcels in particular—P3, P9 and P10—have a long planning history and have been identified as key parcels for the future of the neighborhood. All three parcels now have designated developers, and P10 will include Whittier replacement housing.



Parcel 9 Planned Development



Parcel 10 Planned Development

Figure 2-11. Map of Schools and Colleges in the Neighborhood



### 2.3 Parallel Planning Efforts

There are many parallel planning efforts underway in Lower Roxbury. The Roxbury Strategic Master Plan is the City of Boston's official land-use plan for the Roxbury district. With respect to housing, the plan strives to balance the affordability needs of current residents with the desire to improve economic conditions in Roxbury, laying out three parameters: 1) facilitate the development of a mix of housing types at different levels of affordability; 2) maintain and enhance the quality of public and other subsidized housing; 3) create Transit-Oriented Development around Ruggles Station.

The Mission 180 Community Contract, which grew out of a broad-based planning process launched in 2011 by the Boston office of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and Nuestra Comunidad, lays out the following housing goals: 1) create structured and affordable housing options for young adults ages 18-26; and 2) create housing-mentoring-support services connections for young adults.

A more detailed description of local planning and engagement efforts is presented in **Chapter 3: Community Engagement**. The Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan embraces the goals of these parallel efforts and is consistent with other key City planning documents, including the BHA's Annual Plan, the City's Consolidated Plan, and the Metro Area Planning Council Regional Sustainable Communities Plan.

Rooted in these broader community planning efforts, but more squarely focused upon the Whittier Neighborhood and its diverse community, the Whittier Choice Neighborhood planning process has served to build a bridge between the past and the future guided by substantial community input and engagement.

## Chapter 3

# Community Engagement

A core principle of Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan is the continuous and meaningful engagement of neighborhood residents and stakeholders. Whittier Choice endeavors to build upon and bring cohesion to the planning efforts already underway in the neighborhood, while adding a focus on strategies to benefit low-income residents.

### 3.1 Parallel Community Engagement Efforts

Several planning initiatives overlap in the Whittier Neighborhood, all of which have included substantial community outreach and involvement:

- **The Roxbury Strategic Master Plan (RSMP).** The Roxbury Strategic Master Plan represents a commitment to build a more socially and economically vibrant community within Roxbury. The plan is primarily about land use and reclamation of the significant parcels of vacant land in Lower Roxbury as an engine for economic growth and social revitalization. The two-year planning effort that resulted in the 2004 RSMP involved numerous working meetings and public workshops that attracted hundreds of residents and stakeholders.

Implementation of the RSMP is coordinated by the RSMP Oversight Committee which meets twice a month to review the status of development proposals. The Committee is comprised of community leaders, residents and business owners as well as elected officials and representatives from the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

- **Boston Promise Initiative.** Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, the City's Promise Neighborhood implementation grantee, has

launched a major place-based strategy to improve under-performing schools in the community, and improve outcomes for youth.

- **Metro Area Planning Council Sustainable Communities Plan.** MetroFuture is the regional sustainability plan for the greater Boston area. The plan promotes efficient transportation systems, conservation of land and natural resources, improvement of the health and education of residents, and an increase in equitable economic development opportunities for prosperity.
- **Northeastern University Master Plan and Community Task Force.** Since April 2012, Northeastern University has engaged the neighborhood to complete its latest (2013-2023) Institutional Master Plan (IMP), which describes the university's future development plans and its community benefits program. The IMP will result in major new housing, recreational and academic uses on and near campus, as well as a community benefits program to support economic development and community facilities in Lower Roxbury and Mission Hill.
- **Mission 180.** Led by Nuestra Comunidad, a local community development corporation, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Mission 180 was launched in 2011 as a collaborative community organizing process to connect residents and organizations in order to define the future of Roxbury. The Mission 180 program has conducted

several large community meetings and more than 100 interviews with residents. From these conversations several focus areas have been identified: economic development, community safety, housing and young adults, arts, history, and activism.

- **Dudley Vision.** Dudley Square is the key commercial district within the Whittier Choice Neighborhood Initiative boundary. The Dudley Square Vision Project, which was launched by the City of Boston in June, 2007, encompasses three key elements: real estate development (creation of two new state of the art municipal buildings and renovations to another), programmatic development to enhance and build upon the strengths of this commercial district, and community engagement. The City created the Dudley Vision Advisory Task Force to provide community perspective on issues related to the programmatic goals and outcome of this Project.
- **Melnea Cass Corridor Transformation and Friends of Melnea Cass.** The Boston Transportation Department is working with the Roxbury community to redesign Melnea Cass Boulevard with the goal of making it a neighborhood friendly corridor. The Friends of Melnea Cass is a grass-roots organization formed to advocate for the community's vision. The scope includes the development of roadway and streetscape designs that create a pedestrian friendly environment, ensure efficient traffic flow, accommodate transit vehicles and bicycles and promote economic development.
- **The American City Coalition.** The American City Coalition (TACC) has worked to advance and transform distressed communities since 1994. At the neighborhood level, TACC develops and implements initiatives to de-concentrate poverty and increase opportunity for families. TACC has provided technical support and analysis to promote the revitalization of the Whittier neighborhood and provides ongoing support to the RSMPOC.

- **Madison Park Development Corporation Community Impact Measurement Project.** Madison Park Development Corporation conducted an extensive initiative in 2013 to gather perspectives on quality of life issues in the Whittier neighborhood.

Whittier CNI builds on these ongoing community planning efforts, but with a special commitment to engaging public housing and other low-income residents of the community. The result has been improved coordination and cohesiveness across these efforts.

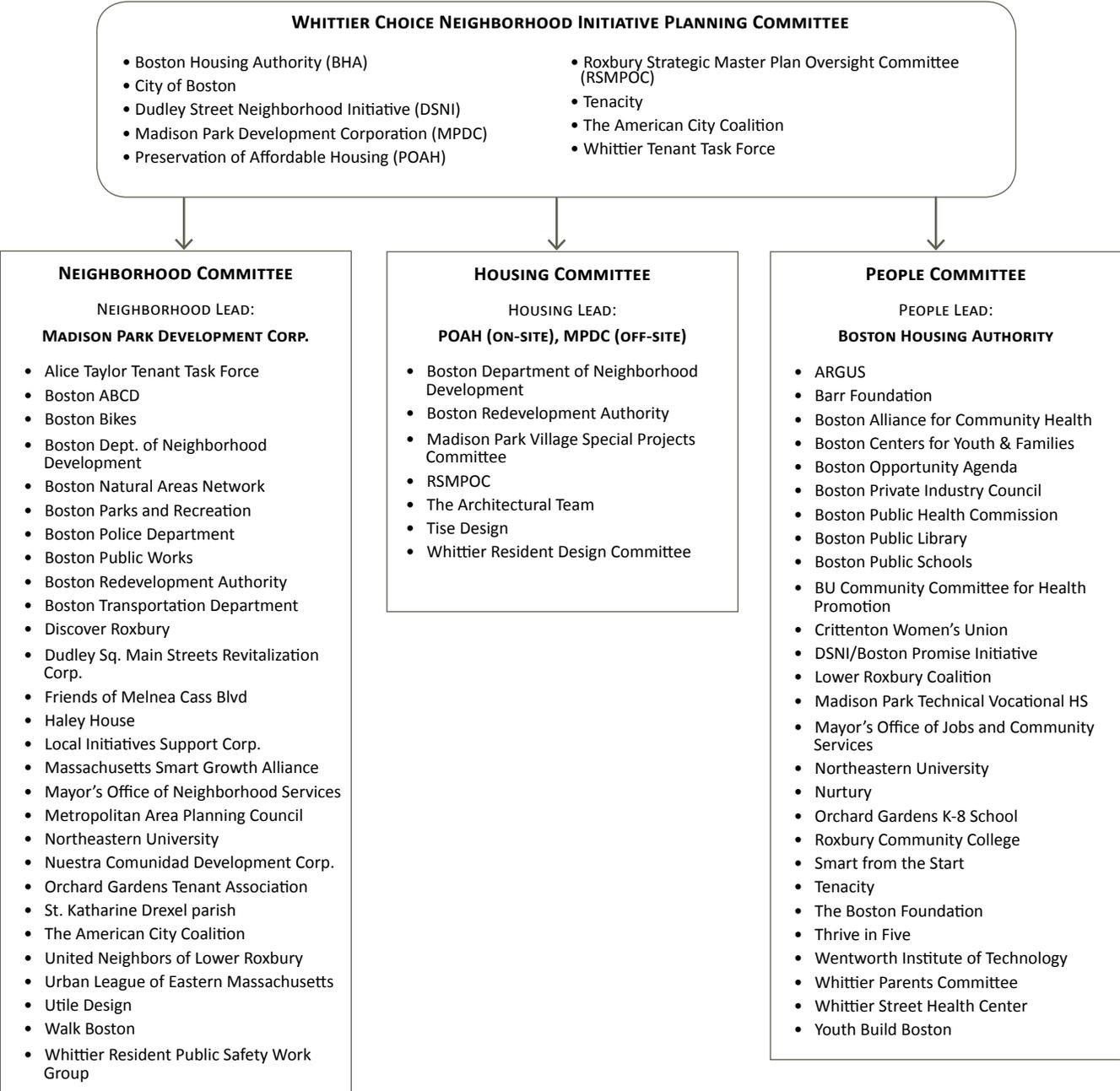
### 3.2 Whittier Choice Neighborhood Engagement

The Whittier CNI team has organized and participated in more than 150 community meetings, surveys, focus groups, workshops, and other forums since October 2012. A variety of venues and formats has provided multiple entry points for all stakeholders in a transparent and inclusive planning process. This multi-level engagement has served to build the capacity of residents, including the Whittier Street public housing residents, to participate fully in the planning process. The engagement process has strengthened relationships on many levels: among residents living within the Whittier Street housing development; between Whittier residents and their neighbors; among neighborhood institutions; and between the city government and its constituents in the neighborhood. The process is ongoing and iterative with continuous outreach and information dissemination. Specific engagement methods are outlined below.

### 3.3 Whittier Choice Neighborhood Planning Structure

The CNI Planning structure follows the CNI framework of Neighborhood, Housing and People. The planning process has utilized existing advisory and engagement forums as much as possible, while focusing upon new and unique challenges associated with Whittier CNI.

Figure 3-1. Planning Organizational Structure



### Advisory Committees

There is a core Advisory Committee associated with each of the Housing, People and Neighborhood elements of Whittier CNI. For the Neighborhood element, the Advisory Committee is comprised of members from existing neighborhood initiatives: Mission 180, the Friends of Melnea Cass, and the Dudley Vision. For the Housing element, the Advisory Committee is the existing Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee, which is currently overseeing all of the vacant land reclamation in the neighborhood. For the People element, Whittier CNI formed a new Advisory forum, the Opportunity Consortium. This group represents the rich array of educational, workforce, youth, and health agencies in the Whittier Neighborhood.

### Strategic Partners

The CNI Strategic Partners are the core organizations that will implement the Whittier CNI Plan. These partners meet regularly to share information, de-brief on broader engagement forums, and to identify next steps. Strategic Partnership Agreements are in place or pending among the following organizations:

- Preservation of Affordable Housing: On-site Housing
- Madison Park Development Corporation: Off-site Housing
- Madison Park Development Corporation: Neighborhood
- Boston Housing Authority: People
- Crittenton Women's Union: Income/Asset-Building
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative/Boston Promise Initiative: Education
- Nurtury, Inc.: Early Education
- Tenacity, Inc.: Youth
- Whittier Street Health Center: Health

In addition, BHA and its strategic partners have formed strong partnerships with Boston Public Schools, Boston Police, Northeastern University and Roxbury Community College.

### 3.4 Methods of Engagement

CNI engagement happens through meetings, community forums, door-to-door outreach, bus and walking tours, surveys, focus groups, planning workshops, a web site, and social media. The CNI team works to make the process accessible, transparent, and inclusive. The forums are often multilingual. Data, information, and developing strategies are presented in an iterative process so that there is growing consensus on the plan, and/or an opportunity to change direction if needed.

#### Stakeholder/Partner meetings

The Strategic Partners meet weekly to keep the process focused and moving. In addition, in any given week the CNI team is meeting with institutional and non-profit partners, advisors, community organizations and residents.

#### Neighborhood Engagement

The CNI team has had regular and meaningful participation in a number of parallel neighborhood forums during the CNI planning process:

- Monthly Roxbury Strategic Master Plan meetings (as both participants and presenters)
- Neighborhood-wide youth focus groups organized by Madison Park, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and Boston Housing Authority
- Meetings with local civic organizations, including the United Neighbors of Lower Roxbury and resident organizations at nearby public housing developments
- Monthly Northeastern Institutional Master Planning meetings
- Regular meetings with more than 20 services organizations operating in the Whittier neighborhood

This engagement has culminated in four key CNI neighborhood public forums: 1) a Neighborhood Open House in October 2013, where over 100 local residents came to learn about Choice Neighborhood, weigh in on priorities and strategies, and engage in fun activities with their

Figure 3-2. Planning Timeline

		2012												2013												2014											
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
<b>1.</b>	<b>ENGAGE COMMUNITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin monthly Resident Meetings</li> <li>• Conduct Resident Capacity Building Charrettes</li> <li>• Procure Developer and Neighborhood Lead</li> <li>• Begin quarterly presentations to RSMPOC</li> <li>• Convene the Opportunity Consortium</li> </ul>																																				
<b>2.</b>	<b>ASSESS NEEDS and OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whittier Resident Needs Assessment</li> <li>• Neighborhood Needs Assessment (CIM)</li> <li>• Collaborate with partner organizations</li> </ul>																																				
<b>3.</b>	<b>ESTABLISH THE VISION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident Design Charrettes</li> <li>• Community Open House: Nov 2013</li> <li>• Neighborhood Charrette: Feb 2014</li> </ul>																																				
<b>4.</b>	<b>PREPARE THE PLAN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary Outline: Oct 2013</li> <li>• Draft Plan: Apr 2014</li> <li>• Community Comment</li> <li>• Final Plan: Oct 2014</li> </ul>																																				



*Neighborhood Charrette*

families; 2) a Neighborhood Improvements Charrette in February 2014 that brought together residents, Friends of Melnea Cass, Boston Alliance for Community Health, Boston Transportation, Boston Centers for Youth and Families, elected officials, Boston LISC, Boston Police, Boston Bikes, Northeastern University, Roxbury Community College and over 20 other organizations to advance the planning for critical neighborhood infrastructure improvements under CNI; 3) a Community Forum in June 2014 that included a neighborhood walking tour to highlight some possible physical transformations of the streetscape and a historic joint discussion among Madison Park Village residents and Whittier Street residents on shared uses of a new neighborhood center; and 4) a drop-in community info session in September 2014 in the heart of Dudley Square that followed several well-attended Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee meetings to discuss the necessary zoning changes that will facilitate the implementation of the Whittier Choice vision.

A number of other events have also been held to bring neighborhood residents to the Whittier housing development, including a piano installation as part of the Play Me I'm Yours street piano festival in Boston in fall 2013, and a weekly playgroup to engage the parents of small children.

### **Neighborhood Needs Assessment**

Madison Park Development Corporation (MPDC) conducted a special initiative in 2013 to gather perspectives on quality of life issues from a randomly selected group of residents living in the neighborhood. MPDC surveyed 202 residents about safety considerations, community engagement, and public services. The survey instruments were developed by the nationally recognized Success Measures and utilized by over 200 community development corporations nationwide through the NeighborWorks® America network. Given the focus on arts and culture in Roxbury, MPDC added several questions to learn more about residents' interest in arts programming. The physical condition of 49 blocks and 100 buildings in the Whittier Neighborhood were also surveyed as part of the process. A summary of survey results are shown in Figure 3-3.

Figure 3-3. MPDC Neighborhood Survey Results

### Neighborhood Satisfaction Levels

- 88% of residents report being very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the community.
- 87% of residents are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the schools.
- 84% of residents would either definitely or probably recommend the community to others as a good place to live.

### Residents Like...

- Convenient location and easy to live here without a car
- Community oriented
- Improved levels of safety
- Quiet
- Improvements to apartment units and satisfaction with the management company
- Access to art and culture in Roxbury

### Residents are Concerned About...

- Public Safety – violence, shootings, drugs, vandalism, unsupervised children
- Unacceptable noise levels

### Safety Perceptions

- 32% do not feel safe in parks, playgrounds, and other outdoor areas.
- 44% do not feel safe walking in the community at night.
- 35% suggested that children and youth who are playing outside are either somewhat unsafe (26%) or very unsafe (9%).
- 17% reported their concern that children and youth who are going to and from school are somewhat unsafe (15%) or very unsafe (2%).

### Resident Engagement

- A majority of residents are willing to become involved to improve the community and help others. Slightly more than 50% are very willing or willing to increase their leadership skills to influence change and work with others to make things happen.
- Most residents feel that they can make a positive difference in the community; 56% said they could make a great deal of difference or a fair amount, and 27% responded they could make some difference. Only 17% said little or none.
- In thinking about the future, more than 60% of residents are optimistic about the community improving a lot or some; only 7% of residents thought that the community would decline some or a lot.

### Public Services

- The police response time was rated lower than other services: 66% very good/ good for the police department as contrasted with 86% for trash collection, 83% for ambulance, and 83% for fire department.
- The police department received more fair, poor or very poor ratings: 34% fair, poor, or very poor for the police department, contrasted with 16% fair or poor for the fire department, 15% fair or poor for ambulance services, and 14% fair or poor for trash collection.

### Engagement at the Whittier Development

The CNI planning process began with engagement of Whittier Street public housing residents. Meetings with residents began prior to the CNI planning grant award and have continued at least monthly since that time. These meetings typically draw 30-50 participants.

One of the first goals of the CNI process was to establish an elected resident organization at the Whittier site, which had not existed in over a decade. With help from community organizers at the Whittier Street Health Center, a new Whittier Street Task Force was elected in the summer of 2012. The Task Force meets regularly with the CNI team and helps to plan the larger resident meetings at the site.

Once the CNI team established a relationship at the Whittier site, residents began to participate in other CNI forums outside of Whittier. In addition, more and more partners became engaged in resident meetings at the site. In particular, the BHA is now regularly joined by the Preservation of Affordable Housing and Madison Park Development Corporation for every resident meeting.

Meeting topics have included the Choice Neighborhoods program, the resident vision for a new community, planning and design charrettes, tours of other redevelopment sites, public safety and education discussions, and workshops to gather feedback about services needs. Two additional venues for resident engagement have included the Whittier Parent Club, which has met five times since its inception in January 2013 and the Whittier Street Design subcommittee, which meets periodically to give feedback about proposed design elements to the architects and developers.

The planning team made available a range of technical resources to help residents explore key design concepts and planning elements. Large aerial maps and CAD visuals as well as 3-D building blocks helped residents to delve into issues of massing, density and shadow effects. A Spanish interpreter attended every resident meeting and bilingual flyers about these meetings were mailed to every household.



*Whittier Neighborhood Forums*

### Resident Survey

Of the 195 households at Whittier, 136 (or 70%) responded to a 90-question survey conducted over a 2-week period in March 2013. Several Whittier residents assisted BHA staff in contacting all households to schedule appointments to complete the survey. Several factors contributed to the strong response rate:

- Households received gift cards for completing the survey
- Every household received a bilingual survey and had the option of filling it out themselves or making an appointment with a survey team member
- Interpreters fluent in Spanish, Creole, Somali, and Cantonese helped to contact residents and to complete surveys
- Residents of other housing developments trained as community health workers were on the survey team
- The survey team conducted interviews on site in the community room and also made house calls for the elderly and disabled

The survey gathered data on household demographics; employment, educational and health needs for both adults and children; support service needs; neighborhood improvements; public safety concerns; and transportation, housing and site design preferences. The survey team reported the results to Whittier residents in June 2013. A more detailed discussion of survey results can be found in the Needs Assessment Summary in the People Strategy chapter.

### Youth Engagement

The planning team worked with three youth organizations and the Madison Park Vocational Technical High School to organize five youth focus groups. Over 50 teens participated, providing critical feedback about their neighborhood and what improvements would make the most difference to youth.

An additional engagement strategy grew out of these youth focus groups, which highlighted the need for more safe play spaces for kids around the neighborhood. Several teens helped the BHA to implement

a flexible play system at the site that provided something fun for kids to do as well as a way for BHA to engage parents about CNI planning. BHA procured Imagination Playground playblocks and established weekly play dates with resident volunteers. Over 60 children have participated in this program. Parents of young children often stay to help supervise, taking advantage of the opportunity to meet other parents and learn about Whittier Choice activities. As a result many of these parents have participated in the Whittier Parents Club, the Parent University sponsored by the Boston Public Schools, and the Parent Choice Network sponsored by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative.



*Parent Gatherings*

### 3.5 Capacity Building

The Whittier CNI engagement strategy has incorporated several successful capacity-building efforts to ensure that the planning process itself is a positive change agent for the neighborhood, and builds the capacity of residents to participate in and shape the future of the neighborhood.

#### Whittier Resident Organization Training and Support

Whittier CNI has been working with the newly formed Whittier Development Resident Task Force to provide training and support for this organization to strengthen impact on behalf of the Whittier community and to participate fully in the CNI planning process. Trainings to date have focused upon leadership development and organizational structure.

#### Design Charrettes

Early in the planning process, the CNI team held a series of three Design Charrettes with the Whittier public housing residents to build a knowledge base for residents to participate in broader planning forums, particularly focused upon the physical development process. Residents were able to explore the concepts of density, varying building types, and trade-offs (e.g. the impact of many townhouses on the number of replacement units versus a mix of elevator and townhouse units, or how the need for parking and open space impacts the configuration of housing at the site).

Through these planning sessions, which were each attended by more than 50 residents, participants were very vocal about their views and provided valuable feedback to the planning team which shifted the direction of the physical design development. For example, residents felt strongly that there should be some sort of opening or gateway into the development off of Tremont Street rather than walling off the site. They also made clear the need for on-site outdoor play spaces.

These forums also served to catalog what residents like about their community and wish to retain for the future, and what issues, particularly public safety, need to be addressed through design and other measures to allow the neighborhood to reach its potential.

#### Leadership Development

A number of leadership development forums have been held during the planning process to help build capacity and resident leadership amongst neighborhood residents. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) held three leadership development/community organizing workshops that drew participation from throughout the neighborhood, including the Whittier development. DSNI also held Parent Network monthly meetings which provided support and training for local parents on parenting skills and navigating the Boston Public Schools system.

Madison Park Development Corporation (MPDC) also convened a highly successful Roxbury Resident Leadership Summit. The summit attracted over 70 community activists, neighborhood organizations, and local residents (including 10 Whittier development residents), to learn about planned developments in the area and to meet with elected officials. Two local CDCs (MPDC and Nuestra Comunidad) presented their development plans for housing and economic development in the neighborhood, and BHA presented preliminary site designs for the Whittier Choice redevelopment.

It is notable that these leadership forums were held off-site from the Whittier development, and many Whittier residents who participated had not previously attended any off-site community forums.

### 3.6 Communications

Whittier CNI has communicated regularly in a multi-modal and multi-lingual manner in order to optimize information sharing. We communicate through flyers, door-to-door outreach, email lists, a web site (<http://www.poah.org/whittierchoice/>) and through Facebook and Twitter.

## Chapter 4

# Neighborhood Strategy

## 4.1 Overall Vision for the Neighborhood

Whittier Neighborhood strategies are based upon the community vision established during the planning process:

*The vision for the Whittier Neighborhood is a resilient community that celebrates its history and welcomes residents from all walks of life. Building on its rich heritage, the neighborhood is steadily modernizing into an attractive, innovative district that has quality, sustainable housing for a variety of income levels; safe, lively streets; excellent schools and economic opportunities for residents; and a thriving array of community services and amenities.*

## 4.2 Priority Needs and Assets

The Whittier community has recognized and articulated the following key priority neighborhood needs:

- **Residents Missing Out on Benefits of Growth.** The significant investment coming into the Whittier Neighborhood is not benefitting low-income residents through services, amenities and opportunities.
- **Difficulty Accessing Supportive Resources.** Residents are not aware of or find it difficult to access neighborhood resources.

- **High Crime.** Public safety concerns drive isolation in the neighborhood, and perceived risks impede access to local services and amenities.
- **Pedestrian Needs.** The Whittier Neighborhood is not friendly for pedestrian and recreational opportunities.

At the same time, there is broad consensus that the neighborhood has significant assets upon which the Transformation Plan is built.

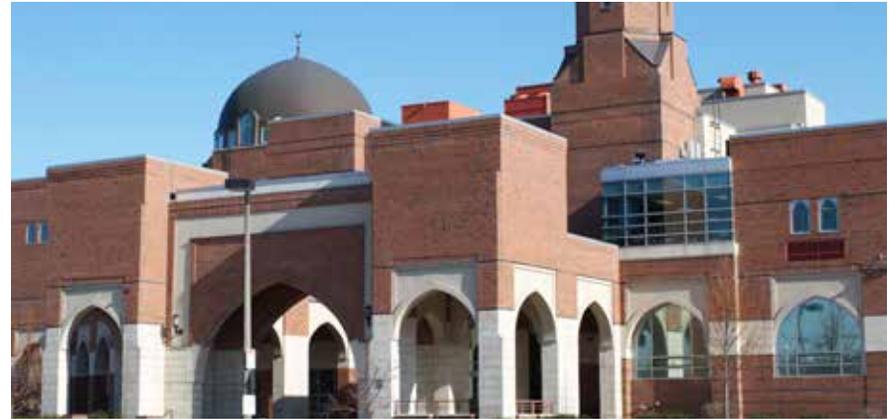
Neighborhood assets are enumerated in Figure 4-1 and include proximity to downtown, regional transportation, jobs and services; institutions of higher learning; an award-winning community health center and close proximity to world-class hospitals; a major commercial hub revitalization underway in Dudley Square; dozens of active churches as well as the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center; and major transportation hubs at Ruggles Station and the Dudley Bus depot.

The neighborhood is also slated for significant investment that will vastly improve the physical experience of the area, as noted in Figure 4-3.

Planned investment totals more than \$2 billion. However, the Whittier community recognizes that this investment must be managed within the context of targeted strategies to ensure that the benefits of investment accrue to neighborhood residents and support the neighborhood vision. Whittier CNI has sparked the community conversation to develop these strategies.



Cultural mural near Dudley Square



Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center



Proposed expansion of Ruggles Transit Node



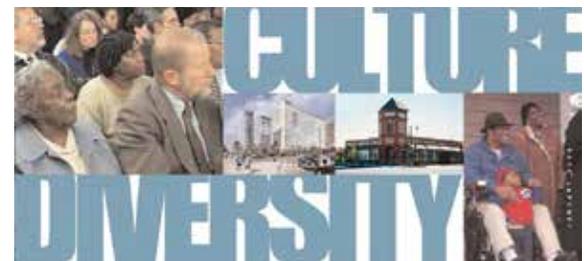
Dudley Bus Depot



Retail on Washington and Ruggles Streets

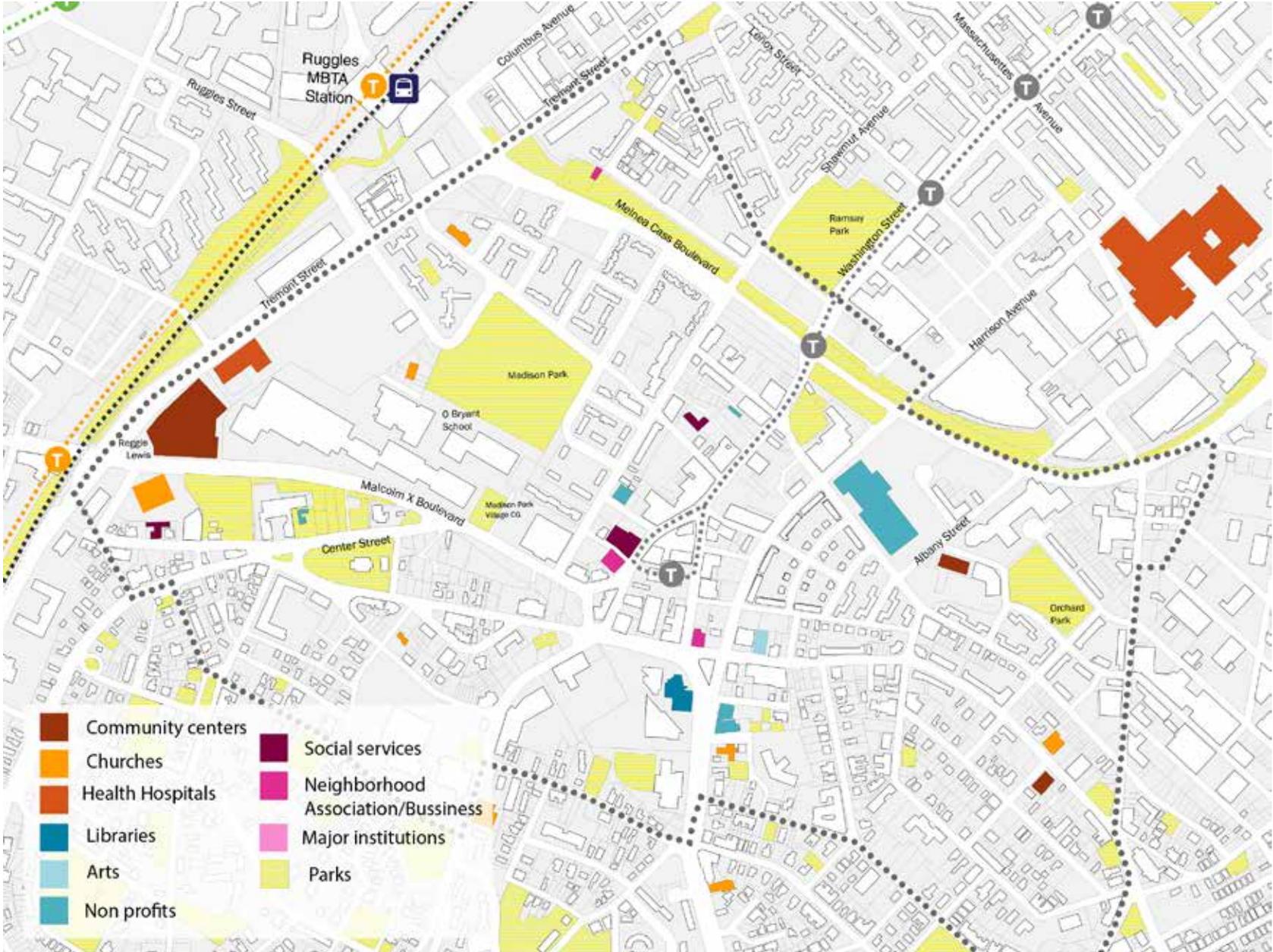


Dudley Vision



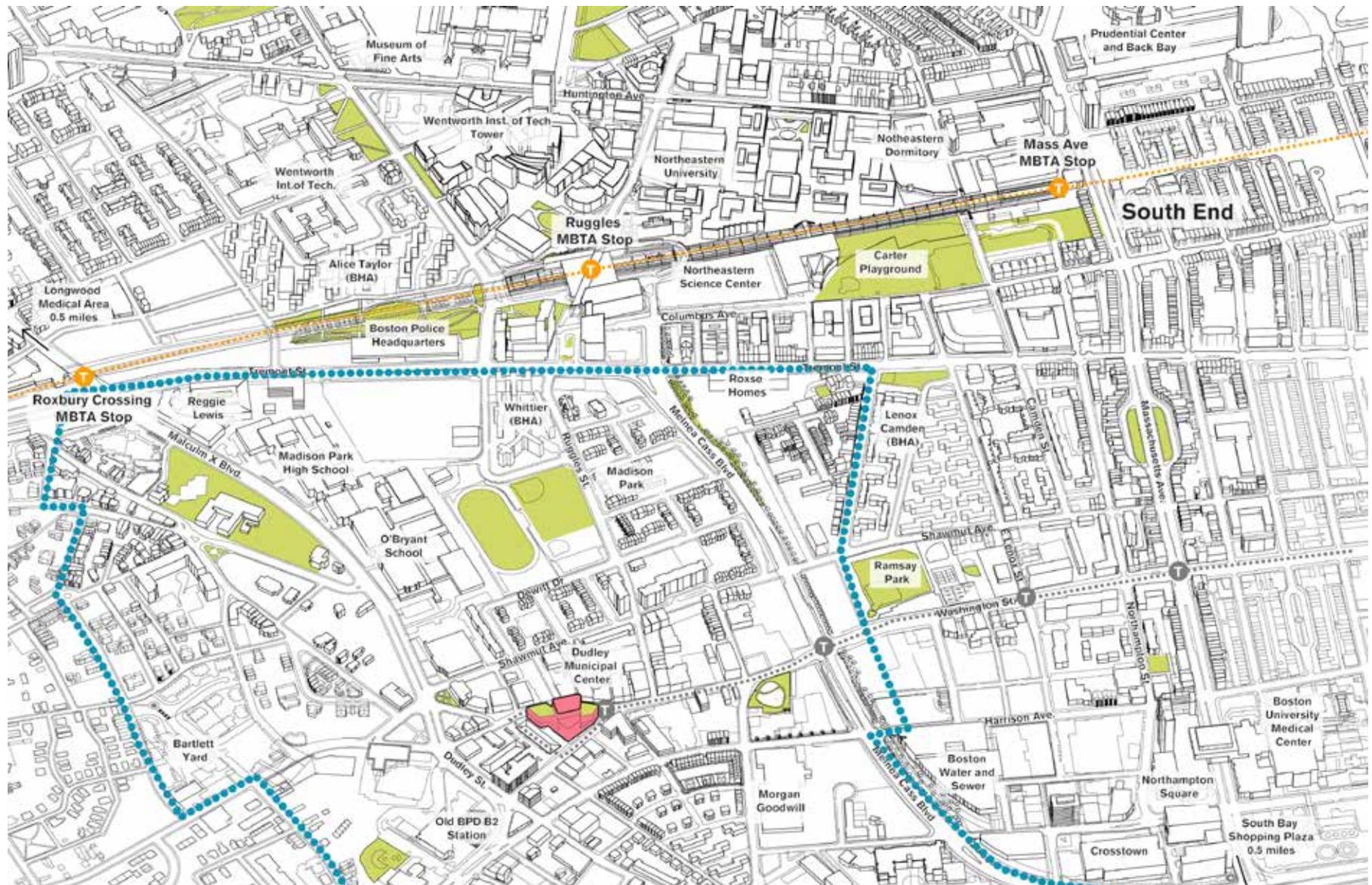
Roxbury Strategic Master Plan

Figure 4-1. Neighborhood Assets Map



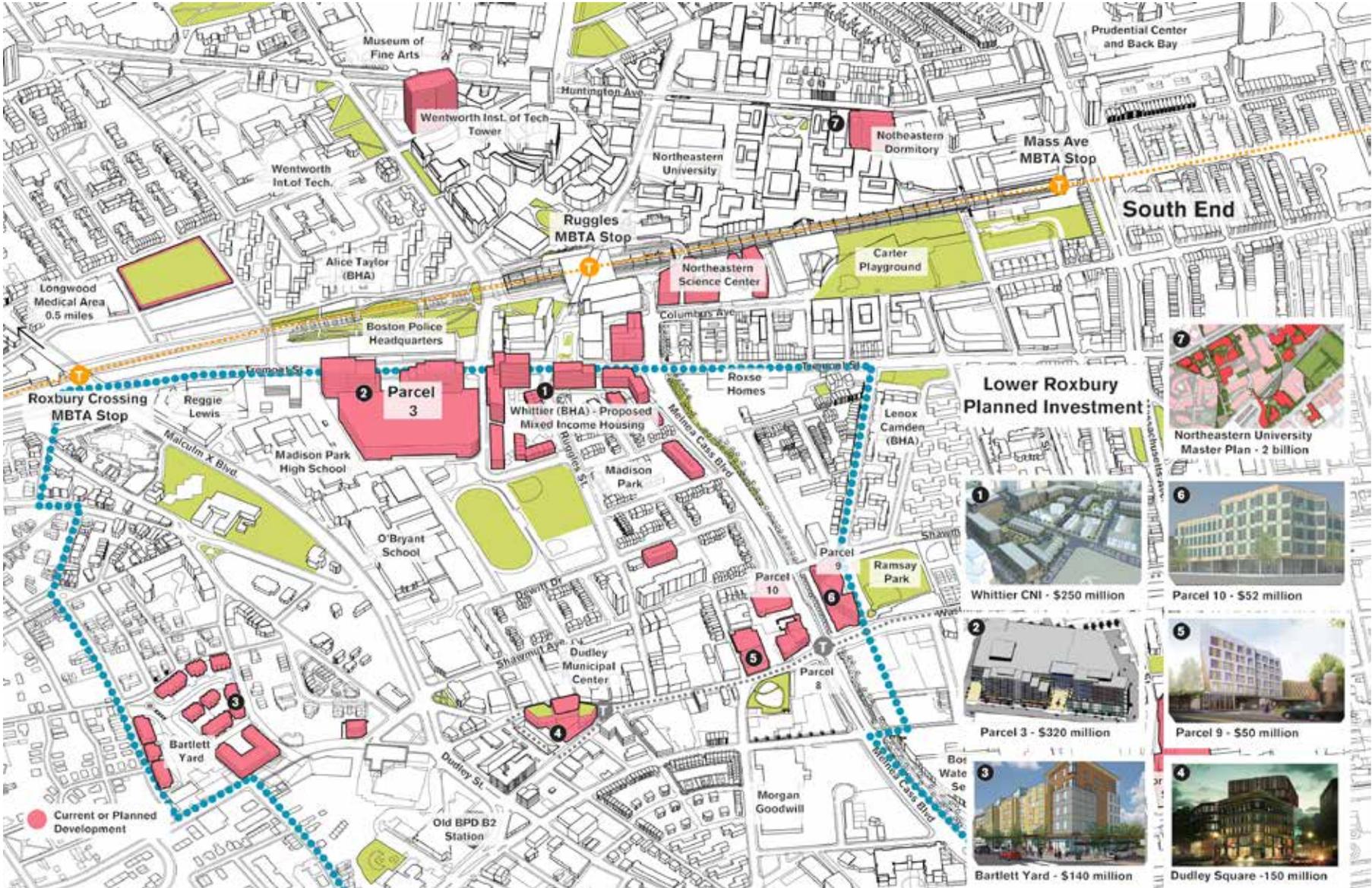
Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority

Figure 4-2. Lower Roxbury Today



Source: The American City Coalition / Utile

Figure 4-3. Planned Investment



Source: The American City Coalition / Utile

### 4.3 Neighborhood Goals, Strategies and Outcomes

It is well-documented that perceptions of a neighborhood have a big impact on stress and overall well-being. The following goals and strategies have been proposed for the transformation of the Whittier Neighborhood. Strategies focus on critical investments in public safety, infrastructure, public facilities, and other amenities that would truly

help residents lead healthy, mobile and connected lives. While there is one goal specific to crime prevention and public safety, improving public safety is a theme imbedded in all goals since they all deal with activating streets, improving pedestrian pathways and making public spaces safer and more active with positive uses.

**Figure 4-4. Neighborhood Goals and Strategies**

Goals	Strategies
#1 Break Down Barriers and Establish Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return long-vacant land to vibrant use.</li> <li>• Promote more community spaces that bring neighborhood residents together (e.g. 122 DeWitt and Crescent Parcel).</li> <li>• Create the “Roxbury Loop” to promote fitness, safe streets, social cohesion, public art and Roxbury heritage.</li> <li>• Improve pathways and signage to key neighborhood nodes.</li> <li>• Expand and improve the City’s wireless service in Lower Roxbury.</li> </ul>
#2 Improve Public Safety (both reality and perception)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the Violence Intervention Program/Village In Progress throughout the Whittier Neighborhood.</li> <li>• Engage young people and Boston Public Schools administrators in a crime reduction initiative at Madison Park Technical Vocation High School.</li> <li>• Develop guiding principles for all development in Lower Roxbury to intentionally address public safety issues through design, place-making and community development strategies.</li> </ul>
#3 Construct Key Transportation and Streetscape Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate an attractive, safe pedestrian and bicycle pathway along Ruggles Street between Ruggles Station and Dudley Square, including planned improvements to Madison Park Village.</li> <li>• Facilitate community consensus on the re-design of Melnea Cass Boulevard and ensure its implementation.</li> <li>• Improve the pedestrian crossing at Tremont Street and Ruggles Street.</li> </ul>
#4 Support Vibrant Mixed-Use Districts at Tremont Street and Dudley Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure a mix of retail, housing, institutional and other uses in the reuse of vacant parcels.</li> <li>• Support Dudley Vision to bring over 500 municipal jobs to Dudley Square and 300 additional permanent jobs to P3, Whittier and the Crescent Parcel.</li> <li>• Expand small business training and opportunities to local entrepreneurs through LISC and other partners.</li> <li>• Expand public art in Dudley Square and near Whittier.</li> <li>• Support the creation of the Elma Lewis Artistic Center and Roxbury Heritage Museum on the P3 site.</li> </ul>
#5 Improve and Expand Educational Facilities and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relocate the Kennedy Academy for Health Careers to the Crescent Parcel.</li> <li>• Provide a site and support the development of the Northeastern Community Portal.</li> <li>• Create and support the Lower Roxbury Educational Alliance.</li> </ul>

## NEIGHBORHOOD GOAL #1 | Breaking down barriers and establishing connections

Many elements of the Whittier Neighborhood currently isolate residents and make it difficult to move between key destinations due to uninviting physical barriers as well as public safety concerns. This goal is aimed at increasing pedestrian trips throughout the neighborhood and promoting a more cohesive sense of “neighborhood,” as well as improving virtual connections through improved broadband access. Key strategies to address this goal include:

- **Return long-vacant land to vibrant use**

The vacant parcels at P3, P8, P9, P10 and the Crescent Parcel are large, uninviting, inactive swaths of land that interrupt key pathways in the neighborhood; in particular the route between Ruggles Station and Dudley Square, and between Ruggles Station and institutions along Malcolm X Boulevard. The Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee has been working for over a decade to put these parcels into productive use. P9 and P10 are already moving forward with hotel, housing and retail uses. In addition, P3, P9 and the Crescent Parcel will now provide opportunities for replacement housing, along with other commercial, retail and cultural uses. The Whittier CNI will help to catalyze development at P3 and the Crescent Parcel.

- **Promote more community spaces that bring neighborhood residents together**

Part of breaking down barriers within the neighborhood is adding community facilities and spaces that help bring neighborhood residents together. Under Whittier CNI, Madison Park Development Corporation will establish a new community center at 122 DeWitt Street. The Center will be housed in the ground floor of a new residential building and will include over 18,000 sf for a daycare, internet cafe, and gym/multi-purpose space. Additional community uses are also considered for the Crescent Parcel.

- **Create the “Roxbury Loop” to promote fitness, safe streets, public art and Roxbury heritage**

Many neighborhoods in Boston have a neighborhood park, pathway or popular place to walk where neighbors routinely see one another. This amenity is lacking in Lower Roxbury, and many residents are not comfortable walking around the neighborhood because of safety concerns. In addition, stress and chronic health concerns are well-documented. There is also interest in celebrating Roxbury Heritage as a means of community building. The heritage element of this loop will nurture and define community identity and pride, and support cultural tourism plans for Roxbury.

A pedestrian and cycling pathway will address multiple needs by activating the street, installing street furniture and public art to celebrate the neighborhood, transforming “edgy” areas into well-lit and well-traveled routes, and encouraging health and fitness. Whittier CNI organized a group of local residents to help design and implement the Loop. This group will work with Roxbury in Motion (RIM) Complete Streets Subcommittee.

- **Improve pathways and signage to key neighborhood nodes**

Signage and streetscape improvements—both along the Roxbury Loop and at additional targeted locations—are needed in order to more fully address neighborhood public safety and promote pedestrian travel. A working committee is defining these locations further.

- **Expand and Improve the City’s wireless service in Lower Roxbury**

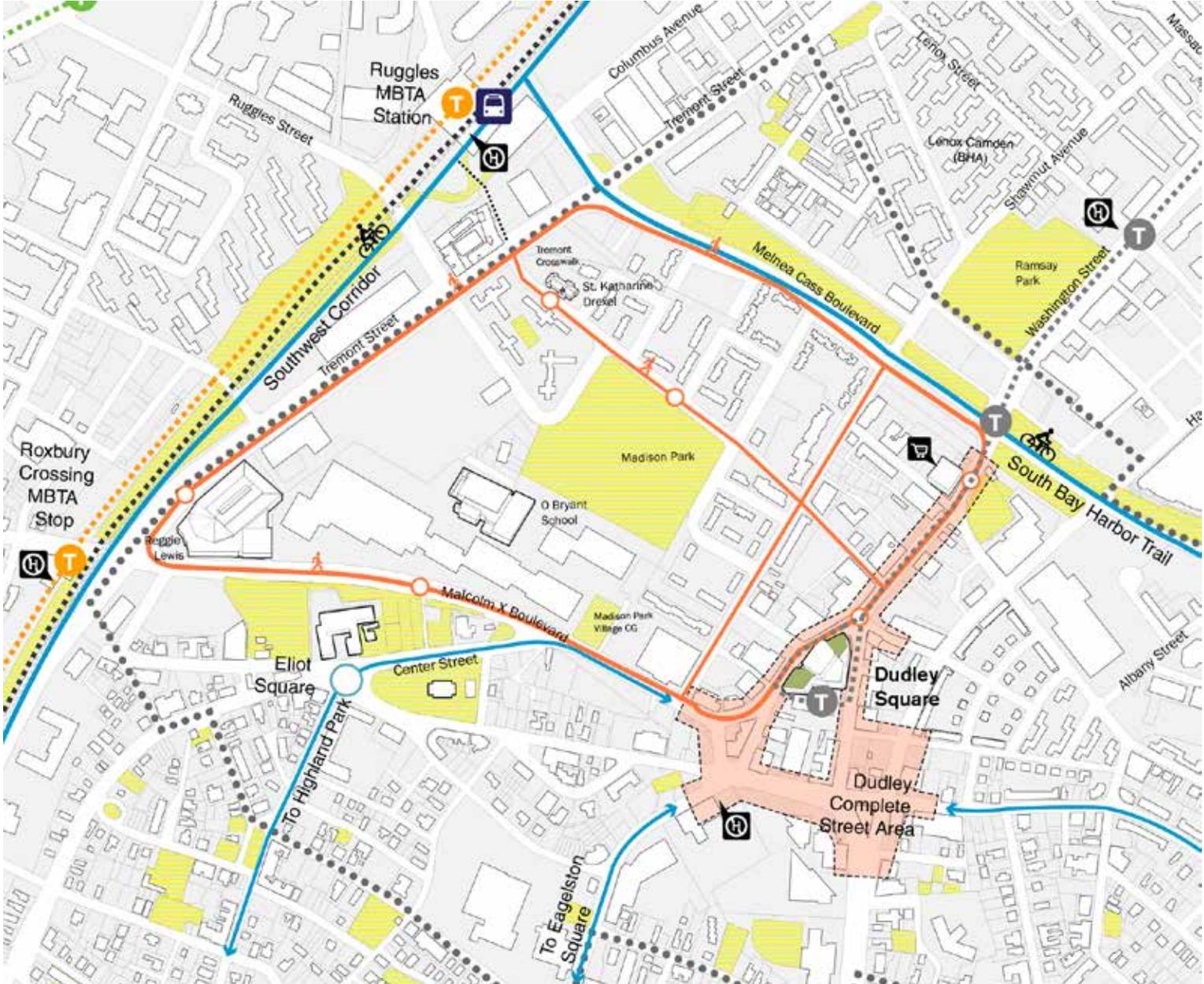
Provide full coverage within the Whittier Choice Neighborhood to help close the digital divide and allow residents to fully avail themselves of on-line resources and connections.

### Neighborhood Goal #1 Key Outcomes:

- ◆ Create a neighborhood coalition led by MPDC to promote and oversee CNI neighborhood goals in 2015.
- ◆ Develop specific scopes of work and budgets for streetscape improvements in 2015.
- ◆ Complete mixed-use redevelopment of Whittier and the Crescent Parcel by 2020, including community spaces at 122 DeWitt and Crescent Parcel.
- ◆ Establish the “Roxbury Loop” by 2020.
- ◆ Support completion of the P3 redevelopment by 2022.
- ◆ Implement the working group recommendations for installation of signage, fitness equipment, benches and other street furniture at targeted locations to improve public safety and pedestrian travel.



Figure 4-5. Proposed “Roxbury Loop” (TBD)



Source: The American City Coalition / Utile

## NEIGHBORHOOD GOAL #2 | Improve public safety (both reality and perception)

All of the neighborhood goals and strategies are aimed at addressing the reality and perception of public safety issues by activating streets, reclaiming vacant land, and promoting safe pedestrian connections between neighborhood destinations. However, the Whittier Neighborhood Plan includes two key public safety initiatives with the Boston Police Department (BPD) aimed at engaging neighborhood residents to help reduce crime:

- **Expand the Violence Intervention Program/Village in Progress throughout the Whittier Neighborhood**

The VIP program has been highly successful in reducing incidents and at the formerly high-crime area in and surrounding Orchard Gardens and at Madison Park Village. VIP would work with Whittier residents and staff, and connect with partners to guide residents in creating their own Public Safety Task Force. This collaboration between BPD, the Housing Authority, property managers, the City's Health Commission, and community organizations will expand its role to include the area west of Orchard Gardens to Ruggles Station.

- **Engage young people and BPS in a crime reduction initiative at Madison Park High School**

Madison Park Technical Vocation High School stands out as the obvious hot spot on the neighborhood heat map created with BPD crime data (See Figure 2-10). While the Whittier Neighborhood Plan aims to promote educational opportunities and higher-performing schools, addressing public safety issues within Madison Park High School must be a top priority. The Plan calls for a working group with students, BPS, BPD and community organizations in order to develop solutions and track progress.

- **Develop guiding principles for all development in Lower Roxbury to intentionally address public safety issues through design, place-making and community development strategies.**

### Neighborhood Goal #2 Key Outcomes:

- ♦ Reduce Part 1 Crimes in the Whittier Neighborhood by 50% by 2020.
- ♦ Demonstrate improved perceptions of safety and walkability across Tremont Street and from Tremont Street to Dudley Square via annual surveys (2015-2020).

## NEIGHBORHOOD GOAL #3 | Construct key transportation and streetscape improvements

A cornerstone of the Neighborhood Strategy is to make transformative improvements in the way residents and visitors move around the neighborhood and connect to its various destinations. Underlying these improvements is an emphasis on improving public safety and creating safe streets that are well-lit, pedestrian friendly, and clearly delineated between key nodes.

- **Facilitate an attractive, safe pedestrian and bicycle pathway along Ruggles Street between Ruggles Station and Dudley Square**

This goal begins with traffic calming and crosswalk improvements at the Tremont-Ruggles intersection, which is currently a harrowing crossing for neighborhood residents. In addition, Ruggles Street is poorly lit and poorly delineated despite its convenience as an efficient route to Dudley Square. The street requires better lighting, signage, public art and street furniture as well as a bicycle lane so that it becomes a welcoming, safe pathway between these major destinations. Planned improvements to Madison Park Village along Ruggles Street are also an opportunity to increase activities and destinations along this route and enhance the pedestrian way.

- **Facilitate community consensus on the re-design of Melnea Cass Boulevard and ensure its implementation**

The community has long advocated for a re-design of Melnea Cass Boulevard to ease congestion, improve pedestrian crossings, and make the boulevard safer and more attractive. The Boston Transportation Department has secured funding for the project, but neighbors and BTM have not been able to agree on an approach to the re-design. The Whittier Neighborhood planning process has proven to be a critical forum for neighbors and BTM to resolve these differences and move forward with a revised approach. The project will also enhance the South Bay Harbor Trail, a pedestrian and bicycle path from Melnea Cass Boulevard to the Boston waterfront.

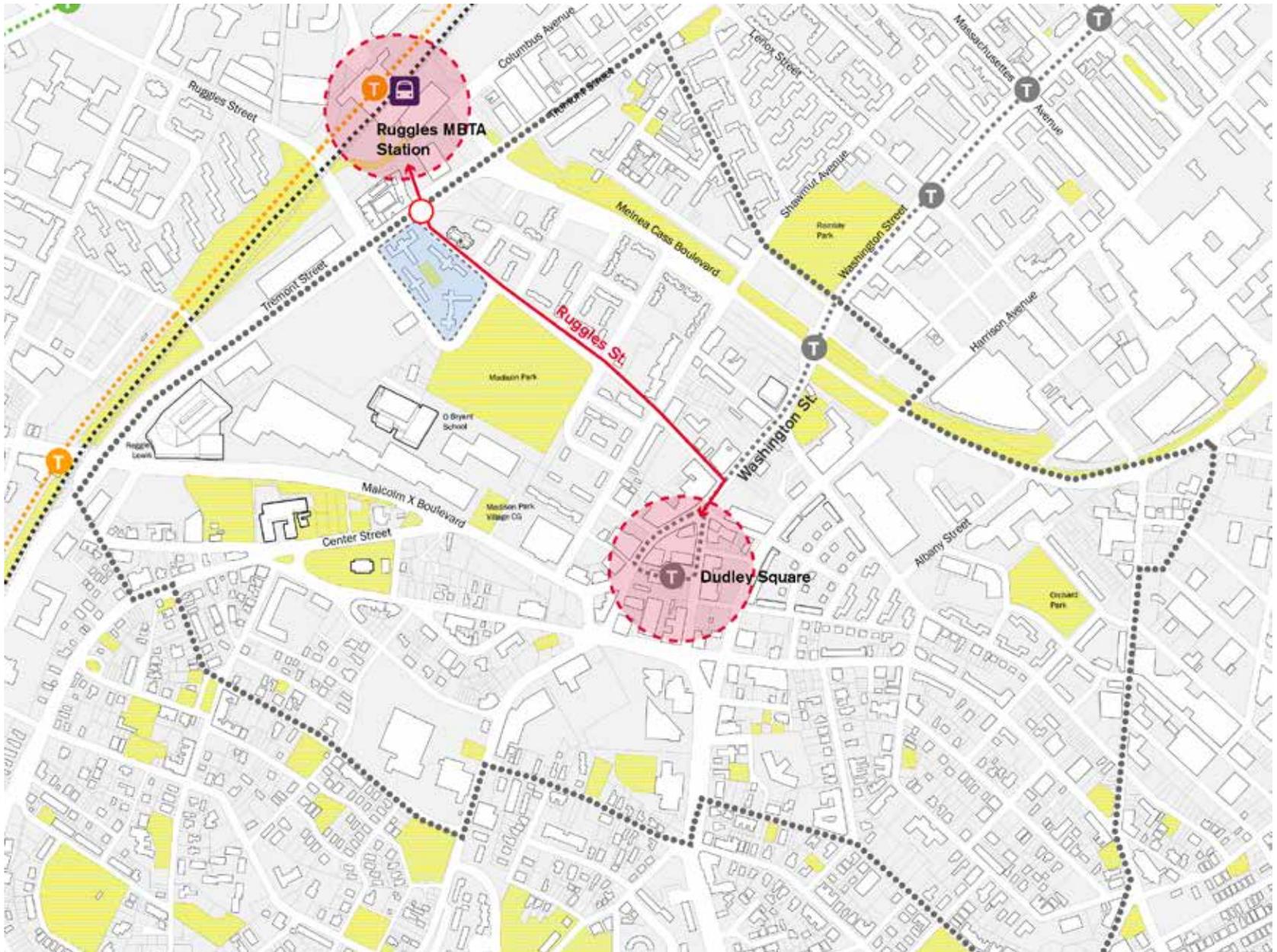
- **Improve the crossing at Tremont Street and Ruggles Street**

Getting from the Whittier side of Tremont Street to Ruggles Station is a difficult, often dangerous crossing. Pedestrians must travel across six lanes of traffic in a very short time and frequently have to run to make it across safely. As part of the Whittier redevelopment and the adjacent development at P3, the Boston Transportation Department and the private developers will work with community residents to define and implement traffic calming and pedestrian-friendly solutions to the crossing.

### Neighborhood Goal #3 Key Outcomes:

- ◆ Create a neighborhood coalition led by MPDC to promote and oversee streetscape improvements in 2015.
- ◆ Formalize streetscape scopes at Melnea Cass, Ruggles and Tremont Street in 2015.
- ◆ Complete Ruggles Street, Melnea Cass, and related improvements by 2020.
- ◆ Complete new Tremont Street crossing by 2022.

Figure 4-6. Connectivity to Dudley Square



Source: The American City Coalition / Utile

## NEIGHBORHOOD GOAL #4 | Support vibrant mixed-use districts at Tremont Street and Dudley Square

The Whittier community recognizes that the key to unlocking the housing and jobs potential of Lower Roxbury is to address the underlying public safety concerns which currently isolate neighbors. To do so, we must support a vibrant mix of uses in Dudley Square as well as along Tremont Street between Melnea Cass Boulevard and Malcolm X Boulevard.

- **Ensure a mix of retail, housing, institutional and other uses in the reuse of vacant parcels**

The Roxbury Strategic Master Plan process in conjunction with the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan has ensured that plans for the P3, P8, P9, P10, Whittier and Crescent parcels include a balance of affordable, moderate-income, and market housing; a mix of housing types; and retail, office, institutional and community facilities. This strategy also includes a priority to establish retail uses that serve the existing community while drawing patrons from beyond the community. Whittier CNI will develop public and private sector resources to attract specific types of businesses desired by the community, as reflected in the 2012 BRA-sponsored Dudley Square Retail survey in which 1,300 current residents, employees and commuters participated.

- **Support Dudley Vision to bring over 500 municipal jobs to Dudley Square and 300 additional permanent jobs to P3, Whittier and the Crescent Parcel**

Permanent job creation is a cornerstone of the Whittier Choice Neighborhoods Initiative. The Dudley Vision will bring over 500 new workers to Dudley Square in addition to related retail jobs. The Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan will result in over 500 construction jobs and more than 300 permanent jobs across the Whittier, Crescent and P3 sites.

- **Expand small business training and opportunities to local entrepreneurs through LISC and other partners**

Promoting small local businesses is a key initiative shared across Dudley Municipal Center project, the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan, and the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan. Small retail businesses will be created along Tremont Street with the revitalization of P3, Whittier, and the Crescent Parcel. In addition, small business training opportunities will be provided by LISC through its MetroEdge program and other partners for those in at-home or beginning stage business creation. An incubator space will be established to accommodate training and networking events for these home-grown enterprises and to house shared administrative/supportive infrastructure and services. Exploration of the potential to connect with and complement other newly developed initiatives is ongoing. These planned developments include several of Northeastern's community benefits obligations and the Roxbury Innovation Center in Dudley Square.

- **Expand public art in Dudley Square and near Whittier**

With street and parcel revitalization comes an opportunity to create attractive public spaces and public art that celebrate the neighborhood and improve safety through social gathering and positive activity. The Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan will invest in public spaces and public art at both Dudley Square and along Ruggles and Tremont Street in order to accomplish this goal.

- **Support the creation of the Elma Lewis Artistic Center and Roxbury Heritage Museum on the P3 site**

Establishing an arts and heritage center within Lower Roxbury has been a key, unrealized goal of the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan for over 15 years. The Whittier Neighborhood Plan looks to advance plans to build the Elma Lewis Artistic Center at the P3 site. The Center will house a dance studio, museum, classroom and performance space. The Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan will promote participation in the Center by neighborhood children and youths.

Figure 4-7. Proposed Mixed-Use Development along Tremont Street



Source: The Architectural Team

**Neighborhood Goal #4 Key Outcomes:**

- ◆ Support the construction of sixty thousand square feet of commercial/retail/institutional space by 2022.
- ◆ Create 300 permanent new jobs, including 10% for hard-to-employ individuals, through Section 3, Building Pathways, and related initiatives.
- ◆ Establish a small business incubator by 2020.
- ◆ Support the development of the new Elma Lewis Artistic Center and Roxbury Heritage Museum at P3 by 2022.
- ◆ Support establishing a restaurant or entertainment venue on Tremont Street by 2020.

## NEIGHBORHOOD GOAL #5 | Improve and expand educational facilities and resources

While many of the educational and opportunity goals of the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan are described in the People Strategies, there are key physical and institutional strategies that are critical to the goal of enhancing educational opportunities in the neighborhood:

- **Relocate the Kennedy Academy for Health Careers to the Crescent Parcel**

The Kennedy Academy for Health Careers is a high-performing Boston Public Schools Charter School with a 95% graduation rate and critical relationships with Boston’s medical area employers. The Kennedy Academy prepares students with marketable skills for a variety of careers that require both vocational as well as higher education backgrounds. The school is currently housed in inadequate space at Northeastern University. As part of the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan, Northeastern will collaborate to build the new school building at the Crescent Parcel. In parallel to creating the new facility, Kennedy Academy will re-orient its enrollment strategies to maximize enrollment from among the public housing communities within and near the Whittier Neighborhood in order to provide more pathways for Whittier neighborhood residents to attend colleges and universities.

- **Provide a site and support the development of the Northeastern Community Portal**

Northeastern University whose urban campus is adjacent to the Whittier Neighborhood will build a “Neighborhood Portal” to provide better community access to Northeastern resources and programs, adult learning services, and access to university jobs and contracts. The Center will offer job-training, GED and ESOL classes. The Center will be staffed by Northeastern and will also help to better connect Northeastern with the Whittier Neighborhood across Tremont Street.

- **Create and support the Lower Roxbury Educational Alliance**

There is a rich spectrum of educational providers within the Whittier Neighborhood from early childhood to post graduate and professional education: Associated Early Care and Education, Northeastern University, Wentworth Institute, Roxbury Community College, Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, the John D. O’Bryant School for Math and Sciences, Orchard Gardens K-8, Dearborn Middle School and the Timilty Middle School. Yet there is little or no coordination between these institutions to create a pathway of success for the nearly 2000 public housing children and young adults who are living in and around the Whittier Neighborhood. The Lower Roxbury Educational Alliance will establish a formal link between these institutions and develop a targeted approach to raising the successful college enrollment and performance of neighborhood kids.

### Neighborhood Goal #5 Key Outcomes:

- ◆ Support completion of the Northeastern University Community Portal by 2016.
- ◆ Finalize priority community uses for the Crescent parcel in 2015.
- ◆ Support construction of the new Kennedy Academy in the neighborhood by 2020.
- ◆ Form the Lower Roxbury Educational Alliance by 2014; formalize enrollment and tracking processes by 2015.

### 4.4 Neighborhood Plan Implementation

#### Neighborhood Lead

Madison Park Development Corporation (MPDC) is uniquely positioned to lead the implementation of the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan. MPDC is one of the oldest and well established community development corporations in Boston and in the nation. Well known for its affordable housing development and preservation work, the organization also plays a key role in overall neighborhood revitalization, community organizing and engagement, public safety initiatives, and resident-centered supports.

MPDC's Community Action Department is organized along five focus areas: Public Safety and Violence Prevention, Youth Leadership and Workforce Development, Civic Engagement, Resident Leadership and Services, and Health Equity and Community Wellness. These priority areas align strategically with the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan goals. Equally importantly, MPDC has the capacity and credibility to engage the neighborhood in a meaningful way to guide the implementation of neighborhood strategies.

MPDC takes a strategic and inclusive approach to assessing neighborhood concerns and capitalizing on community assets. In 2013 MPDC initiated a comprehensive neighborhood survey to gather perspectives on quality of life issues, creating a rich data set that serves as the basis for MPDC's Community Investment Plan (See Figure 3-3). The survey instruments were developed by the nationally recognized Success Measures and are utilized by over 200 community development corporations nationwide.

MPDC also has a strong track record for youth programming and leadership development, which positions the organization well to leverage youth involvement and capacity-building within the context of neighborhood initiatives.

#### Implementation Structure

Successfully achieving the goals of the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan will require resources, strong partnerships, shared vision and commitment from the community, city government and other stakeholders. MPDC will establish working teams for each of the Neighborhood goals to ensure successful implementation, on-time and within budget. See Chapter 7.

#### Budget and Financing

The total budget for all Neighborhood Improvements is approximately \$30 million. It is anticipated that funding will be provided by City of Boston (transportation, infrastructure and school funds), the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Northeastern University, Roxbury Community College, and Choice Neighborhoods funding. Further budget information is included in Chapter 7.

## Chapter 5

# Housing Strategy

## 5.1 Overall Vision for Housing

Through a series of community forums and design charrettes over two years, the Whittier community has developed a compelling vision:

*The community is committed to building housing throughout the Whittier Neighborhood to the highest standards of quality and sustainability including preserving 200 units of deeply affordable housing currently available at the Whittier housing development, while expanding housing options for moderate-income and higher income families; and creating a vibrant new mixed-use district that will become the gateway to historic Dudley Square.*

The Whittier redevelopment will adhere to the following principles:

- **Mixed-Income.** Whittier's 200 public housing units will be replaced with 200 deeply subsidized rental apartments plus an equal number or more of moderate-income and market-rate apartments interspersed throughout the new district and the neighborhood.
- **Mixed-Use.** The redevelopment will capitalize on its gateway location through Transit-Oriented Design and a vibrant mix of land uses: commercial, office, institutional and residential.
- **Highest Quality Environmental Design.** The new homes will be energy efficient, healthy, safe, attractive and comfortable. The new community will incorporate the best practices in energy efficiency, Healthy Homes, and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design.
- **Economic Development and Social Justice.** The new development will serve neighborhood residents while attracting visitors from beyond the community. Construction and commercial activity will provide critical economic opportunities for community residents and local businesses.



*The Corner of Whittier and Tremont Streets (Architect's Rendering/TAT)*

## 5.2 Summary of Priority Needs

Three key housing challenges have been identified—while at the same time opportunities have come to light—through a needs assessment and market study:

- First, the Whittier public housing development needs to be redeveloped and knit into the broader neighborhood in a way that breaks the social and economic isolation at the site. The redevelopment of the Whittier property, situated as it is between two currently vacant parcels, will serve as the catalyst for a broader effort to create a more vibrant community in a critical transit-oriented location.
- Second, there is a severe lack of housing mobility among the public housing families in the neighborhood; nearly one quarter of the heads of households grew up in public housing and 97% of these families do not earn sufficient income to pay average market rents—which underscores both the need to preserve deeply subsidized affordable housing and the need to provide supportive services to promote economic advancement.
- Third, the neighborhood as a whole needs a stronger balance along the spectrum of deeply subsidized to market housing, with more moderate-income and market-rate housing units that will lead to a lower concentration of poverty.

Physically, the 200-unit Whittier Street development is showing its age. Originally built in 1953, many components are well beyond their useful lives. A physical needs assessment in 2012 estimated rehabilitation costs for Whittier Street at over \$40 million, a level that makes rehabilitation infeasible. Moreover, the structural, environmental, and design deficiencies at Whittier have contributed to a pervasive sense of isolation that many residents feel. Specific physical needs at the Whittier Street development are summarized in Figure 5-1. The Whittier community—both residents and neighbors—have voiced a clear consensus that redevelopment plans must entail demolition and new construction.

Figure 5-1 Summary of Whittier Apartments Physical Needs

### Structural Deficiencies

- Severely undersized electrical system
- Original plumbing increasingly needing repair, often exposed within units and common areas
- Out-of-date fire safety system and egress
- Damaged sub-grade drainage lines, sagging or crushed in places, causing sewer backups
- Sidewalks and other paved surfaces that are broken, uneven, settling – a safety hazard.
- Masonry exteriors are fragmenting

### Environmental Deficiencies

- Presence of lead paint and asbestos-containing materials, while safely encapsulated nevertheless limits rehabilitation options
- Uninsulated roofs and exterior walls require oversized heating equipment; aluminum windows are inefficient and drafty.
- Bathrooms are not vented to the outside creating moisture, mildew and mold problems.

### Design Deficiencies

- Dense buildings placed at odd angles to the streets with poor connectivity to the street and creating unsafe blind spots
- Ill-defined open outdoor spaces claimed by no one, hard to monitor and inhospitable to recreational uses.
- Significantly undersized units, about one-third the size of typical apartments built today
- Lack of Accessibility: No dwelling units fully meet applicable accessibility requirements; elevators are small and do not meet accessibility requirements; low-rise buildings with walk-up stoops are neither accessible nor visitable.
- Apartment units lack standard amenities; no units have more than one bathroom, or closet doors.



*The Whittier Apartments Today*

### 5.3 Housing Goals, Strategies and Outcomes

The goals and strategies for the housing component of the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan are summarized in Figure 5-2 and are described in greater detail in the following pages.

**Figure 5-2. Housing Goals and Strategies**

Goals	Strategies
#1 Preserve affordability while expanding housing options in Lower Roxbury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-for-One Replacement</li> <li>• Deconcentrate Poverty</li> <li>• Develop Moderate-Income and Market Rate Housing</li> <li>• Develop Units for Smaller Households</li> </ul>
#2 Create safe, energy-efficient, healthy and accessible homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Homes Principles</li> <li>• Energy Efficiency</li> <li>• Accessibility and Universal Design</li> <li>• Crime Prevention through Environmental Design</li> </ul>
#3 Create a vibrant mixed-use district that will become a new gateway to historic Dudley Square	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed-Use</li> <li>• Transit-Oriented Development</li> </ul>
#4 Phase redevelopment to minimize disruption to residents, maximize relocation options, and optimize financing opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offsite Housing</li> <li>• Onsite Phasing</li> <li>• Phased Financing</li> <li>• Master Plan/Zoning</li> </ul>
#5 Maximize employment opportunities for community residents and contracting opportunities for local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggressive Contractual Requirements, including Section 3 hiring and subcontracting</li> <li>• Apprenticeship Programs</li> </ul>

## HOUSING GOAL #1 | Preserve affordability while expanding housing options in Lower Roxbury

The community is committed to supporting its low-income residents, while at the same time deconcentrating poverty in the neighborhood. Residents of the community have voiced a clear priority to increase the supply of moderate-income and market-rate housing in the neighborhood, while preserving and enhancing the existing affordable housing in the neighborhood. The community has also identified a need for new housing options for young adults, singles and small families—including those who cannot afford to establish their own households in the current Boston housing market. These goals will be achieved through the following strategies:

- **One-for-One Replacement**

Replace the 200 public housing units being demolished with an equal number of new deeply subsidized units.

- **Deconcentrate Poverty**

Construct a substantial portion of the replacement housing off site (beyond the current Whittier property) within the neighborhood.

- **Develop Moderate-Income and Market Rate Housing**

For every deeply subsidized housing unit, build one or more units for higher income households.

- **Develop Units for Smaller Households**

Increase the proportion of one-bedroom and two-bedroom units that would be appropriate for young adults, singles, and small families, specifically among the moderate-income and market rate housing—while at the same time achieving an appropriate range of unit sizes among the replacement units, given the needs of both current Whittier public housing residents and applicants on the BHA’s waiting lists.

### Housing Goal #1 Key Outcomes:

- ◆ Redevelop 200 units of deeply subsidized housing
- ◆ Build 200+ homes for moderate-income and market-rate households
- ◆ Among the deeply subsidized units, build at least 60% one- and two-bedroom units.
- ◆ Across the entire redevelopment program (including moderate-income and market-rate units as well as replacement units) build at least 80% one- and two-bedroom units.

## HOUSING GOAL #2 | Create safe, energy-efficient, healthy and accessible homes

Residents of the Whittier Neighborhood recognize the crucial importance of designing and building safe, energy-efficient, healthy and accessible homes. In the United States, buildings (and the electricity they use) produce 39% of the carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming—more than both Industry (29%) and Transportation (33%).<sup>1</sup> Carbon emissions can be reduced through the careful design and implementation of conservation measures.

At the same time, the housing plan must ensure that energy efficient homes are healthy homes. Adults in the U.S. spend 65% of their time at home; residents who live in high-poverty, high-crime neighborhoods spend even more time at home. Indoor air pollutants have been associated with poor health outcomes ranging from asthma to cancer, while there is evidence that exposure to indoor pollutants combined with the stress of daily living can aggravate conditions such as asthma.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, as a community where nearly 40% of households have a member who is disabled, health, safety, and accessibility are critical concerns.

Housing Goal #2 will be achieved through the following strategies:

- **Healthy Homes principles**

Employ measures such as Integrated Pest Management, carpet-free living spaces, and a no-smoking policy to promote indoor air quality.

- **Energy Efficiency**

Design and build to the highest possible standards of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. LEED certification means that the buildings have been designed and constructed with a strong focus on energy and water efficiency, durability, healthy indoor air quality and reduced impact on natural resources.

- **Accessibility and Universal Design**

Design and build units and public areas to be accessible to everyone, including disabled individuals, seniors, kids in strollers, residents on bicycles.

- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design**

Design the development to optimize natural surveillance (whereby people can observe their surroundings whether inside or outside) through the strategic placement of windows, doors and landscaping. Clearly articulate public spaces from semi-private and private spaces. Use lighting (both color and intensity) to enhance buildings, and ensure that street lighting serves the needs of both vehicles and pedestrians. Design spaces for community gatherings and events to promote positive and constructive social interaction.

### Housing Goal #2 Key Outcomes:

- ◆ Achieve LEED Gold (or better) certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.
- ◆ Five percent of newly constructed residential units must meet UFAS accessibility standards, while 50% of units and all community spaces will be visitable to residents who rely on wheelchairs and other mobility assistance devices.
- ◆ Achieve a 50% reduction in Part I crimes in the Whittier development and along pedestrian connector routes by 2020.

## HOUSING GOAL #3 | Create a vibrant mixed-use district that will become a new gateway to historic Dudley Square

Residents of the Whittier Neighborhood recognize the special development opportunities presented by the Orange Line rapid transit service at Ruggles Street station. The regional significance of the Orange Line is striking: over 700,000 people live within one half-mile of an Orange Line station—nearly a quarter of the residents of the Boston metropolitan region—and there are nearly 300,000 jobs near Orange Line stations, including the regional employment centers at Downtown Boston, Back Bay, and the Longwood Medical Area.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the properties immediately adjacent to Whittier Street and along key routes into the neighborhood from the station have long stood vacant or underdeveloped, which offers an opportunity to create a new mixed-use development serving the community but with regional appeal.

Housing Goal #3 will be achieved through the following strategies:

- **Mixed-Use**

In addition to providing housing, the Whittier Street redevelopment will include a mix of other uses, including retail, office and cultural facilities. Retail or other non-residential uses will be sited on the ground level along Tremont Street to produce a lively pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

- **Transit-Oriented Development**

Transit Oriented Development (or “TOD”) takes advantage of the proximity to public transit to increase development density in order to give more residents, shoppers, and workers access without dependence on cars. TOD principles call for higher-density (i.e., taller) buildings along Tremont Street and areas closest to Ruggles station.

### Housing Goal #3 Key Outcomes:

- ◆ In addition to residential units, create approximately 10,000 SF of retail space at the original Whittier property.
- ◆ Create approximately 50,000 SF of retail, institutional, or office space at the Crescent Parcel and other adjacent property.
- ◆ Establish a restaurant or entertainment venue along Tremont Street, if not within the Whittier redevelopment itself then through neighboring development at Parcel 3.



*View of the new Whittier Street Development from the corner of Ruggles and Cabot Streets.*

*(Architect's rendering/TAT)*

**HOUSING GOAL #4** | Phase redevelopment to minimize disruption to residents, maximize relocation options, and optimize financing opportunities

Because redevelopment will entail complete demolition and new construction, Whittier residents will need to relocate from their current apartments. The community recognizes that the disruption to people’s lives can be minimized and mitigated through phasing the redevelopment work. For example, some of the new apartment units will be built off site, on nearby property that is currently vacant; by building these units in early phases, many residents will be able to move directly into brand new apartments when it comes time to relocate. Similarly, by phasing onsite redevelopment work, many families will be able to move directly into newly constructed homes.

For the many residents who need to relocate temporarily, phasing means that the number of moves at any given time will be manageable, allowing residents options to move to other public housing developments in the city or to move with mobile Section 8 vouchers within Boston and beyond.

Phasing will also allow the developers to make the best use of financing options, particularly public resources such as low-income housing tax credits that are highly competitive.

Housing Goal #4 will be achieved through the following strategies:

- **Offsite Housing**  
Provide new offsite housing early in the redevelopment to allow greater numbers of residents to move only one time.
- **Onsite Phasing**  
Begin demolition and new construction on site at the rear of the Whittier property.

- **Phased Financing**  
Stage redevelopment work through separate sub-phases that can take advantage of separate funding options; for example, separate concurrent phases could access different public resources such as 4% tax-credits versus 9% tax credits.
- **Master Plan/Zoning**  
Employ a master plan approach to zoning approval in order to facilitate phased implementation of construction.

**Housing Goal #4 Key Outcomes:**

- ◆ Master Zoning approval by Fall 2014.
- ◆ Financing commitments for Phase One by December 2014.
- ◆ One-fourth of current Whittier residents are offered relocation opportunities from their current apartments directly into newly constructed housing.
- ◆ Complete all redevelopment by December 2020.

**HOUSING GOAL #5**

Maximize employment opportunities for community residents and contracting opportunities for local businesses

The Whittier redevelopment program will cost over \$300 million. To ensure that such a substantial investment will directly benefit local residents and businesses to the greatest extent possible, the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan sets aggressive but realistic objectives for hiring and contracting.

As with all development work financed even in part with federal resources, the Whittier redevelopment must meet Section 3 requirements for employment and contracting that directly benefits low-income individuals, including the residents of public housing. In order to ensure that Whittier and other local residents can access well-paying construction jobs, the developer, the Boston Housing Authority, and the local building trades will partner to ensure the availability of slots in apprenticeship as well as pre-apprenticeship programs for local residents.

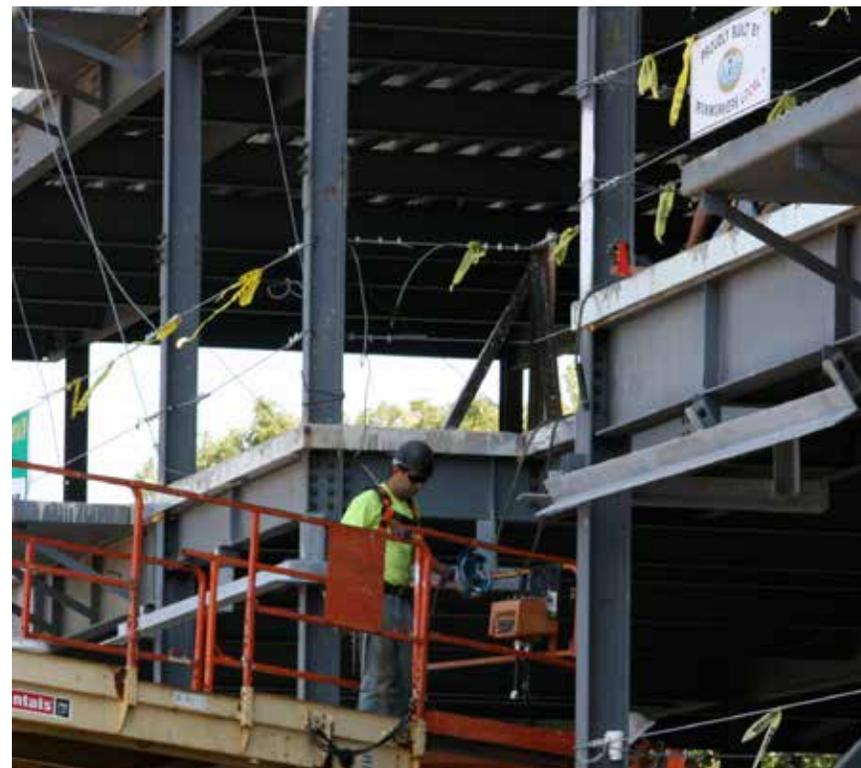
Housing Goal #5 will be achieved through the following strategies:

• **Aggressive Contractual Requirements and Project Labor Agreement**

All construction contracts, as well as contracts for property management and other ancillary services, will contain robust requirements for local hiring and subcontracting.

• **Apprenticeship Programs**

Utilize the successful Building Pathways pre-apprenticeship program and other programs to ensure that low-income and public housing residents in particular are able to access well-paying construction jobs.



*Union Ironworkers at work at BHA's Washington Beech redevelopment*

**Housing Goal #5 Key Outcomes:**

- ◆ Employment: Construction workers (and construction work-hours) will be at least 10% women, 25% minority, and 50% Boston residents.
- ◆ New Hires: 30% of new hires will be Section 3 hires.
- ◆ Contracts: 10% of contracts (by dollar value) will be with Section 3 firms; 35% with Minority- or Women-Owned Business Enterprises.

## 5.4 Housing Program

The existing Whittier Street Apartments will be completely demolished and redeveloped. All 200 units of public housing will be preserved by creating 200 new deeply subsidized units through HUD’s public housing, Section 8, and Rental Assistance Demonstration programs. Replacement housing will be built both at the original Whittier property and off site in the Whittier neighborhood. In addition to the 200 replacement units, 376 new units of moderate-income and market-rate housing will be constructed both on and off site. Moderate-income units are housing units that are restricted to ensure affordability; they include tax-credit units that are restricted to households earning up to 60% of Area Median Income, as well as units developed through other affordable housing programs for households earning up to 110% of Area Median Income. Market-rate units are unrestricted. In total, the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan calls for the development of 576 new units of housing, as well as approximately 50,000 SF of commercial and institutional space.

### Replacement Plan

The 200 units of public housing currently at Whittier are a mix of one-bedroom, two-bedroom, three-bedroom and four-bedroom flats, in a combination of walk-up and elevator buildings.

Due to changes in family composition over the years, an increasing number of Whittier residents need smaller, one- and two-bedroom units. At the same time, the waiting list for public housing (both at Whittier and elsewhere in the Boston) includes a significantly higher proportion of applicants who need one-bedroom units—nearly half.

In order to balance the needs of existing and future residents—and in recognition of the value of larger unit sizes for many low-income families who cannot afford to rent apartments elsewhere—the replacement plan calls for the creation of 50 one-bedroom units (25%); 96 two-bedroom units (48%); 50 three-bedroom units (25%); and 4 four-bedroom units (2%).

**Figure 5-3. Target Mix for New Replacement Units**

	Existing Housing		Needs of Current Residents		Needs of Waiting List Applicants		Target Mix	
	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent	Units	Percent
One-bedroom	12	6%	34	18%	5526	48%	50	25%
Two-bedroom	120	60%	104	54%	4092	35%	96	48%
Three-bedroom	56	28%	52	26%	1778	15%	50	25%
Four-bedroom	12	6%	4	2%	224	2%	4	2%
Total	200	100%	194	100%	11620	100%	200	100%

**Total Unit Mix**

The 376 units of moderate-income and market-rate housing will include a slightly higher proportion of studios and one-bedroom units, in response to the broader community needs as documented in recent market studies. In total, the unit mix for all 576 units (replacement units, moderate-income units and market-rate units) breaks down as presented in Figure 5-4.

Deeply subsidized, moderate-income and market-rate units will be dispersed throughout the redevelopment and among all building types.

**Figure 5-4.** Redevelopment Program: Residential Units

	Replacement Units	Moderate-Income Units	Market-Rate Units	Total Units
Studio	0	0	40	40
One-bedroom	50	61	63	174
Two-bedroom	96	75	65	236
Three-bedroom	50	47	25	122
Four-bedroom	4	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>576</b>

**Onsite and Offsite Development**

The Whittier redevelopment encompasses both the original Whittier property, owned by the Boston Housing Authority, as well as adjacent publicly owned property—the Crescent Parcel at the intersection of Tremont Street and Melnea Cass Boulevard, owned by the Boston Redevelopment Authority—and property nearby in the neighborhood that is currently owned by Madison Park Development Corporation.

Most of the offsite development will be immediately adjacent to the original Whittier property, and all of the newly developed units will be within a short walk of Whittier. See Figure 5-5.

Figure 5-5. Redevelopment at Whittier and Adjacent Properties



Note: Red dotted line indicates the limits of the original Whittier property.

Source: TAT

Figure 5-6. Proposed Redevelopment (Looking west toward Tremont Street)



(Architect's rendering/TAT)

## Zoning

Permitting for the Whittier redevelopment will be accomplished through approval of a zoning map amendment that will set the overall programmatic restrictions for the Whittier property and the surrounding parcels, including details such as building height, setbacks and parking requirements. Individual phases of construction will proceed separately subject only to design review. MPDC's mixed-use development project at Parcel 10 is already fully permitted.

## Why this Program vs. Other Approaches?

By including the properties adjacent to Whittier Street the redevelopment will achieve the complete transformation of an entire district at Tremont Street and Melnea Cass Boulevard. Anchored by the Orange Line station at Ruggles, the new development will capitalize on the principles of Transit Oriented Design including increased density. At the same time, the redevelopment will accomplish a significant deconcentration of poverty, as replacement units will be interspersed with a greater number of moderate-income and market-rate residences. Perhaps most important for the current residents of Whittier Street, inclusion of the offsite properties will facilitate relocation and will minimize disruption by allowing many households to move from their current apartments directly into newly built homes.

## 5.5 Housing Design

The Whittier redevelopment will provide a range of housing types, affordable to community residents at a wide range of income levels, all designed and constructed to provide healthy, safe, and attractive homes.

### Design Approach

At the community level, the design follows the principles of Transit Oriented Development. Increased density along Tremont Street takes advantage of the proximity of the Orange Line rapid transit service at Ruggles to create a bustling mixed-use streetscape appealing to residents, workers, and shoppers from within and beyond the community. The tallest buildings will be along Tremont Street and Whittier Street, which is planned to be widened as part of the large-scale mixed use development at Parcel 3. Taller buildings are needed along both streets given the height of the structures planned for Parcel 3 and existing buildings across Tremont Street—see the perspective view presented in Figure 5-6.

From these tallest buildings at the intersection of Whittier and Tremont Streets, the scale steps down in the direction of Madison Park Village, with townhouses sited at the rear of the Whittier Street property and on infill sites within Madison Park Village. Along Tremont Street in the direction of Melnea Cass Boulevard, residential uses will be combined with institutional and commercial uses, including ground floor retail along to promote lively activity—and thereby safety—throughout the day, evening, and night.

The smaller-scale residential feel of the interior will be reinforced by the creation of new streets, including some that re-create the historical street pattern in the neighborhood, as well as playgrounds and passive recreation areas. Throughout the development, the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design have been used to promote safety and social cohesiveness.



*New townhomes along Ruggles Street*

*(Architect's rendering/TAT)*

## Green Standards

The Whittier redevelopment will be designed through an integrated design process to maximize energy and water efficiency, durability, and healthy indoor air quality, while at the same time reducing the development's impact on natural resources during construction as well as ongoing operations. Individual buildings will achieve LEED Gold or higher. The entire redevelopment will achieve LEED-ND certification for neighborhood design.

A significant objective in the Whittier redevelopment is that the property achieve as close to net zero energy consumption as possible over the course of the build-out and operation of the property. Net zero means that the total amount of energy used by the property is equal to the amount of renewable energy created at the site. In order to approach this goal, the new development will incorporate the following measures:

- Highly-insulated building envelopes
- Direct-to-unit exhaust and supply ventilation systems with heat recovery
- PV or solar-thermal ready rooftops
- Hydronic heating and cooling systems with centralized sources per building, groups of buildings, or phase, with the ability to adapt heating and cooling sources with low-energy or renewable energy systems in the future.
- Sub-metered units with heating and cooling energy use by unit, even if heat is included in the tenant rent.
- 100% Energy Star qualified hard-wired light fixtures and switching schemes to encourage utilization of daylight.
- Energy Star rated appliances and equipment

Critical to the success of these measures will be a robust program of community education to ensure that residents, workers, and visitors know how to best use the green features of the new development. It will be a function of the property management team to provide training, along with administering green and Healthy Homes practices such as Integrated Pest Management.

## Accessibility and Visitability

A minimum of 5% of all residential units will fully comply with Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards. At the same time, every effort will be made to ensure that as many residential units as possible (a minimum of 50%) are visitable by persons who rely on wheelchairs or other means of mobility assistance.

## Long-Term Affordability

The affordability of the deeply subsidized units will be ensured by deed restrictions that comply with federal public housing regulations, Section 8 regulations, and low-income housing tax credit regulations, as well as state affordable housing program restrictions. The Boston Housing Authority will administer all HUD subsidies, including public housing operating subsidy and Section 8 rental assistance, and BHA will retain ownership of the underlying land at the original Whittier property.

## Information Technology

All residential units will be wired internet-ready. The developers will pursue partnerships to provide wireless internet access free of charge.

## 5.6 Implementation

At the outset of the Whittier CHOICE planning process, Boston Housing Authority procured Preservation of Affordable Housing, Inc. (POAH) and Madison Park Development Corporation (MPDC) to act as developers for the Whittier Street transformation. In close collaboration with BHA, Whittier Street public housing residents, and constituents throughout the broader community, POAH and MPDC have formulated a thoughtful and achievable plan to implement the full Whittier housing transformation described above by the year 2020.

### Phasing and Relocation

In order to ensure a smooth relocation process that minimizes disruption to residents' lives—and that ensures that a wide range of relocation options is available to residents—the redevelopment will be carried out in three phases, which may be split into concurrent sub-phases for financing purposes.

Figure 5-7 presents the projected phasing plan:

- Phase One comprises Building 2 and 3 on site at the original Whittier property and several buildings off site: Buildings 8 and 9 at Madison Park Village and Building 10 at the Tropical Foods property.
- Phase Two comprises Building 4 at the Whittier property and Building 5 off site at the Crescent Parcel.
- Phase Three comprises Building 1 at the Whittier property, Building 6 at the Crescent Parcel, and Building 12 at Dewitt Drive in Madison Park Village.

The new buildings on the opposite side of Melnea Cass Boulevard from the Crescent Parcel, while part of the vision for the new mixed-use district, will not formally be part of the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan.

### Financing Plan

The mixed-use development envisioned in Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan is projected to cost over \$300 million, and will require a substantial investment of public resources: Federal and state low-income housing tax-credits (both 9% and 4% credits) and New Markets Tax Credits that will leverage significant private equity; state and city infrastructure grant funds; state and city affordable housing soft debt; and public housing capital funding, including potential Choice Neighborhoods Initiative implementation grant funds.

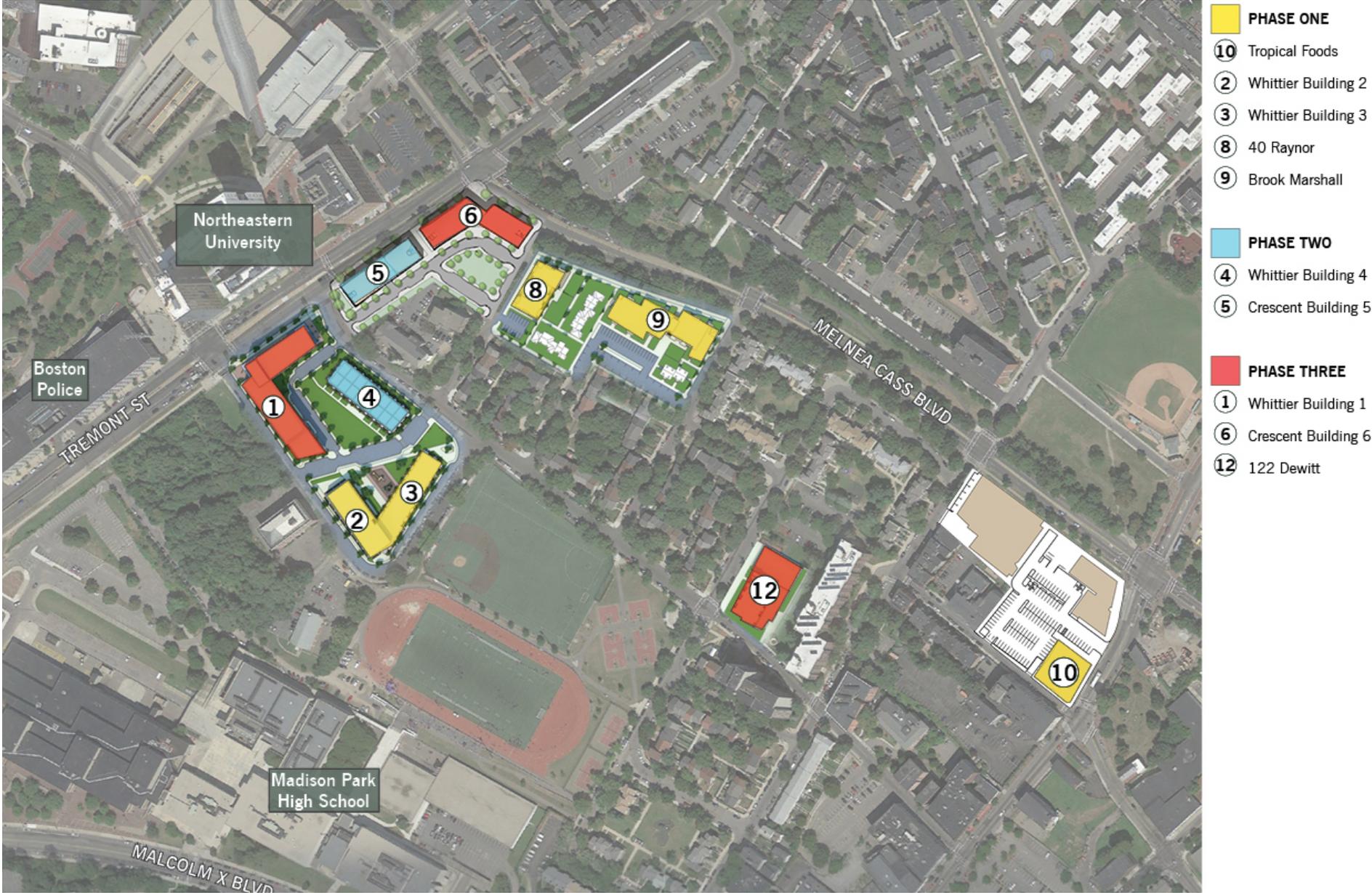
### Developer Team

The housing component of the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan will be carried out by a joint venture comprised of two Boston-based non-profits with extensive housing development experience—one a firm with national significance, including Choice Neighborhoods development experience, and the other the oldest community development corporation in the city, dedicated to the Whittier Neighborhood since the 1960s.

Preservation of Affordable Housing, Inc. is a non-profit organization charged to preserve and steward affordable rental housing in order to provide stability, hope and security to low and moderate income individuals and families. Since its founding in 2001, POAH has successfully rescued and refinanced close to 8,000 apartments in 63 developments across 9 states and the District of Columbia. POAH currently has 21 properties in its pipeline with a total value of over \$136 million. POAH currently serves as the Lead Developer for the Choice Neighborhoods implementation Grant in Chicago.

Madison Park Development Corporation is a leading nonprofit housing developer in the Roxbury neighborhood. Its mission is to develop and preserve quality, mixed-income housing in Roxbury, and to promote the renaissance of Dudley Square as a thriving neighborhood business district, recognized as a center of commerce and culture that anchors the economic revitalization of Roxbury.

Figure 5-7. Onsite and Offsite Development/Phasing Plan



Source: TAT

As part of that mission, Madison Park works to bolster economic growth in Dudley Square, to strengthen resident leadership and engagement, and to promote arts and culture through the historic Hibernian Hall. Since its founding in 1966, MPDC has successfully developed over 400 units of housing and 76,000 square feet of retail and office space. These units include the adjacent Madison Park Village and 366 units in the Orchard Gardens HOPE VI redevelopment.

### End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> U.S. Green Building Council, <http://www.documents.dgs.ca.gov/dgs/pio/facts/LA%20workshop/climate.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> Colton, Meryl D. et al, "Indoor Air Quality in Green vs. Conventional Multi-Family Low-Income Housing" (Unpublished manuscript 2014). Harvard School of Public Health, Department of Environmental Health, Boston, MA.
- <sup>3</sup> Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Orange Line Opportunity Corridor Report (Final Report March 2013). [http://www.macdc.org/sites/default/files/research/Orange\\_Line\\_Opportunity\\_Corridor\\_Report.pdf](http://www.macdc.org/sites/default/files/research/Orange_Line_Opportunity_Corridor_Report.pdf)

## Chapter 6

# People Strategy

### 6.1 Overall Vision for People

The People component of the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan focuses on the residents of the Whittier Street public housing development in pursuit of the community's vision:

*Whittier is a connected community whose members enjoy access to a broad spectrum of quality programs and services. Immediate and long-term needs related to financial stability, health, wellness, education, and youth development are addressed through a coordinated, accessible support network offering both on-site and off-site assistance. Through this support network residents experience greater financial stability, lower stress levels, fewer chronic diseases, better school outcomes, more out-of-school activities, and improved job skills. Moreover, they are engaged in the broader Whittier neighborhood and feel part of a vibrant community.*



*Play Me I'm Yours Street Piano Festival at Whittier*

## 6.2 Needs Assessment

As part of the broader community needs assessment, a comprehensive Resident Needs Assessment was conducted at the Whittier housing development. The primary tool for this assessment was a 90-question survey completed in person with a team of community partners speaking five languages. The team achieved a 69% response rate by heads of household at the 200-unit Whittier site—a historical high for this type of survey at a BHA site. Perhaps as important, the survey proved to be an important tool for engaging residents in the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan process.

The resident survey was augmented by teen and parent focus groups, quantitative data collection, and information shared by partner organizations. In particular, the Boston Promise Initiative, Whittier Street Health Center, the Boston Public Health Commission, Madison Park Development Corporation, Boston Public Schools, Boston Police Department, and the Mission 180 initiative all contributed data to the resident assessment.

The assessment yielded the following priority categories of services needs: asset building, health, education and youth development. An undercurrent within all of these areas is the need for linguistic, cultural and programmatic approaches that really work for Whittier families, since many families are not currently utilizing available programs.

### Priority Resident Needs

- ◆ Income generation and asset-building
- ◆ Education and training program opportunities
- ◆ Better access to English Language Learning programs
- ◆ Support for people with mental and physical disabilities
- ◆ Programs to promote health and wellness
- ◆ Better understanding about benefits of healthier eating and exercise
- ◆ Support for parents as educators and advocates for their childrens' academic achievement
- ◆ More quality programs to engage youth
- ◆ Public safety concerns that keep residents isolated

### Whittier Development Demographics

Whittier Development residents are poorer than the neighborhood as a whole, with over 85% earning less than 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI). There is a higher concentration of Latino/Hispanic residents (53% versus 34% in the neighborhood), and somewhat fewer African-Americans (42% versus 59% in the neighborhood). While the neighborhood is already younger than the City as a whole, the Whittier development has even more young people, with over 40% below the age of 18. Eighty-seven percent of households are female-headed households (98% for households with children 0-5) and, perhaps most notably, 31% of heads of households are either physically or mentally disabled. More demographic information is detailed in Chapter 2.

### Income Generation/Asset-Building

Boston's public housing communities are low-income by design; however, the Whittier site houses families that are extremely low income:

- Less than half of households report employment wages (45%)
- A high proportion of households receive Social Security (25%), SSI (35%) income or TANF (23%) income
- More than 80% of households earning less than 30% of AMI
- Average household income is just over \$14,000 per year

An additional indicator of the lack of mobility at Whittier is the large number (23%) of heads of households who lived in public housing as children. There is an often impossible gap between what families are earning and what they would need to move on from deeply subsidized housing, with significant multi-generational poverty and little hope that the younger generation will find an alternate trajectory out of public housing.

Not surprisingly, given the extremely low incomes of these families, residents reported the following, all of which indicate the strong need for financial literacy programs:

- 51% of households have no checking account
- 26% need credit repair or counseling
- 24% have had problems in the past with late payments or not being able to pay bills

Of the residents who work, most are primarily in services industries: hotel/hospitality, maintenance, retail, personal services, administrative, and healthcare jobs that have low wages. Residents universally reported the need for job training and assistance with a pathway to living wage jobs. The most-needed services included help with learning about job opportunities (44%), help with job search and interview skills (41%), training in technical skills (39%) and transportation (30%).

In addition to job training, residents at Whittier face significant barriers to employment, including low educational attainment, limited English proficiency and high rates of disability.



Whittier Street Residents Meeting

### Education and Training Program Opportunities

The Boston Promise Initiative notes that greater Boston has lost over 33,000 jobs in the past decade, and 45% of the remaining jobs require a bachelor's degree.<sup>1</sup> Yet many Whittier residents have very limited education:

- 42% of heads of household have no high school diploma or GED
- 27% of those seeking work stated that they would benefit from basic math training
- only 9% of respondents have a family member enrolled in a community college and 8% in a 4-year college
- 4% of respondents have a family member enrolled in a college prep program

### Better Access to English Language Learning Programs

The Boston Promise Neighborhoods Initiative has documented the connection between poor school performance and barriers to work opportunities for non-English speaking families. Sixty-five percent of those seeking work at Whittier stated that they would benefit from training related to speaking, reading or writing English.

The resident survey affirmed the data that BHA tracks on primary languages spoken in the home: 55% of heads of households speak a foreign language at home. Fifty percent speak Spanish—the highest of any BHA site; the remaining 5% speak Haitian Creole, Somali or Chinese. Low English proficiency is particularly high among many parents and grandparents.

Despite a strong reported need for GED and ESOL programs, only 2% of those surveyed have a family member currently participating in one of these programs. Almost no one (1%) is currently in a job readiness or computer training program, despite several programs available within a few blocks of the site.

### Support for People with Mental and Physical Disabilities

Mental and physical disabilities frequently amplify the isolation as well as the educational and employment barriers faced by residents. The rates of disability are significant: 41% of households have a member with a documented physical or mental disability. Nearly a third (31%) of heads of household report having a disability and 9% report having a disabled child. Caring for a disabled household member places additional burden on able-bodied family members.

### Programs to Promote Health and Wellness

Residents rated their own health generally ranging from fair to good, but more detailed questioning about specific health issues indicated that residents are struggling with a number of chronic diseases and health issues, which is also borne out by data from the Boston Public Health Commission and Whittier Street Health Center.

Almost all families (98%) have health insurance. Most residents report no barriers to getting quality health care, and also say they have good access to primary care, with only 2% reporting use of the emergency room most often for health service or advice. Residents rate the quality of health care services high. Residents utilize a variety of community health centers, including the Whittier Street Health Center, Dimock Health Center, Martha Eliot Health Center, and the Boston Medical Center.

While 80% report they have no unmet health needs and only 12% report that their health is poor, this data is at odds with reporting on more specific ailments as well as City and local health center data, as presented in Figure 6-1.

On the positive side, treatment rates for these conditions appear to be reasonably good. For heads of household, treatment rates range from a high of 82% for asthma and hypertension to a low of 51% for weight problems; for other adults, treatment ranges from 79% for hypertension to 33% for weight and anxiety; for children, the treatment rates are all greater than 50%.

Figure 6-1. Health Statistics

Health Condition/ Indicator	Whittier <sup>2</sup>			WSHC <sup>3</sup>	Roxbury <sup>4</sup>	Boston <sup>5</sup>	Massachusetts		United States
	Head of Household	Other Adults	Children	All Patients	Adults	Adults	Adults	Children	Adults
Health Insurance Coverage <sup>6</sup>	98%	88%	97%	—	—	—	95%	97%	85%
Asthma	26%	27%	40%	18%	15%	11%	9.6% <sup>7</sup>	10.8% <sup>8</sup>	—
Type II Diabetes	16%	21%	1%	16%	11%	6%	7.4% <sup>9</sup>	—	8.2% <sup>10</sup>
Hypertension	41%	35%	1%	28%	—	—	29.2% <sup>11</sup>	—	28.6% <sup>12</sup>
Obesity	26%	12%	5%	10%	—	21%/14% <sup>13</sup>	23% <sup>14</sup>	14.3% <sup>15</sup>	—
Elevated Blood Lead Levels	—	—	1%	—	1.4%	1.4%	—	—	—
Difficulty Sleeping	38%	6%	10%	—	—	—	—	—	—
Depression/Stress/ Anxiety	34%	9%	8%	20%	10% <sup>16</sup>	9%/25% <sup>17</sup>	—	—	9.1% <sup>18</sup>

Sources: Various (see endnotes on p. 6-27)

### Better understanding about benefits of healthier eating and exercise

Residents rate healthier eating and exercise low on a scale of what is important to them, despite the potential for these activities to help with a variety of prevalent mental and physical health issues at the site. About half of heads of households and their children are eating at least two servings of fruits and vegetables per day, according to the survey. Among the barriers to eating fruits and vegetables are cost (35%), low quality of produce at the local stores (18%), lack of availability (12%)—but 47% of residents simply do not want to buy these foods.

There is other data to support the need for more healthy food options in the neighborhood, but perhaps the more challenging barrier is this lack of interest in pursuing healthier options. Residents want convenient and inexpensive food nearby; they do not specify the preference for healthy food.

The self-reported level of exercise and physical activity is fairly high with more than one-third of heads of household indicating that they engage in 60 minutes of vigorous physical activity 3-5 days per week and that 70% of their children do the same. Even so, a quarter of adults report that they are overweight. Indoor and outdoor recreational space was identified as the most needed neighborhood amenity and respondents identified several barriers to being more physically active which include physical disability, lack of parks/playgrounds, no (or poor quality) sidewalks and an unsafe neighborhood.



*Imagination Playground playblocks at Whittier*

### Support for parents as educators and advocates for their children's academic achievement

While 92% of Whittier parents report satisfaction with their children's school experience, Boston Public Schools (BPS) data shows that most Whittier kids are attending poor performing schools. BHA kids are also generally performing worse than average in BPS schools on several key measures including attendance, standardized test scores, and graduation rates.<sup>19</sup> Whittier kids are almost exclusively comprised of the groups that have persistently performed poorly in BPS schools according to Boston Promise Initiative data—low-income, from non-English speaking homes, and with disabilities.

Whittier school kids reflect the Boston school choice system, with 150 school-age children attending over 50 different BPS schools throughout the city. This phenomenon is not unusual for any community, public housing or otherwise, in the city. About half of Whittier kids are in grade school (K-5); 18% are in middle school (grades 6-8), and 29% are in one of the City's 30 high schools.

Even though parents reported satisfaction with schools, "better schools" was ranked second to public safety as the improvement that would make Whittier Street a better community for raising children. More than half of respondents with children indicate they participate in a parent organization at school. They cited the need for bilingual support, schools closer to home, and parent meetings at more convenient times.

Over 40% of children in the Boston Promise Initiative area enter kindergarten unprepared for success.<sup>20</sup> The indicators from the Whittier residents survey seem positive and encouraging: 71% of 0-5 year olds who are not yet in kindergarten were in early Head Start, Head Start, or daycare program. This rate is actually slightly higher than the statewide rate (60%) and citywide rate (64%) of preschool enrollment according to the Kids Count Data Center.<sup>21</sup>

However the very high rates of participation in early education programs at Whittier Street is not a guarantee that the children are more school-ready. More assessment is needed to gauge whether the quality of

these early learning programs in which they are enrolled is high enough to ensure academic success. Furthermore, ongoing tracking of data on student performance is crucial. The Whittier Choice team is continuing discussion with BPS and BPI on building a collaborative data-sharing model.

### More quality programs to engage youth

Residents are universally concerned about youth in the community and the potential for youth to engage in dangerous or unhealthy activities. There is a strong call for more programming and better opportunities for young people.

More programs for teens was among the top ranked improvements that would make Whittier Street a better community for raising children. There is already reasonably good participation in out-of-school programs but still room for improvement:

- 60% of youth are involved in some type of youth program; 22% in after-school programs, 14% in summer enrichment programs and 14% in recreation and sports programs. By comparison, the Harvard Family Research Project reported in March 2006 on data collected nationally that, "among younger youth (ages 6-11), only 31% of the lowest income youth participated in an OST [out-of-school time] club or activity, whereas fully 58% of the highest income youth participated. Among older youth (ages 12-17), participation rose from 43% to 72%."<sup>22</sup>
- Those who do not participate indicated it was due to cost (40%), inconvenient location (34%), lack of information (34%), no transportation (34%) and inconvenient hours (28%).

- The programs that young people would be most interested in, if available, are: arts/music/ performing arts (38%), recreation/sports (32%), summer enrichment and tutoring (30% each).

The prevalence of teen parenting and teen pregnancy also affirmed the need for better engagement and activities for young people. Nearly a third (31%) of adults with kids ages 0-5 had their kids when they were teenagers.

Teen focus groups also emphasized the need for better strategies to improve attendance at school, including person-to-person contact between schools and parents regarding tardiness or absences and better school breakfast to attract teens to school on time.

### Public Safety Concerns

Concerns about public safety are prominently expressed in the resident survey. Such concerns have an impact on residents' ability to access and utilize services and programs in the neighborhood. Strategies to address these concerns systematically are detailed in Chapter 4, specifically p. 4-10.

### Commitment to the Whittier Community

Despite all of the challenges described above, the overwhelming majority of residents (84%) want to return to Whittier after the redevelopment and have positive hopes for redevelopment at the site. There is significant interest in participating in the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan planning process.

### 6.3 People Goals, Strategies and Outcomes

The goals and strategies for the People component of the Whittier Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan include four major categories: Income and Asset Building; Health and Wellness; Education and Youth Development. These areas align with the priority resident needs identified in the Resident Survey. While these are described in discrete categories, successful implementation and desirable outcomes are interdependent.

#### Income and Asset Building

The stress and complexities associated with chronic poverty are well-documented, and there is growing acceptance that the approach to moving families out of poverty must be multi-dimensional, flexible, and long-term. Moreover, the approach must take into account the impact that stress has upon decision-making and mobility for those who are persistently poor.<sup>23</sup>

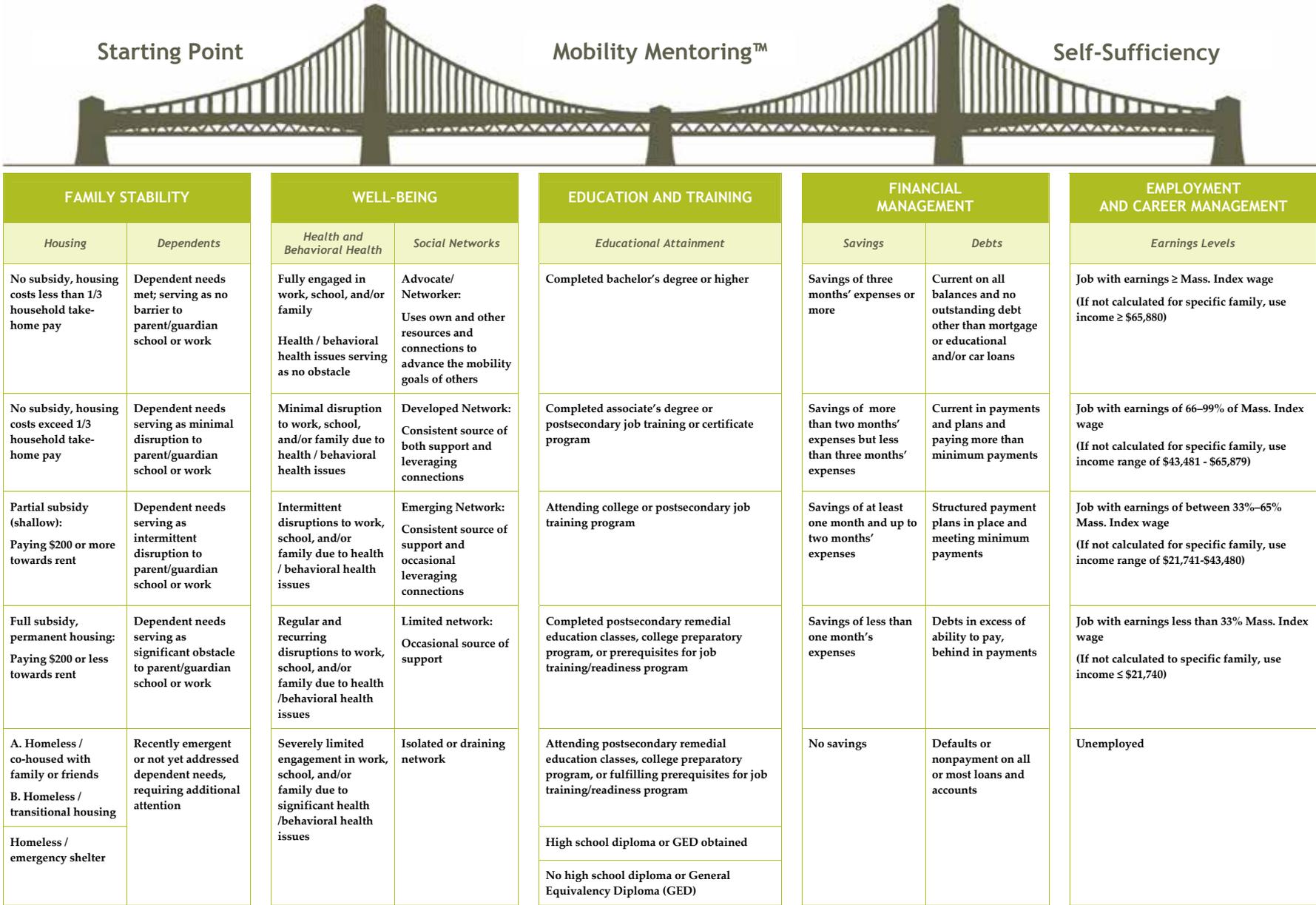
The Crittenton Women’s Union (CWU) has developed a flexible, outcomes-driven model for creating pathways out of poverty that is gaining national momentum for its success in helping families make lasting change. The CWU approach, called Mobility Mentoring™, will be the cornerstone of the Whittier income-generation and asset-building plan. Mobility Mentoring™ is the practice of partnering with clients so that over time they may acquire the resources, skills and sustained behavior changes necessary to attain and preserve their economic independence<sup>24</sup>. The framework for the CWU approach is outlined in Figure 6-3. Depending upon available resources, CWU will either deliver these services directly, or will provide technical assistance to a BHA-administered program.

At the center of this approach is a coaching/mentoring relationship which departs from crisis case management and is designed to help families set goals, change behaviors, gain new skills, and navigate available networks of learning and support.

**Figure 6-2. Income and Asset-Building Goals and Strategies**

Goals	Strategies
<b>#1</b> Stabilize families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify recurring barriers to work, school, and family health</li> <li>• Develop budgeting strategies to address debts, arrears and/or other financial issues</li> <li>• Establish short-term (six-month) goals</li> </ul>
<b>#2</b> Optimize pathways and decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish medium-term (6-18 months) goals</li> <li>• Put in place structured payment plans and build savings to at least 1-2 months expenses</li> <li>• Engage in an employment or education-based activity</li> <li>• Continue to strengthen support networks</li> </ul>
<b>#3</b> Achieve measurable progress toward individual goals for education and earnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish long-term goals</li> <li>• Continue education and employment training</li> <li>• Increase savings</li> </ul>

Figure 6-3. Crittenton Women's Union Bridge to Self-Sufficiency™



## **INCOME AND ASSET-BUILDING GOAL #1**

### Stabilize families

- **Identify recurring barriers to work, school, and family health**

Through on-site coaching staff that will work with each individual household, residents will begin to identify key issues that are preventing family members from moving out of a crisis mode and achieving more stability. Whether financial, health, mental health, or other issues, coaches will identify appropriate partners and services to begin to address these issues and become part of a longer-term support network. Coaches will remain active conduits and coordinators in the process.

- **Develop budgeting strategies to address debts, rent arrears and other financial issues**

Coaches will work with participants to identify debt, default, non-payment or other financial issues that are barriers to family stability. A structured plan will be developed to bring the household current on payments at a realistic pace.

- **Establish short-term (six-month) goals**

Families will set very short-term, achievable goals which begin to create the basis for longer-term planning and goal-setting.

## **INCOME AND ASSET-BUILDING GOAL #2**

### Optimize pathways and decision-making

- **Establish medium-term (6-18 months) goals**

As the strategies to stabilize families take hold, coaches will begin to work with each household on a medium-term set of goals for the next 6-18 months.

- **Put in place structured payment plans and build savings for at least 1-2 months expenses**

As payments become current, it is possible for families to begin to save a small amount. Subject to available funding, these savings will be matched through the Whittier CNI program.

- **Engage in an employment or education-based activity**

With some progress on immediate needs and basic stability, residents can begin to engage in an employment or education-based activity in an area of interest. The activities are intended to be short-term (i.e., several weeks).

- **Continue to strengthen support networks**

It is critical that each household continue to build its engagement with a growing support network that can continue to stabilize and support the family.

### INCOME AND ASSET-BUILDING GOAL #3

Achieve measurable progress toward individual goals for education and earnings

- **Establish long-term goals**

Multi-year Goals will be established across each pillar of the CWU “Bridge to Self-Sufficiency™”: Family Stability, Well-Being, Education and Training, Financial Management, and Employment and Career Management, with each goal broken down into six-month increments.

- **Continue education and employment training**

Residents will continue to build on education and employment related skills in order to move to increasing earnings.

- **Increase savings**

Families will work toward building savings that equal 3 months or more of expenses. Subject to available funding, these savings will be matched through the Whittier CNI program.

#### Income and Asset-Building Key Outcomes:

- ◆ Increased median household income for Whittier residents.
- ◆ More Whittier residents work in family-sustaining jobs.
- ◆ More Whittier residents complete high school or earn GED.
- ◆ Increase in Whittier household savings.
- ◆ More Whittier residents enroll in and graduate from college.



Whittier residents at HUD site visit

### Health

Despite high rates of health insurance and good access to quality health care, Whittier residents suffer disproportionately from high rates of chronic disease including asthma, hypertension, and diabetes as well as extreme stress, anxiety and fear.

The definition of a chronic disease is a long-lasting condition that can be controlled but not cured. Patients with chronic diseases may receive treatment, even high quality treatment, yet continue to suffer from these persistent illnesses. The reasons are clearly noted in the *Health of Boston 2012* report by the Boston Public Health Commission. While it is often believed that biology, individual behavior, and health care access are the most important determinants of health, in actuality, the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, play and age contribute greatly to shaping health behaviors and influencing one's health. These “social determinants” of health include:

- **Economic conditions** – a person’s employment, income, education and wealth affect health. It has long been recognized that socioeconomic status is the single strongest predictor of health; as socioeconomic status rises, health improves.
- **Environmental and Neighborhood conditions** – food access, parks and open space, housing, air quality, liquor and tobacco advertisement, and transportation. Whether in isolation or working in concert, these neighborhood conditions impact health. For instance, individuals who live in areas with poor air quality experience higher rates of asthma. Neighborhoods without grocery stores that sell fresh produce or safe and affordable places to engage in physical activity suffer from higher rates of obesity and diabetes.
- **Social conditions** – Social conditions such as lack of neighborhood safety, social networks, social capital, and civic engagement as well as exposure to racism lead to chronic stress. Stress is directly linked to chronic disease, particularly hypertension and heart disease which are very prevalent in the Whittier Street neighborhood. Research has shown that supportive social networks can serve as a buffer to stress

and depression, which in turn, protects against physical and mental illness<sup>25</sup>.

The following goals and strategies seek to leverage partners, programs and initiatives to not only influence personal health behaviors but also affect some of the social determinants of health, particularly related to neighborhood and social conditions, in an effort to help Whittier residents achieve and maintain good health. It is also important to note that these health strategies are part of a more holistic People Plan as well as Neighborhood and Housing Plans that aim to affect other aspects of these social determinants including economic conditions that should, collectively, have even greater impact on health outcomes among Whittier residents.



Whittier Street Health Center

**Figure 6-4. Health Goals and Strategies**

Goals	Strategies
<p><b>#1</b> Increase resident knowledge and access to resources to address and prevent chronic disease</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build upon Whittier Street Health Center (WSHC) Building Vibrant Communities to decrease instances of high-blood pressure, diabetes and depression</li> <li>• Expand treatment of chronic diseases</li> <li>• Conduct Community Health Fairs and other health-related workshops</li> <li>• Promote WSHC's primary care, behavioral healthcare, and urgent care services</li> </ul>
<p><b>#2</b> Residents have the supports and programs needed to address stress, anxiety and depression</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop culturally-sensitive mental health programs to address depression and stress</li> <li>• Incorporate the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) into CNI case management</li> <li>• Create opportunities for both professional and peer support in all aspects of the People Plan</li> <li>• Connect adult and child victims of trauma and violence to support programs</li> <li>• Support existing and develop additional community building activities and initiatives that promote positive neighborhood interaction and combat social isolation</li> </ul>
<p><b>#3</b> Adults and children are physically active</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with Tenacity to engage Whittier Street and neighborhood youth in tennis instruction</li> <li>• Partner with District B-2 to engage youth in sports and recreation</li> <li>• Develop walking and biking programs in the neighborhood</li> <li>• Promote use of recreation venues and amenities in the neighborhood for fitness and regular exercise</li> <li>• Create a tot lot in the new development</li> <li>• Improve public safety and open space amenities in the neighborhood to address key impediments to physical activity</li> </ul>
<p><b>#4</b> Families have access to healthy, affordable food and embrace healthy cooking and eating</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make low-cost Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares available to Whittier Street residents</li> <li>• Create an affordable farmers market in the neighborhood</li> <li>• Promote fresh, fun and tasty food prep activities for whole families to encourage development of healthy eating habits across generations</li> <li>• Ensure safe pedestrian access to new Tropical Foods supermarket</li> <li>• Apply lessons from successful programs such as <i>With Every Heartbeat is Life</i></li> <li>• Commit to providing fresh and healthy food and drink at community events and meetings</li> </ul>
<p><b>#5</b> Design and manage the new housing to support better health outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximize indoor air quality in the design of the units</li> <li>• Implement a No Smoking policy</li> <li>• Utilize integrated pest management and green cleaning protocols</li> <li>• Implement a new resident orientation to help residents keep their homes green and healthy</li> </ul>

**HEALTH GOAL #1** | Increase resident knowledge and access to resources to address and/or prevent chronic disease

- **Build upon lessons learned from the Building Vibrant Communities grant program with Whittier Street Health Center to continue to decrease instances of high-blood pressure, diabetes and depression**

Whittier Street Health Center has made a commitment to continue funding for a part-time Social Health Coordinator at Whittier to create a robust peer education and navigation program to increase knowledge among the resident community, develop and support healthy community-wide activities while also supporting leadership development. In addition, they have expressed a willingness to explore the opportunity to locate a WSHC clinician on-site at the Whittier Housing development.

- **Expand treatment of chronic diseases**

Whittier Street Health Center offers Asthma and Diabetes Clinics as well as the Cardiovascular Community Outreach Program and Adult Healthy Weight Services. In addition to providing personalized care, some of these programs provide teaching and support in a group setting.

- **Conduct Community Health Fairs and other health-related workshops**

Madison Park Development Corporation (MPDC) hosts health fairs and workshops on a number of health topics. Three or four events are being planned for 2014. MPDC will expand its outreach to encourage Whittier Street residents to also participate in these events.

- **Promote Whittier Street Health Center's primary care, behavioral healthcare, and urgent care services**

WSHC has capacity to provide primary care and behavioral healthcare services to residents who currently only enroll in their wellness programs. Urgent care services are available 10 hours per day, 6 days per week regardless of patient status. However, many Whittier and neighborhood residents who are not primary care patients of the Health Center are not aware of this convenient resource available right around the corner.

## HEALTH GOAL #2 | Residents have the supports and programs needed to address stress, anxiety and depression

- **Develop culturally-sensitive mental health programs to address depression and stress**

Work with health partners like Whittier Street Health Center, Boston Medical Center and Dana Farber/Brigham & Women's Hospital to develop culturally-sensitive programs and workshops that help residents reduce, prevent, and cope with stress.

- **Incorporate the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) into the CNI case management intake and assessment process**

Whittier Street Health Center currently uses the DASS-21, a set of three self-report scales designed to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Incorporating this tool into the assessment process will help CNI case managers determine when referrals to medical/mental health partners are needed. It will also provide an opportunity to measure changes in individual and community wide depression, anxiety and stress over the course of the CNI grant period.

- **Create opportunities for both professional and peer support in all aspects of the People Plan**

Research has shown that supportive social networks can serve as a buffer to stress and depression<sup>26</sup>. So, in addition to connecting residents with professional supports through referrals, workshops, and programs, the CNI team will facilitate and sustain peer support networks. Peer support serves several important functions: assistance with daily challenges by sharing personal experiences and strategies, social and emotional support through empathetic listening and encouragement, linkages to community resources, and ongoing support over an extended period of time. Peer support programs may build upon a variety of models including professional-led group visits with peer exchange, peer-led face-to-face self-management programs, peer coaches, community health workers, support groups and/or telephone-based or email-based peer support<sup>27</sup>. In collaboration with

Whittier Street Health Center, a part-time Social Health Coordinator is already trained and working in the Whittier housing development. Such peer support networks could readily extend beyond health issues to other aspects of life including parenting, job search, college preparation, etc.

- **Connect adult and child victims of trauma and violence to supportive programs**

Violence is widely recognized as a major public health issue. The fatal and non-fatal outcomes resulting from violent victimization and perpetration have a negative impact on individual and community health<sup>28</sup>. Whittier Street Health Center's DecisionArts, Defending Childhood Program and Anti-Violence Programming are designed to help victims process and express feelings about trauma while also working on community-wide prevention and intervention.

- **Support existing and develop additional community building activities and initiatives that promote positive neighborhood interaction and combat social isolation**

There are existing neighborhood events like the Whittier Street Health Center's Back-to-School Barbeque that are well received in the community. These events and activities will be well publicized and promoted among Whittier Street resident to maximize participation. New activities and initiatives will also be created in partnership with other neighborhood entities including National Night Out events, holiday celebrations, pot lucks, coffee hours, walking clubs, clean-up days, park activities, etc. to build community spirit and pride.

## HEALTH GOAL #3 | Adults and children are physically active

- **Partner with Tenacity to engage Whittier Street and neighborhood youth in tennis instruction**

As discussed in further detail in the Youth Development strategies, BHA will partner with Tenacity to bring its highly successful after school and summer programs to Whittier Street. This program will not only foster positive youth development but it will increase physical activity through tennis instruction and play.

- **Partner with BPD District B-2 to engage youth in sports and recreation**

In addition to strengthening the relationship between police officers and youth in the neighborhood, such a partnership will provide an opportunity for neighborhood youth to engage in physical activity in a safe and supportive environment.

- **Develop walking and biking programs in the neighborhood**

Engage WalkBoston and BostonBikes to create programs and events which capitalize on the bike and pedestrian friendly environment that the planned street improvements are expected to create. This includes working with the Neighborhood Lead on the creation and promotion of a proposed fitness loop, discussed in more detail in the Neighborhood Plan.

- **Promote use of recreation venues and amenities in the neighborhood for fitness and regular exercise, including:**

- *Madison Park Village.* Exercise classes for seniors are offered by MPDC in partnership with Northeastern University at Smith House. MPDC also partners with Earthseed Yoga to offer free "Relax & Renew" gentle yoga sessions as 122 DeWitt Community Center for MPV and Whittier residents.

- *Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center.* With memberships as low as \$10 per month, the Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center offers great fitness facilities and programs.

- *Madison Park Community Center.* While most of the facilities at the Madison Park Community Center are already oversubscribed by the Madison Park and O'Bryant High Schools, the swimming pool is open and available to the public. Swimming is a great exercise across the life span. In addition, it offers a great opportunity to help neighborhood residents learn to swim.

- *Medical Fitness Center.* To be located in the basement of the Whittier Street Health Center, the Medical Fitness Center will offer integrative medicine services such as meditation, acupuncture, yoga, dance therapy, physical fitness services, nutrition counseling, health literacy, wellness support, and life coaching—all with proven health benefits. The Fitness Center plans to have a sliding fee schedule for residents

- **Create a tot lot in the new development**

At the neighborhood charrette, stakeholders and area residents noted that there are no playgrounds designed for toddlers in the immediate vicinity of Whittier Street. To address this gap, the Whittier Street redevelopment will include a playground designed for children under the age of five.

- **Improve public safety and open space amenities in the neighborhood to address key impediments to physical activity**

As discussed in more detail in the Neighborhood Chapter, efforts will be made to improve the open spaces currently available in the neighborhood including refurbishing/expanding the tennis facilities through partnership with Tenacity and the U.S. Tennis Association and creating/promoting the "Roxbury Loop." Additional strategies to improve public safety will enable residents to feel safe utilizing these local parks and amenities as well as walking/biking in the neighborhood.

## HEALTH GOAL #4 | Families have access to healthy, affordable food and embrace healthy cooking and eating

- **Make low-cost Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares available to Whittier Street residents**

MPDC currently operates a CSA program as part of a collaboration with Dana Farber/Brigham & Women's Hospital. Typically the shares are \$12.50 per week over a 20 week period in the summer. However, MPDC and some other partners subsidize the shares so that residents pay only \$10.75 per week. MPDC will expand the program to include Whittier Street residents, and explore additional funding opportunities to support more subsidized shares.

- **Create an affordable farmers market in the neighborhood**

MPDC is looking to create a farmer's market across the street from Smith House along Ruggles Street. In addition to providing another great resource for fresh and healthy food in the neighborhood, this location would support the Neighborhood Plan goal of making Ruggles Street a more attractive and lively streetscape.

- **Promote fresh, fun and tasty food prep activities for whole families to encourage development of healthy eating habits across generations**

Resident-led healthy cooking demonstrations and gatherings with both Madison Park Village and Whittier Street residents are in the works. WSHC is initiating a rooftop community garden to engage its patients in healthy nutrition.

- **Ensure safe pedestrian access to new Tropical Foods supermarket**

A new supermarket is planned as part of the P10 development. To maximize utilization of this important new resource in the community, it is critical that safe and easy pedestrian access is available from Whittier Street and other key points in the neighborhood.

- **Apply lessons from successful programs such as With Every Heartbeat is Life**

With Every Heartbeat is Life (WEHL) is a heart health curriculum developed by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute at the National Institutes of Health. In partnership with HUD, the program aims to prevent heart disease in public housing communities by recruiting public housing residents to serve as Community Health Workers. Using the WEHL curriculum, the Community Health Workers facilitate heart health workshops for their neighbors, coordinate weekly health promotion activities and partner with local health organizations to provide health prevention education.

- **Commit to providing fresh and healthy food and drink at community events and meetings**

Providing food is known to be a key tool in eliciting broad participation in community events and meetings. By providing tasty, fresh and nutritious food in these contexts, the planning team and partners have an opportunity to reinforce this important health principle.

### Fresh Vegetables & Fruit



MPDC is working with Farmer Dave to provide fresh vegetables and fruit through our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program. Taking part in the CSA not only provides you with a box of fresh produce each week but also helps increase access to healthy food for other community members.

<b>Pick-up Locations</b> Dates: Tuesdays Times: 3pm - 6:00pm Where: 122 Devault Drive, Community Rooms, Roxbury, MA 02119	<b>Vegetable Shares:</b> June 10 <sup>th</sup> - Oct 21 <sup>st</sup> Cost: \$12/week for MPDC residents & subsidized shares *Fresh approximately 3 - 4 people weekly	<b>Fruit Shares:</b> July 15 <sup>th</sup> - Oct 21 <sup>st</sup> Cost: \$10/week for MPDC residents & subsidized shares *Fresh approximately 2 - 4 people weekly
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\*SNAP payments are available starting in July

Payments accepted on a weekly basis.  
Subsidized shares available for those who qualify  
for other forms of assistance

\*For more information or to sign up contact Anika at 617.849.6242  
or [anaron.makro@madison-park.org](mailto:anaron.makro@madison-park.org)



## HEALTH GOAL #5 | Design and manage the new housing to support better health outcomes

All too often, indoor air can become more polluted than outdoor air, which can negatively affect inhabitants, particularly those with asthma. Keeping homes clean, dry, well-ventilated and free from pests, chemicals and second-hand smoke is critical to creating a healthy living environment. To this end the developer and property manager will employ, at a minimum, the following measures:

- Maximize indoor air quality by installing high-quality ventilation, eliminating carpeting, using low VOC (volatile organic compounds) materials and other best practices.
- Implement a No Smoking policy to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke.
- Utilize integrated pest management and green cleaning protocols to reduce exposure to chemicals.
- Implement a new resident orientation to help residents keep their homes green and healthy.



### Health Key Outcomes:

- ◆ Whittier residents are more knowledgeable about preventive care and treatment options.
- ◆ Whittier residents are attaining and maintaining healthy weight.
- ◆ All Whittier residents receive quality treatment for chronic illnesses (hypertension, diabetes, asthma) and majority with chronic diseases follow a personalized health management plan.
- ◆ Majority of Whittier residents report low psychological distress.
- ◆ More Whittier children and adults are engaging in 60 minutes of vigorous physical activity 3 or more times per week.
- ◆ The Roxbury Fitness Loop including all lighting, public art, signage and street furniture, is completed.
- ◆ Complete the tot lot with a design that encourages early learning and creativity.
- ◆ Whittier residents have more opportunities to access affordable, healthy and fresh food.
- ◆ Whittier residents know how to prepare nutritious, healthy and appealing meals.
- ◆ Whittier children and adults eat at least 3 servings of fruits and vegetables per day.
- ◆ Whittier residents are involved in activities to keep their homes green and healthy.

### Education

According to National Assessment of Educational Progress scores, Boston performs higher than many other urban school systems. But overwhelming challenges remain. Persistent gaps in achievement exist among poor, Black, Latino and disabled students—predominant populations in the Whittier neighborhood. While the average BPS student is behind grade level and only has a 64% chance to graduate, public housing youth in the Whittier Neighborhood lag even further behind this average<sup>30</sup>. As the Needs Assessment summary notes above, many parents struggle with limited literacy and English language proficiency which make supporting their children all the more difficult.

Focus groups with parents/guardians about school performance show that most are not clear how to evaluate their children’s academic performance, particularly against developmental milestones. This disconnect has implications for how parents navigate the complicated Boston school assignment process and select schools. Lacking knowledge about the school system and education approaches hinders parental interactions with teachers and administrators. In addition, many do not understand that quality early care programs can make a big difference in preparing their children to be school-ready and children not kindergarten-ready are half as likely to read well by 3rd grade.



Associated Early Care and Education

Figure 6-5. Education Goals and Strategies

Goals	Strategies
<b>#1</b> Prepare children to enter school ready to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the Mayor’s program of Universal pre-K and achieve universal access to early education programs</li> <li>• Increase parent awareness of the importance of early education and literacy programs</li> <li>• Implement Jump Start</li> </ul>
<b>#2</b> Achieve age-appropriate literacy for all children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve attendance</li> <li>• Offer on-site tutoring and reading programs</li> <li>• Offer on-site library study/reading space</li> <li>• Implement Tenacity Pathway Programs</li> </ul>
<b>#3</b> Maximize access to BPS highest-performing schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold info sessions on school performance and tips on navigating the school system</li> <li>• Arrange visits/tours of highest performing schools</li> <li>• Create a data-sharing infrastructure that can inform timely and effective interventions</li> <li>• Prepare more Whittier youth for exam schools</li> </ul>
<b>#4</b> Increase the capacity of Whittier parents to serve as advocates and educators for their children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase participation in Parent University</li> <li>• Work with BPS to implement Dashboard Reports</li> <li>• Bring DSNI parent support programs to Whittier</li> <li>• Implement Raising a Reader</li> <li>• Provide enhanced support for parents of children with disabilities</li> <li>• Leverage Tenacity’s after-school and summer programs to engage and support families</li> </ul>

Countering these challenges are some key education assets that can be strong building blocks for the Whittier Choice People Plan.

- **Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative/Boston Promise Initiative (DSNI/BPI):** DSNI has launched a significant initiative to disrupt the cycle of low education achievement among low-income families as the City's Promise Neighborhood Grantee. With DSNI as the Whittier CNI Principal Education Partner, significant focus, resources, tracking and intervention will be available to Whittier neighborhood residents.
- **Early Education:** Given the overwhelming research emphasizing the importance of early education to success later on, the high rate of participation in early education among Whittier families who responded to the resident survey is encouraging: 71% of 0-5 year olds who are not yet in kindergarten are in early Head Start, Head Start, or a daycare programs. However, more information is needed about the quality of the programs and assessment of children's school readiness when they enter kindergarten.
- **STEM:** Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics provide the underpinning for much of the region's current and future economic prosperity. Development efforts are underway to build a facility that will include: 1) a digital fabrication laboratory (Fab Lab) and workshop area; 2) a technology classroom to conduct digital design work and instruction; 3) a space to hold robotics and engineering design competitions for the Boston Public Schools; and 4) an exhibit space to showcase student projects, designs and creation. Through collaboration between Northeastern University, MIT, Fab Foundation, and the Boston Public Schools, the proposal is to build on an unused parcel adjacent to the John D O'Bryant School of Science and Math (an exam school). The Whittier CN Plan supports these efforts to bring a Community Innovation Arena to this blossoming neighborhood that will connect residents with the excitement generated by these fields and with the entrepreneurial activities being launched at the Roxbury Innovation Center in Dudley Square.

### EDUCATION GOAL #1

#### Prepare children to enter school ready to learn

- **Support the Mayor's program of universal pre-K and achieve universal access to early education programs**

Connect families with early education providers, in particular, Nurtury, formerly Associated Early Care and Education (AECE) and Smart from the Start, as the key connectors. BHA will build upon existing successful initiatives with these providers, who have worked closely with public housing populations throughout the City.
- **Increase parent awareness of the importance of early education and literacy programs**

Create an on-site parent educational resource center and network. Organize information sessions, send promotional materials, display posters and talk individually with parents to get the word out about the benefits of high quality early education and help them navigate the early education system. Parent peer support networks can also be effective communication channels.
- **Implement Jump Start**

Jumpstart is a research-based, cost-effective program operated by Nurtury that trains college students and community volunteers to serve preschool-age children in low-income neighborhoods. Through proven curriculum, these children develop the language and literacy skills they need to be ready for school, setting them on the path for lifelong success.

## EDUCATION GOAL #2

Achieve age-appropriate literacy for all children

- **Improve attendance**

Launch a place-based Attendance campaign at the Whittier site to ensure that parents understand the connections between school attendance and future success and opportunities for their children. Establish a parent support team to help overcome the barriers to getting kids to school on time and every day.

- **Offer on-site tutoring and reading programs**

Support the creation of the Lower Roxbury Educational Alliance to establish on-site services for students who need more academic tutoring, and to recruit and train volunteers to read with 2nd graders in preparation for 3rd grade MCAS.

- **Offer on-site library study/reading space**

An on-site academically-oriented space that can house tutoring and reading programs and also serve as a literacy resource center for both adults and children.

- **Implement Tenacity Pathway Programs**

As discussed in more detail in the Youth Development strategies, bring Tenacity's model for educational success to Whittier through its Elementary, Middle School Academy, and College Prep programs.

## EDUCATION GOAL #3

Maximize access to BPS highest-performing schools.

- **Hold Info Sessions on School Performance and Tips on Navigating the School System**

Supplement BPS outreach with targeted info sessions for Whittier parents on BPS school choice, BPS highest functioning schools, benefits of graduating from these schools, and requirements for enrollment.

- **Arrange visits/tours of highest performing schools** to demystify the process of preparation for gaining entrance to these schools and to build a supportive structure for families involved in the process. This will include establishing contacts with schools and other academic resources.

- **Create a data sharing infrastructure**, in conjunction with the Boston Promise Initiative to increase coordination among BPS, BPI, Whittier Choice and other service providers so there can be timely and effective interventions towards academic achievement for Whittier students.

- **Prepare more Whittier Students for Exam Schools** by working with Tenacity and other providers that have strong track records in nurturing academic talent.



BPS Parent University with Secretary Duncan

## EDUCATION GOAL #4

Increase the capacity of Whittier parents to serve as advocates and educators for their children

- **Increase participation in Parent University**

Parent University is run by the Boston Public Schools Office of Family and Student Engagement as the primary strategy to build the capacity of parents to become more effective advocates for their children's education. Engage Whittier parents to take full advantage of Parent University's offerings. Partner with Parent University to develop follow-up multi-lingual parenting workshops on site in between their semi-annual sessions and aim for full participation of Whittier residents.

- **Work with BPS to implement Dashboard Reports at more schools**

Promote monthly dashboard reports such as those sent by Orchard Gardens School. These color-coded reports provide much needed assistance with interpreting report cards and test data.

- **Bring DSNI Parent Support Programs to Whittier**

DSNI has proven success with parent peer support programs such as Parent Choice Network and L.O.V.E. (Learn Our Value in Education) as well as informal Parent Cafes. Parents need peers that can help navigate the complex school system and access services to support their children. In particular, peer leaders can help with special needs or ELL issues that can easily overwhelm parents.

- **Implement Raising a Reader**

This evidence-based early literacy and family engagement program seeks to prepare children for school by inspiring families of young children in high need communities to develop, practice and maintain the habit of reading books together at home. Work with Smart from the Start who has successfully implemented this program in other Boston communities to engage Whittier parents.

- **Provide enhanced support for parents of children with disabilities** who face additional barriers in navigating the school system and need additional information to make the best school choice for their child.
- **Leverage Tenacity's after-school and summer programs to engage and support families**

A key element of the Tenacity after-school programs, detailed in the Youth Development strategies, is family engagement via family workshops and home visits. By promoting increased participation in these programs among Whittier youth, there is the added benefit of services and supports for parents and families.

### Education Key Outcomes:

- ◆ 90% of Whittier children 0-5 are enrolled in early education programs.
- ◆ Improve school attendance to >95% for Whittier youth.
- ◆ Whittier students proficient at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level literacy (both ELA and math).
- ◆ Whittier students proficient at 8<sup>th</sup> grade level literacy.
- ◆ Whittier students proficient at 10<sup>th</sup> grade level literacy and on their way to graduation.
- ◆ Whittier parents of children with disabilities receive coaching to become better navigators of the system and more effective advocates.
- ◆ Increased Whittier enrollment in Level 1 and Level 2 elementary and middle schools.
- ◆ Increase in Whittier applications to exam high schools.
- ◆ A functional data-sharing process and system among key partners to facilitate coordination and meaningful interventions.

### Youth Development

Whittier Neighborhood residents and youth alike are calling for more activities and opportunities for young people. The potential impacts of effective youth strategies are well documented, and it has become clear that youth development programs can play a key role in solidifying general well-being and academic success<sup>31</sup>. According to the National Summer Learning Association:

- Two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities during the elementary school years.
- More than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. As a result, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college<sup>32</sup>.
- Children lose more than academic knowledge over the summer. Most children—particularly children at high risk of obesity—gain weight more rapidly when they are out of school during summer break<sup>33</sup>.



Figure 6-6. Youth Goals and Strategies

Goals	Strategies
#1 Maximize access to academic oriented after-school and summer programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt Tenacity’s school-based model to serve the Whittier community</li> <li>• Connect families to and assist them with the Boston Navigator</li> </ul>
#2 Prepare youth for the transition to college and career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring Tenacity Middle School Academy to Whittier</li> </ul>
#3 Provide youth with supports that encourage healthy life decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage existing mentoring programs</li> <li>• Encourage participation in sports and recreation programming</li> <li>• Promote youth participation in community gardening</li> <li>• Connect at-risk youth to the Whittier Youth Services Enrichment Program and other services</li> </ul>

Whittier Youth Development strategies focus on the need for programming beyond the school walls and school calendar to ensure year-round and out-of-school opportunities for young people to develop life and leadership skills.

### YOUTH GOAL #1

Maximize access to academic oriented after-school and summer programs to improve education outcomes

- **Adapt Tenacity’s school-based model to serve the Whittier community**

Tenacity’s Middle School Academy is an intensive three-year program that works to improve students’ literacy, tennis, and fitness skills, while simultaneously building character and engaging families. The program seeks to prepare students for academic success in high school and beyond, to grow student’s appreciation and aptitude for literacy and to nurture positive social/emotional development. The intensive literacy curriculum includes whole group instruction, small group work, and one-on-one mentorship through vocabulary development, reading comprehension, writings and life skills. Students also receive individualized assistance with the high school selection and transition processes.

- **Connect families to and assist them with the Boston Navigator**

[www.BostonNavigator.org](http://www.BostonNavigator.org) is the City's comprehensive database of opportunities for youth with more than 1,700 programs that run after school, before school, on weekends, during the summer, and during school vacations. The site has recently expanded its program locator function to allow for participation ratings and reviews as well as making and tracking referrals.

### YOUTH GOAL #2

Prepare youth for the transition to college and career

- **Bring Tenacity Middle School Academy (MSA) to Whittier**

Tenacity offers graduates of their Middle School Academy continued support and opportunities through the College Prep and Alumni Services programs. When they graduate from MSA and move into the College Prep program, students have access to:

- (1) Ongoing academic support and educational enrichment resources including tutoring, homework help, study skills workshops, and writing assistance
- (2) Opportunities to earn college scholarship money
- (3) SAT prep
- (4) Assistance with the college process including the application, selection and financial aid processes
- (5) Job, internship, volunteer and leadership opportunities
- (6) Fun, social and recreational alumni events & a positive peer network.

Over 95% of students who have completed Tenacity’s MSA program have defied the odds represented by Boston's high school dropout rate and have stayed in school and graduated. More than 80% have moved on to college.

## YOUTH GOAL #3

Provide youth with supports that encourage healthy life decisions

- **Leverage existing mentoring programs**

Programs would include the DREAM Program led by Northeastern University college students as well as establishing new mentor opportunities through Wentworth University and corporate partners.

- **Encourage participation in sports and recreation programming**

A growing body of research finds that in addition to improved physical health, sport plays a primarily positive role in youth development, including improved academic achievement, higher self-esteem, and fewer behavioral problems. As discussed in more detail in the health strategies, the Plan seeks to develop partnerships with Tenacity, District B-2 and others to make sports and recreation programming available to youths in safe and supportive environments.

- **Promote youth participation in community gardening**

As discussed in more detail in the health strategies, the Plan calls for building additional community gardens in the neighborhood. Community gardens can serve as an outdoor classroom where youth can learn valuable skills. Recent studies indicate that community gardening has a positive impact on social and interpersonal skills, healthy eating and nutrition, science achievement and attitudes toward learning, and self-efficacy and enhanced stewardship<sup>34</sup>. So opportunities to engage Whittier youth in this activity will be actively pursued.

- **Connect at risk youth to services like the Whittier Youth Services Enrichment Program at the Whittier Street Health Center**

This program includes primary care based intervention for all youth ages 13-25. The program collaborates with several community partners to target at risk youth and connect them to services that address behavioral health, substance abuse, domestic violence, life coaching, as well as preparation for GED and college placement programs.

### Youth Key Outcomes:

- ◆ More Whittier youth participate in academically oriented after-school and summer programs.
- ◆ More Whittier youth graduate high school.
- ◆ More Whittier youth enter college and post-secondary vocational programs.
- ◆ Fewer teen pregnancies.
- ◆ More Whittier youth participate in leadership development programs.
- ◆ More Whittier youth participate in high quality sports or recreation activities.
- ◆ At-risk Whittier youth are connected to support services through the Whittier Youth Services Enrichment Program.

### 6.4 Implementation

#### Implementation Structure

Successfully achieving the CNI Neighborhood Goals will require resources, strong partnerships, shared vision and commitment from the community, the city government and other stakeholders. BHA will establish working teams for each of the People Goals to ensure successful implementation, on-time and within budget.

#### Strategic Partners

Crittenton Women's Union (CWU) will be the key strategic partner for income- and asset-building. CWU has gained national prominence for combining service delivery and research to develop better economic mobility tools and program approaches. CWU's Mobility Mentoring™ model is a proven approach that allows families to move away from crisis management to deeper life changes that the permanently address barriers to mobility, employment, and healthy families. CWU has partnered with BHA for several years to improve pathways out of poverty for public housing families in Boston.

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) is a nonprofit community-based planning and organizing entity rooted in the Roxbury/North Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston. DSNI's approach to neighborhood revitalization is comprehensive including economic, human, physical, and environmental growth. It was formed in 1984 when residents of the Dudley Street area came together out of fear and anger to revive their neighborhood that was devastated by arson, disinvestment, neglect and redlining practices, and protect it from outside speculators.

DSNI is Boston's Promise Neighborhood Implementation grantee and has partnered with Whittier Choice Neighborhoods as the Principal Education Partner to develop and implement educational strategies for initiative. DSNI is also serving as the Neighborhood lead for the City of Boston's Quincy-Geneva Choice Neighborhood implementation grant.

Nurtury has a strong track record of quality early education programs at many BHA housing developments. By investing in school readiness, promoting healthy development, and strengthening families, Nurtury nurtures 1,500 plus children every day, supporting their families and their communities. Activities and services include six early care and education centers; 140 family child care educators; curricula designed to develop each child's cognitive, social-emotional, physical, literacy and pre-math skills; classroom metrics using research-based tools; mental health and social services.

Tenacity's intensive youth development pathway delivers literacy, life-skills, family engagement and tennis/fitness programming. Tenacity's approach combines fun and fitness with serious educational and life skills training. Tenacity currently works with 1,000 students in Boston public schools with outstanding student outcomes, including an overall 95% graduation rate versus the 64% city average. Its family/parent engagement has also brought enthusiastic participation to its celebratory events.

Whittier Street Health Center (WSHC), a federally-qualified health center, provides high quality, reliable and accessible primary health care and support services for diverse populations to promote wellness and eliminate health and social disparities. Its vision is to serve as the premiere leader in urban healthcare to diverse populations. WSHC has served the Whittier population for decades, most recently from a new state-of-the-art building just a few blocks from the development.

#### Budget and Financing

The total budget for all People activities is approximately \$13 million. It is anticipated that funding will be provided by the City of Boston, foundations, providers, and Choice Neighborhoods funding. Further budget information is included in Chapter 7, Implementation.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>3</sup> Whittier Street Health Center, Community Needs Assessment, Summer 2011
- <sup>4</sup> Health of Boston 2012-2013, Boston Public Health Commission, unless otherwise noted
- <sup>5</sup> Health of Boston 2012-2013, Boston Public Health Commission, unless otherwise noted
- <sup>6</sup> City and State data from The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, <http://kff.org/other/state-indicator/children-0-18/>, downloaded January 28, 2014
- <sup>7</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/stateprofiles/Asthma\\_in\\_MA.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/stateprofiles/Asthma_in_MA.pdf)
- <sup>8</sup> Massachusetts Department of Health, Bureau of Environmental Health, [http://matracking.ehs.state.ma.us/Health\\_Data/Pediatric\\_Asthma.html#](http://matracking.ehs.state.ma.us/Health_Data/Pediatric_Asthma.html#)
- <sup>9</sup> Boston Indicator's Project <http://www.bostonindicators.org/indicators/boston-neighborhoods>, downloaded January 29, 2013
- <sup>10</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6145a4.htm#tab>
- <sup>11</sup> Trust for America's Health, Key Health Data About Massachusetts, 2011, <http://healthyamericans.org/states/?stateid=MA>, downloaded 1/28/2014
- <sup>12</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db107.htm>
- <sup>13</sup> Rate for adults/youth
- <sup>14</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/massachusetts.html>
- <sup>15</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/massachusetts.html>
- <sup>16</sup> Measured Persistent Sadness
- <sup>17</sup> Measured Persistent Sadness among adults/youth
- <sup>18</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/features/dsdepression/>
- <sup>19</sup> Wellspring Consulting for Boston Housing Authority, Pathway to Success, October 2012
- <sup>20</sup> Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. Implementation Proposal for the Boston Promise Initiative, July 2012
- <sup>21</sup> Kids Count Data Center. Children not attending pre-school by city and town, 2007-2011. <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/7278-children-not-attending-preschool-by-city-and-town-county-subdivision?loc=23&loct=2#detailed/11/3324-3674/false/1074/any/14328,14329>
- <sup>22</sup> Harvard Family Research Project. (March 2006). *What are Kids Getting Into These Days? Demographic Differences in Youth Out-of-School Time Participation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Education.
- <sup>23</sup> Babcock, E.D. (2014). Using Brain Science to Design New Pathways out of Poverty. Boston: Critten Women's Union.
- <sup>24</sup> Babcock, E.D. (2012). Mobility Mentoring™. Boston: Crittenton Women's Union.
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- <sup>27</sup> Heisler, M. (2006) Building Peer Support Programs to Manage Chronic Disease: Seven Models for Success. California Health Care Foundation.
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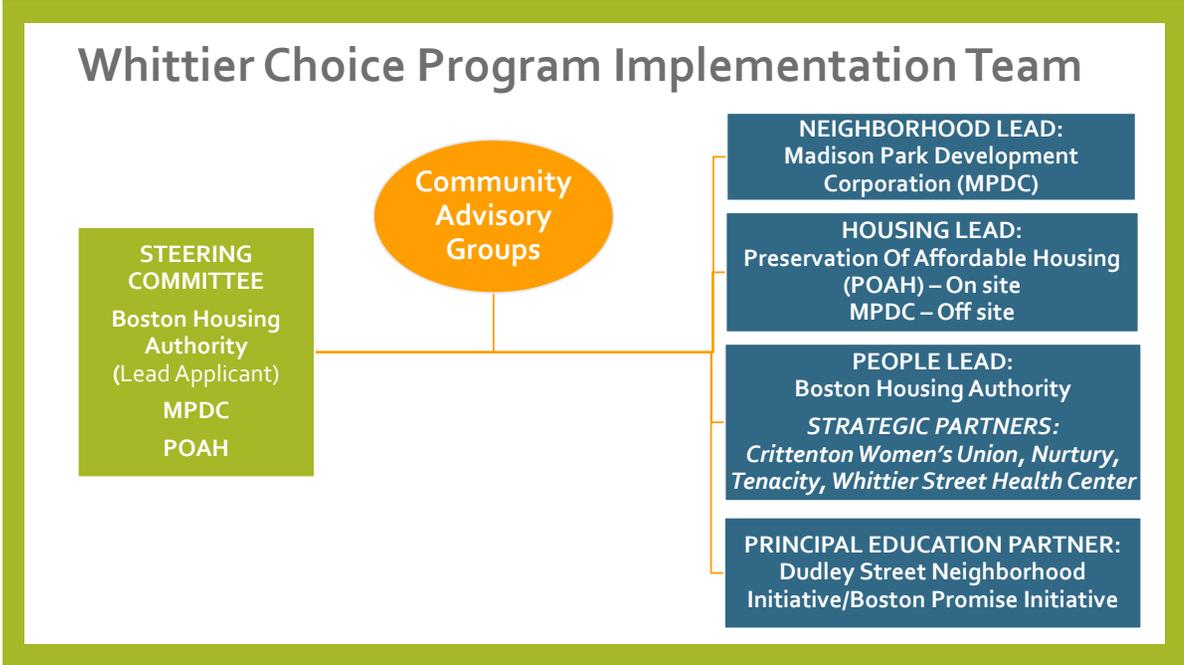
Chapter 7

# Implementation

## 7.1 Implementation Structure

The Boston Housing Authority (lead People entity), Madison Park Community Development Corporation (lead Neighborhood entity), and Preservation of Affordable Housing Inc. (lead Housing entity) will lead the implementation of the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan. Each lead entity will coordinate other strategic partners that have major deliverables for their respective area. This management team will be accountable to an Advisory Board made up of key members from the resident community, neighborhood associations, service organizations, donors and other contributors. While the lead organizations will be the hub of communication and coordination of plans and activities, the implementation structure is intended to be flexible, collaborative and community-based.

Figure 7-1. Implementation Structure



## 7.2 Budget and Potential Funding Sources

The total cost to implement the Whittier Neighborhood Transformation Plan is projected at nearly \$340 million over seven years, which will likely require an investment of approximately \$90 million in public funds matched by \$250 million in private funds. Potential public sources of funds include HUD’s Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, Commonwealth of Massachusetts infrastructure and affordable housing resources, and City of Boston transportation, housing, education, job training and public health resources. Private sources of funds will include private investor equity for housing and commercial development, as well as charitable foundation support for education, human services, arts and cultural programming.

Figure 7-2. Implementation Budget

<b>People</b>	
Relocation and Program Management	\$4,000,000
Case Management - Mobility Mentoring	\$4,000,000
Children and Youth Services	\$2,000,000
Job Development - Income and Asset Building	\$1,000,000
Education	\$1,000,000
Health and Wellness	\$1,000,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$13,000,000</i>
<b>Neighborhood</b>	
Neighborhood Broadband	\$250,000
Public Safety Initiatives	\$200,000
Streetscape - Connectivity Improvements	\$12,000,000
Roxbury Loop	\$5,000,000
Educational Facilities	\$12,500,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$29,950,000</i>
<b>Housing</b>	
Demolition	\$4,400,000
Infrastructure	\$20,000,000
Non-Residential Development	\$7,000,000
Residential Development	\$265,000,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$296,400,000</i>
<b>Total Program Cost</b>	<b>\$339,350,000</b>

### 7.3 Implementation Schedule

Figure 7-3 provides a preliminary schedule of each of the major elements in the Transformation Plan. The schedule will be adjusted according to funding availability.

Figure 7-3. Implementation Schedule

	2014				2015				2016				2017				2018				2019				2020							
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4																												
<b>PEOPLE</b>																																
Pilot Tenacity summer program																																
Develop and implement data tracking system																																
Establish on-the-ground Whittier Team																																
Resident Services focused on relocation, health, education																																
Launch whole-year Tenacity program																																
Implement Mobility Mentoring																																
Implement sustainability plan																																
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD</b>																																
Establish working groups for key initiatives																																
Launch Madison Park High School safety initiative																																
Implement Whittier Neighborhood Broadband																																
Roxbury Loop																																
Streetscape Improvements: Ruggles, Melnea Cass, Tremont																																
Northeastern University Portal construction																																
Kennedy Academy construction																																
<b>HOUSING</b>																																
Obtain land use approval																																
Phase One																																
Phase Two																																
Phase Three																																

### 7.4 Data Management Plan

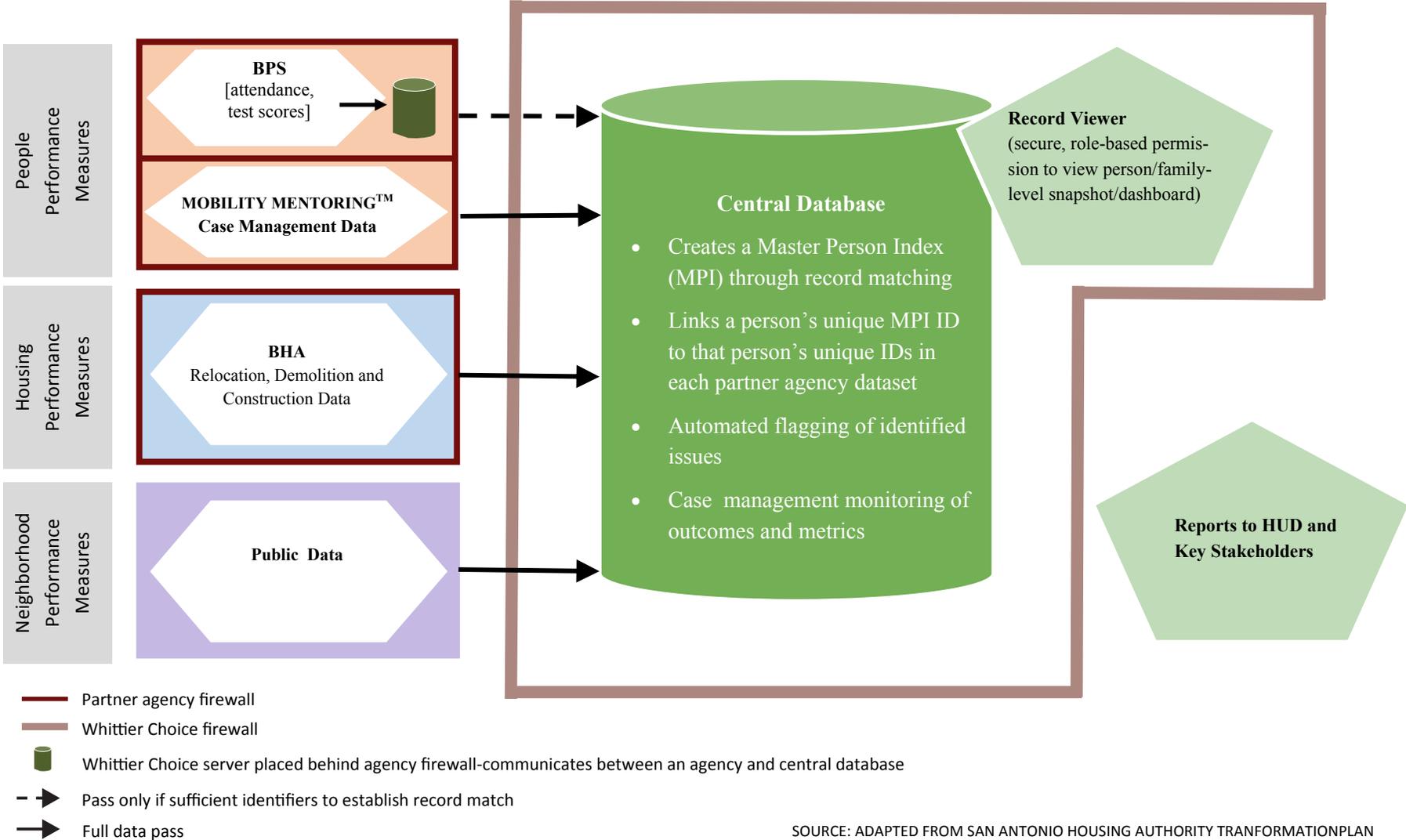
BHA will establish a robust yet user-friendly data sharing and data tracking system so that strategic partners, key funders, and HUD have a reliable way to see the impacts of the plan's implementation. Progress will be tracked against HUD's performance measures and BHA's own goals in each area of the Transformation Plan. The data collected will be routinely analyzed to ensure that progress is on a positive trajectory. If the results of the data show certain goals and metrics failing to improve, BHA and its partners will determine a solution that may include bringing in additional resources or adopting a new approach. BHA will remain responsive and adaptive throughout the CNI implementation grant.

Current research involves evaluating the most cost effective and sustainable data management system for the plan's implementation as well as studying best practices of Choice Implementation grantees. This led BHA to develop a structure that will enable data to flow from agencies, public sources, the case management team, and the developer into a central database. Beyond the technical aspects of data collection and analysis, warehousing and reporting, an important part of keeping stakeholders engaged is sharing data, successes, and challenges.

As stipulated by HUD for CNI implementation grantees, there are three major categories of data, each with multiple sources and different levels of confidentiality.

- **Neighborhood.** Demographic, economic and other data will be available from Census, State and City sources in addition to a variety of foundations and non-profit sources. BHA has localized HUD's recommended sources by verifying the location of each metric or identifying a new resource. BRA and MPDC will also assist in providing neighborhood data.
- **Housing.** Data on unit types and household information will be tracked and reported by the on-site developer and property manager, POAH, along with BHA, which will continue to maintain information on the deeply subsidized housing.
- **People.** BHA will work with the key partner for each of the key People categories to track the status of goals and outcomes of individual household's developmental plan and also aggregate results. BHA will also execute data sharing agreements with the key partners as well as Boston Public Schools, Whittier Street Health Center, and Boston Center for Youth and Families.

Figure 7-3. Data Management Structure



SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM SAN ANTONIO HOUSING AUTHORITY TRANSFORMATION PLAN  
ORIGINAL SOURCE: LAURA MCKIERAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CINOW-NOW DATA