

GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

impact report 2012

In cities and towns across the state, the people of Massachusetts are making public decisions about how to build great neighborhoods and a strong future.

The Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance supports residents and leaders working to improve their community and region with the Great Neighborhoods initiative. We work together with our partners to:

- Level the playing field for sensible development while conserving our natural and historic assets;
- Identify barriers and create solutions for rebuilding important places in our cities and towns; and
- Provide assistance to transformational projects and their local champions.

This report describes the project's first year, and focuses on five neighborhoods in the region.

Every year we intend to keep a scorecard of our collective impact, and we invite people like you to get involved.



vision

The Great Neighborhoods project is powered by people focusing on their communities but mindful of the big picture.

Together, we strive to cultivate a network of great places around the Commonwealth that attract residents and investment. Our success will help address climate change and pollution, rising transportation and energy costs, and make our state's regions more competitive. It could also improve public health and reduce racial and economic segregation.

Our work began in 2011 with Lawrence, Roxbury, Somerville, Winchester, and the Fairmount Corridor in Boston. Partnerships were launched in these five Greater Boston communities thanks to the support of the Barr Foundation and the Ford Foundation, and they include twenty-one public and private organizations across the five sites.

We think that these diverse partnerships can inspire the region, but they can also learn from efforts in other cities and towns. So we envision growing a broader Great Neighborhoods Network across the state that pulls together leaders and practitioners from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to share their experiences and support each other.

The Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance (MSGA) provides the backbone for this collective work, supplying staff, expertise, and resources. We document the barriers and the lessons, and craft statewide policy solutions so that other communities will not face the same struggle.

MSGA is staffed by the Boston Society of Architects, Citizens Housing and Planning Association, Conservation Law Foundation, Environmental League of Massachusetts, Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

“Roxbury residents are eager for new development that provides local jobs, improves air quality and builds housing where families can live affordably, walk or bike to parks, get to work easily by mass transit and enjoy a variety of shopping and dining options right in their neighborhood. That’s what a great neighborhood means here.”

— David Price, Executive Director, Nuestra Comunidad CDC

“The Great Neighborhoods initiative gives us access to great thinkers who can help us realize our vision. It’s important to establish connections with players who can help.”

— Mary McKenna, Winchester Planning Board and Town Meeting Member

“This partnership and resources further our efforts to develop vibrant urban villages at the four new stops, which are central to the Fairmount/Indigo vision.”

— Gail Latimore, Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation



highlights

Great Neighborhoods partners in the five communities are collectively:

- Developing 717 housing units near public transportation for a range of incomes, with 72 units currently in construction.
- Creating 144,450 square feet of commercial space to promote mixed-use neighborhoods and create jobs, with six new commercial tenants secured.
- Advocating for improvements to infrastructure that will unlock growth and investment, such as the Green Line extension in Somerville, bridges and waterways in Lawrence, the commuter rail station in Winchester, the Warren Street bus corridor in Roxbury, and the Fairmount Line in Boston.
- Planning or constructing over twelve miles of new community paths, including the Spicket River Greenway, Riverwalk, and North Canal Tow Path in Lawrence, the Community Path in Somerville, and the Fairmount Greenway in Boston.

Additionally, Great Neighborhoods partners:

- Identified barriers to long-term goals, including the difficulty financing mixed-use projects and infrastructure (Lawrence), local hiring, community benefits, and local tax revenue (Somerville), floodplain issues, local zoning, and housing affordability (Winchester).
- Increased local capacity by supporting the hiring two new full-time staff and four consultants across the five sites, with additional assistance from over a dozen different MSGA staffers.
- Engaged hundreds of community residents in planning and public advocacy, including grassroots action campaigns such as Everyone’s Somerville and We Are Lawrence, to counter negative media coverage and prejudices
- Completed “placemaking” workshops in Lawrence and Roxbury with Project for Public Spaces.
- Drafted five communications plans with Boston-based media relations and public affairs firm Solomon McCown.

the great neighborhoods model

Around its small Common, the Winchester town center has several picturesque blocks clustered with Victorian-style red brick buildings, and several much-loved small businesses, including a bakery, several restaurants, and an independent bookstore. The Aberjona River winds its way through town here, passing through a series of ponds, and on the far side is the Town Hall, Public Library, Senior Center, and several public schools. There is a commuter rail station right in the middle of it all, making Winchester one of the few suburbs with rail service in its downtown.

This seems like an ideal place for an aging senior or a young couple to rent an apartment. However, were you to search, you might have difficulty finding something available, because there are only 200 dwelling units in the neighborhoods that make up the town center. Even fewer of those units would be affordable to a teacher, artist, or receptionist—or for that matter, a retired person. And with little foot traffic, most of the local businesses survive at the margins. Since Winchester is mostly built-out, increasing public revenues depends on redevelopment and growing its commercial base.

The Town sought to participate in Great Neighborhoods to help unlock the town center’s potential. Its volunteer Planning Board, together with its planner—the first in the Town’s history—sent a “letter of interest” to the Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance and was selected. The Town put together a team, the Alliance assembled a team, and jointly we got to know each other while crafting a shared workplan.

Over several months, the Great Neighborhoods teams prompted Winchester’s leadership to identify and commit to long-term goals that exemplified their vision for the next ten years. At the same time, we worked to identify what needed to be done over the next two years to make the transformation possible.

Many of the buildings in the town center are now only one or two stories, never rebuilt to their original four story height after fire or demolition. The town’s zoning and permitting systems are outdated and restrictive, such that very few proposals come forward, and only a handful have been built over the last twenty years. Meanwhile, the river has a 100-year floodplain that extends over much of the town center and further restricts development. Any recommendations will have to be approved by Town Meeting whose members may be resistant to change, so we know that the Great Neighborhoods team has to build a thoughtful and thorough case.



how it works

Early on, MSGA Executive Director André Leroux made a presentation to the Board of Selectmen that was enthusiastically received, with elected officials thankful for the resources and assistance needed to move the Town’s work forward. MSGA helped its local partners attract positive local media coverage, along with a major Boston Globe North feature headlined, “Winchester Looks to Town Center for New Growth.”

To explain the challenges facing the town, Great Neighborhoods has funded a market study to document Winchester’s housing needs, legal analysis of the floodplain issues, and analysis of existing zoning regulations. These studies are being vetted with the Town’s leadership, and when they are soon finalized, there will be a series of public meetings to present the results and get feedback from residents. In addition, we brought in WalkBoston to explore Safe Routes to Schools strategies to increase walking.

To help steward this complex work forward, MSGA’s Great Neighborhoods Director Ina Anderson and Conservation Law Foundation’s Aviva Rothman-Shore have weekly calls with Betsy Ware, Winchester’s planner, to keep the team focused on their tasks and benchmarks, as well as offering coaching support and troubleshooting when necessary. With the support of the Great Neighborhoods Learning Fund, Betsy was part of the MSGA delegation that went to the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in San Diego, an inspiring experience.

As Year Two of the initiative approaches, the Great Neighborhoods team is moving toward concrete implementation strategies. Great Neighborhoods resources will leverage additional Town funds in order to create design concepts for a key developable property next to the commuter rail station. A Low-Impact Development (LID) bylaw will be drafted to

ensure that projects will help reduce flooding and water pollution. Zoning changes will be recommended to Town Meeting, and an educational campaign among leaders and residents will be undertaken. Finally, MSGA may help Winchester implement Complete Streets strategies that could encourage more walking and biking in the Town Center, and could also help the Town engage the MBTA regarding its forthcoming station renovation. Finally, we are helping to identify groups and individuals who might increase residents’ participation in these issues, such as the Winchester Housing Partnership, Sustainable Winchester, and the Winchester Multicultural Association.

“I should note that in 25 years of public sector planning, such an offer has never come my way. Many thanks.”
– ***Betsy Ware, Winchester planner, on being sent to the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference***

vision

Residents living along the Fairmount Corridor in Boston have fought successfully to bring local train service back to the neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and Hyde Park. Now they are working to cultivate a string of “urban villages” along the line. Nearby small business districts that are currently struggling would benefit from more residents, jobs, and investment in these neighborhoods. Meanwhile, creating a Fairmount Greenway by linking open space, paths, and improving the streets for walking and biking, will help people get to the trains and jobs around Boston, and help visitors explore all the neighborhoods have to offer. These neighborhoods will keep fighting to make sure that public transportation is frequent and affordable, and that the new investment provides real benefits for local residents.

LEAD PARTNER: Fairmount/Indigo Line
 CDC Collaborative

highlights

- There are 428 units of affordable housing and 93,880 square feet of commercial space in twelve different projects in pre-development at this time, including three mixed-use projects currently in construction:
 1. 157 Washington Street, 24 units, 3,500 square feet of retail.
 2. Uphams West, 13 units and 2,900 square feet of commercial.
 3. Codman Square Apartments, 80 units and 4,250 square feet of retail.
- The \$2 million initial phase of the Bornstein and Pearl Small Business Center is proceeding, with 20-30 jobs anticipated coming to the Center by the end of 2012.
- The federal government awarded \$20.5 Million for the 129-unit Quincy Heights project through the HUD Choice Neighborhoods Program.
- The City of Boston also received a \$1.8 million HUD Community Challenge Grant for the Fairmount Corridor, with a significant portion of the award dedicated for a TOD fund.
- Mayor Menino announced the Fairmount Corridor and Crossroads Planning Initiative on February 21st, representing the City’s largest planning initiative in decades.



ten year goals: 2021

1. Build or preserve 1,500 housing units within one-quarter mile of the stations, with at least 65% being affordable.
2. Construct or renovate 780,000 square feet of retail and commercial space within walking distance of the stations.
3. Create 800-1,000 new jobs along the corridor.
4. Maintain or generate 500 small businesses.
5. Construct a six-mile green corridor composed of linked parks, community paths, and safe street access by pedestrians and cyclists (the Fairmount Greenway).

challenges

- The unprecedented slash in federal funding (especially HOME and CDBG funds) makes it unlikely that the full TOD goal will be achieved by June 2013.
- Several projects are in serious need of acquisition and predevelopment funding, but the effort to establish a TOD fund has been slow and complicated.
- The Fairmount/Indigo Line CDC Collaborative concluded its relationship with the Mattapan CDC in November, 2011. Subsequently, the Collaborative formed a new partnership with Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition to continue the Mattapan community’s involvement in planning and implementing the Fairmount Greenway.
- Coordinating with other agencies, including the Boston Redevelopment Authority and MAPC, has required a significant time investment and occasional course corrections.

at-a-glance*

Demographics	
Total Population, Census 2010	121,624
% White	16.1
% Minority	83.9
% Foreign Born, ACS 2006-10	32.3
Language Spoken at Home (5 y/o +), ACS 2006-10	
% English Only	57.7
Housing	
% Multi-Family Housing Units	85.4
% Subsidized Housing Units, DHCD 2011	8.7
Household Income, ACS 2006-10	
Median Household Income - range across stations	\$28,905 - \$67,224
Employment, InfoGroup USA and BLS/EOLWD	
Unemployment Rate	15.6%
Commuting, ACS 2006-10	
% Automobile	60.1
% Public transportation	35.2
% Walk	3.1
% Other	1.7
Average commute time to work (in minutes)	25+
Environment, MassGIS	
Acres of Open Space per 1,000 Residents	0.26

*Source: Census 2010, American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-09 and 2006-10, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) 2011, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) 2010, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010, InfoGroup USA 2010, MassGIS, BRA, and MAPC.

“The transit-oriented development funding has been crucially important to the CDCs given the tightening fundraising environment, and we also appreciate the coordinated approach Great Neighborhoods has created to support the communications efforts of all of the partners.”

vision

Lawrence has the youngest population of any city in Massachusetts, and that rising generation wants good schools, local job opportunities, good places to live, and places to be social. With its vibrant and diverse culture and rich local history, many Lawrence High school graduates have returned as teachers, business owners and professionals, committed to raising their families there and helping to improve their community.

Lawrence will transform the North Canal District by redeveloping vacant and under-used mills into a healthy, appealing urban neighborhood, featuring a mix of commercial and residential uses. Lawrence is committed to increasing the development of attractive homes for a range of income levels. That is part of its strategy for economic development that creates jobs and wealth for local residents. Infrastructure improvements are needed to support economic development, to create more open space for healthy living, and to manage pollution and protect rivers and streams. Building the Spicket River Greenway—and other work to increase transit, bicycle and pedestrian opportunities—will contribute to Lawrence’s revitalization as a destination of choice, where local residents benefit from new job opportunities.

LEAD PARTNER: Groundwork Lawrence

highlights

- Completed construction on 60 affordable rental units at Union Crossing and hosted a ribbon-cutting with over 200 residents, public officials, and supporters.
- Hired two consultants and created a viable financial model for the 28,000 square foot commercial development at Union Crossing Phase One.
- The five-mile Spicket River Greenway is in construction and will be completed by June 30, 2012.
- Worked with WalkBoston to conduct walking audits to identify strengths and weaknesses of neighborhood connections to the Greenway.
- Worked with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) to conduct a feasibility study for a new shared use path along a rail corridor that links Lawrence to Manchester, New Hampshire.
- Conducted “placemaking” workshops with Project for Public Spaces that created an action agenda for the North Canal and mobilized residents and community leaders.
- Helped found We Are Lawrence, a local movement to improve the perception of the city.
- Created a communications plan with Solomon McCown.



ten year goals: 2021

1. Create 200 units of housing in the North Canal District.
2. Create 200 jobs in the North Canal District.
3. Establish 5 miles of community paths in Lawrence that connect low-income neighborhoods to parks and commercial areas.
4. Establish 3 regional destinations for retail and services.
5. Establish a municipal Master Plan that includes land use, infrastructure, transportation, and economic development strategies.

challenges

- A weak commercial market has made finding commercial tenants and securing financing difficult, along with a scarcity of predevelopment funds for mixed-use projects such as Union Crossing.
- Traditional media coverage has tended to focus on negative stereotypes.
- The parking needs of some desired commercial tenants and the need for innovative parking management are creating barriers to establishing a mixed-use district.
- The North Canal itself is in disrepair and needs long-term investment and improvement.
- Developing a shared vision for the North Canal district has been difficult at times, especially fostering collaboration among property owners who may be competing for tenants.

at-a-glance*

Demographics	
Total Population, Census 2010	76,377
% White	20.5
% Minority	79.5
% Foreign Born, ACS 2006-10	36.0
Language Spoken at Home (5 y/o +), ACS 2006-10	
% English Only	25.1
Housing	
% Multi-Family Housing Units	76.2
% Subsidized Housing Units, DHCD 2011	14.0
Household Income, ACS 2006-10	
Median Household Income	\$31,631
Employment, InfoGroup USA and BLS/EOLWD	
Unemployment Rate	16.5%
Commuting, ACS 2006-10	
% Drive alone	65.2
% Carpool and Taxi	27.7
% Public transportation	3.5
% Walk and Bike	3.6
Average commute time to work (in minutes)	23.4
Environment, MassGIS	
Acres of Open Space per 1,000 Residents	0.63

*Source: Census 2010, American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-09 and 2006-10, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) 2011, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) 2010, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010, InfoGroup USA 2010, MassGIS, BRA, and MAPC.

“Great Neighborhoods has provided greatly needed resources to help us move projects forward that would otherwise be difficult to address.”

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vision

The people of Roxbury aim to transform Warren Street into a vibrant, healthy and welcoming area anchored by two landmark gateways: Dudley Square and Grove Hall. Too many people who live in Roxbury are far from their work, either because jobs in the neighborhood are scarce, or because public transportation from this area is so slow and congested. The successful redevelopment of the neighborhood will reduce commuting times, preserve and create jobs at local small businesses; and promote public health and neighborhood interaction, with increased opportunities for walking, biking and using public transit.

A partnership of community-based development and advocacy organizations is helping residents assemble the knowledge and resources to enhance the community through smart development consistent with the resident approved neighborhood Master Plan. This transformation will include producing quality commercial space and good homes that people can afford. In addition, the project is developing an economic development strategy leading to improved employment opportunities and asset development, in conjunction with a health campaign promoting clean air, nutrition and exercise.

LEAD PARTNER: Nuestra Comunidad CDC

highlights

- Hired a full-time Rose Architectural Fellow (Enterprise) to lead community design for Bartlett Place, a 300 residential unit development with 60-70,000 square feet of commercial retail space.
- Identified two anchor commercial tenants for Bartlett Place.
- Conducted an inventory of developable parcels along the Warren Street corridor.
- Exploring new acquisition opportunities for infill development along the corridor.
- Conducted a workshop with Project for Public Spaces to improve the public areas in front of the Dudley Square branch Public Library, which resulted in new partnerships with the City, the Library, Dudley Square Main Streets, and a local cooperative of artists called Gallery Basquiat.



ten year goals: 2021

1. Develop and Preserve 928 new homes representing a diverse mix of incomes, ages, family sizes, and rental/ownership.
2. Create or retain 104 businesses as part of economic development and job creation revitalization efforts.
3. Reduce commuting time by residents in the neighborhood by at least 25%.
4. Increase walking and biking along Warren Street by at least 25%.

challenges

- With several planning processes underway in Roxbury, it can be difficult at times to engage a range of community partners in new coalition work.
- The fact that the City of Boston is focused on the redevelopment of Dudley Square requires care to ensure that local partners are engaging with the City on key decisions, and also that the City is well-informed about what the coalition is doing.
- Coordinating Great Neighborhoods activities with other ongoing initiatives like Mission 180 and the Roxbury-Dorchester-Mattapan (RDM) transportation planning has at times slowed the timeline and created confusion about multiple roles and responsibilities.

at-a-glance*

Demographics	
Total Population, Census 2010	66,070
% White	10.5
% Minority	89.5
% Foreign Born, ACS 2006-10	25.9
Language Spoken at Home (5 y/o +), ACS 2006-10	
% English Only	60.9
Housing	
% Multi-Family Housing Units	82.6
% Subsidized Housing Units, DHCD 2011 (Boston average)	18.0
Household Income, ACS 2006-10	
Median Household Income	\$30,654
Employment, InfoGroup USA and BLS/EOLWD	
Unemployment Rate	14.8%
Commuting, ACS 2006-10	
% Drive alone	39.4
% Carpool	12.0
% Public transportation	39.5
% Walk	6.9
Average commute time to work (in minutes)	30.9
Environment, MassGIS	
Acres of Open Space per 1,000 Residents	0.038

*Source: Census 2010, American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-09 and 2006-10, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) 2011, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) 2010, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010, InfoGroup USA 2010, MassGIS, BRA, and MAPC.

“The weekly check-in meetings with the Partnership Director have been very helpful as they help us vet issues, think about how to engage partners more effectively, or stay focused with specific, short-term goals”

vision

The people of Somerville want to ensure that public and private investments around the MBTA Green Line extension and new Assembly Square Orange Line station, lead to real public benefits for the diverse population of this area. Over the next few years and into the next generation, Somerville should have new, good jobs and economic opportunities for local residents, businesses for people of all incomes and backgrounds, quality homes that the people in the area can afford, and cleaner air. Numerous community groups working together through the Great Neighborhoods project and the Community Corridor Planning Coalition are committed to establishing policies, and creating strategies for development and land use, that address the needs of Somerville's diverse population, and will continue to serve the needs of every part of the community.

LEAD PARTNER: Somerville Community Corporation

highlights

- Helped secure the City's commitment in the new SomerVision 2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan to create 6,000 new units of housing, 20% of which would be permanently affordable; 125 acres of new open space; 30,000 new jobs, and 50% of new trips by transit, bike, or walking.
- Won approval for Saint Polycarp's phase 3 (25 rental units) and Cross Street (6 SRO units), and first agreement to purchase 181 Washington (40-45 rental units).
- Hired a full-time Community Corridor Planning Coordinator to steward coalition activities, and build broad community support with institutions and municipal government.
- Aligned the goals and actions of coalition members through a shared work plan.
- Led a "mock groundbreaking" with ten partner organizations, the Mayor, and more than 175 people to fight delaying construction of the Green Line.
- Ensured that the Community Path is incorporated into the Lowell Street and Gilman Square Green Line station designs.
- Helped secure MPO funding and design for a .25 mile extension of the existing Community Path from Cedar to Lowell Streets, to be built this year.
- Mobilized residents to speak out against the MBTA's proposed fare increases and service cuts and attend public hearings.
- Launched a successful local campaign called Everyone's Somerville to show support for affordable housing in the city, and specifically the development of 45 affordable housing units in Union Square.
- Engaged 700 individuals and organizations, including Buildings and Trades, to endorse a Local Hiring Ordinance, which led to the Mayor's creation of a Local Hiring Panel.
- Completed a communications plan, held a training retreat on message framing, and hosted a Community Corridor Planning meeting for the entire coalition.
- Engaged low income, minority, and youth residents to influence the City's planning process around Harris and North Parks.



ten year goals: 2021

1. Increase the dedicated affordable housing stock in Somerville from the current 9.6% of the total housing stock to 12% of the total housing stock by 2021 (estimate 800 units).
2. Add 7,500 jobs in Somerville by 2021.
3. Ensure that 30% of new construction and permanent jobs created in Somerville will employ Somerville residents.
4. Add at least 40 acres of new public open space by 2021.
5. Connect the Charles River path network with the Minuteman Bikeway through Somerville by 2020 along GLX route from Lowell Street (Somerville) to Lechmere/North Point in Cambridge.
6. Lower the residential property tax burden from 73% of the total property tax levy to 63% of the total property tax levy by 2021.
7. Add at least 2 million square feet of office / R&D space in Somerville by 2021.

challenges

- Difference of opinion with the Mayor on how to ensure local hiring.
- Green Line delays which impact larger land use changes including the Community Path.
- Maintaining a complex coalition with varying timelines and methodologies.
- Staff turnover at the City in the planning department, which requires time spent to build new relationships.
- Neighborhood opposition to affordable housing, particularly at 181 Washington Street.

at-a-glance*

Demographics	
Total Population, Census 2010	75,754
% White	69.1
% Minority	30.9
% Foreign Born, ACS 2006-10	26.8
Language Spoken at Home (5 y/o +), ACS 2006-10	
% English Only	67.4
Housing	
% Multi-Family Housing Units	86.5
% Subsidized Housing Units, DHCD 2011	9.3
Household Income, ACS 2006-10	
Median Household Income	\$61,731
Employment, InfoGroup USA and BLS/EOLWD	
Unemployment Rate	6.4%
Commuting, ACS 2006-10	
% Drive alone	41.4
% Carpool and Taxi	10.3
% Public transportation	33.5
% Walk and Bike	14.9
Average commute time to work (in minutes)	28.8
Environment, MassGIS	
Acres of Open Space per 1,000 Residents	0.19

*Source: Census 2010, American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-09 and 2006-10, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) 2011, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) 2010, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010, InfoGroup USA 2010, MassGIS, BRA, and MAPC.



W I N C H E S T E R

vision

Winchester has tremendous opportunity to grow a more vibrant, welcoming, and compact Town Center. The existing small town scale and character of downtown are guiding its approach to turning the Town Center into Winchester's housing and commercial hub with an excellent quality of life and easy access into Boston. The rehabilitation and redevelopment of historic properties can help restore the upper floors and mix of uses that the town once enjoyed. With a commuter rail station soon to see major MBTA investments and rehabilitation, the town will cultivate more transportation choices including better pedestrian and bicycle access. Winchester is exploring its options for encouraging increased retail development, and an improved housing market with a range of price points. The community is planning for development of the Town Center that will encourage pedestrian and bicycle access, and will reduce the impact of flooding and protect the Aberjona River and area wetlands. With community engagement and review of the all the options, Winchester's Town Center will become an attractive and thriving neighborhood.

LEAD PARTNER: Town of Winchester

highlights

- Completed draft analysis of water related issues within the town center as a prelude to addressing zoning changes.
- Developed a Great Neighborhoods executive committee composed of the town planner, Planning Board members, Selectmen, and Town management staff.
- Completed a housing market analysis of town center and updated the inventory of existing housing within the town center.
- Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) is near completion of the master plan chapter on Transportation and Circulation.
- Coordinated a meeting between the public safety officer, schools, Department of Public Works and Walk Boston on Safe Routes to School and other programs that would encourage increased walking and bicycling access in the town center.



ten year goals: 2021

1. Study the existing river and floodplain areas and develop mechanisms that allow for the preservation and enhancement of natural resources.
2. Improve access and circulation within the town center.
3. Increase residential housing in the town center.
4. Encourage development of town center businesses.
5. Expand town center social and cultural activities.
6. Preserve and enhance the character of the town center's built and natural environments.
7. Reduce energy and green house gas (GHG) emissions.
8. Update zoning bylaws and determine best practices for land use governance within the downtown.

challenges

- Transition in Town leadership due to lack of Town Manager for the past year, although a new Town Manager has been hired and is in a position to now move things forward.
- Recent FEMA floodplain maps expanded the 100-year floodplain area, which makes it more difficult to mitigate water runoff issues and resolve development constraints.
- Managing multiple projects and consultant teams.
- Keeping all of the appropriate Town personnel informed and involved.
- Advancing new ideas that Town Meeting may not be receptive to.

at-a-glance*

Demographics	
Total Population, Census 2010	21,374
% White	85.7
% Minority	14.3
% Foreign Born, ACS 2006-10	13.6
Language Spoken at Home (5 y/o +), ACS 2006-10	
% English Only	83.2
Housing	
% Multi-Family Housing Units	23.7
% Subsidized Housing Units, DHCD 2011	1.9
Household Income, ACS 2006-10	
Median Household Income	\$121,572
Employment, InfoGroup USA and BLS/EOLWD	
Unemployment Rate	5.7%
Commuting, ACS 2006-10	
% Drive alone	77.0
% Carpool and Taxi	9.4
% Public transportation	9.9
% Walk and Bike	3.7
Average commute time to work (in minutes)	27.6
Environment, MassGIS	
Acres of Open Space per 1,000 Residents	3.7

*Source: Census 2010, American Community Survey (ACS) 2005-09 and 2006-10, Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) 2011, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) 2010, Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010, InfoGroup USA 2010, MassGIS, BRA, and MAPC.

“It is beneficial to have additional land use professionals, lawyers and designers working on the project. The five projects and their shared stories contribute to creative problem solving.”

Creating one great place is a heroic undertaking. Creating a region of them will be impossible without a broad spectrum of leaders and organizations working together.

Great Neighborhoods promotes *collective impact* by creating opportunities for many different people to contribute to this vision. There are five elements of a successful collective impact initiative, which we use below to identify some of our progress and continued challenges.¹

Green equals accomplishments; red is continued challenges

common agenda

- MSGA first established a set of principles, along with criteria for selecting local partners. The criteria favored: a transformative vision, long-term outlook, comprehensive approach, a commitment to equity and smart growth, the capacity to convene diverse groups in their communities, and a readiness to implement.
- Local partners submitted Letters of Interest and signed off on a set of smart growth principles.
- Each site developed a common workplan and budget for all local and regional partners.
- Each lead partner signed a Memorandum of Understanding with MSGA.
- GN partners should play more of a leadership role in building out the regional network strategy and the policy campaigns.
- Need to more narrowly focus the local workplans and resources.

shared measurement

- Great Neighborhoods is based on helping local groups achieve their smart growth goals in order to build a movement for reforming development policy and practice.
- MSGA hired an independent evaluator to track our effectiveness; so far, she has conducted studies of the “program design” phase, the “transition to implementation” phase, and the “six-month implementation” phase.
- Established long-term (10 year) and short-term (2 year) goals, strategies, and deliverables.
- Developed an impact report template that can be used to track progress within each site and across the sites.
- Do not yet have a standard set of indicators across sites and for the Network as a whole.
- Have not established who will collect data for the sites on annual basis.



mutual support

- Identified complementary roles and responsibilities for coalition members.
- Brought partners from the five communities together in the fall of 2011 to meet each other, discuss communications needs, and identify other areas of common interest.
- Hosted two Great Neighborhoods Summits in 2010 and 2011 for Network members and the public, with a third Summit in June 2012 designed to provide workshops and networking for GN partners.
- Created a Learning Fund for professional development that sent 15 people to the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference.
- The broader GN Network has not been finalized.
- Have not established quarterly GN Network meetings.
- Local partners could act more collectively, especially around policy, fundraising and communications.

continuous communication

- Established weekly or bi-weekly check-in calls with local lead staff.
- Created an informal email list for Great Neighborhoods partners as well as GN Network.
- Established an active Twitter, Facebook, and Flickr presence.
- Currently implementing a more powerful relationship management system and database.
- Currently redesigning the MSGA website to provide more updated content, tools and resources, and opportunities to get involved.
- Have not sent out regular email bulletins.
- Have not established a listserv for GN Network members to communicate directly with each other.

backbone support

- Secured \$450K over three years in start-up funding, \$450K over two years for operations, and \$1M over two years in direct support for local partners.
- Hired a full-time Partnerships Director to manage Great Neighborhoods in 2010.
- Contracted with an independent evaluator to document and assess Great Neighborhoods.
- Hired a half-time Operations Director to develop and manage our contacts and communications platform in 2012.
- Working with MAPC to provide maps and data for the initiative.
- Have not yet implemented a “case management” system to help local groups with issues involving state agencies.
- Could establish a mentorship or coaching program.
- Could create a GN training program leveraging existing partners and programs.

¹ “Collective Impact,” John Kania and Mark Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011.

building a movement

Transforming our built environment is the work of a generation or more. However, the urgency of climate change and revolutions in the global economy require us to accelerate that transformation as quickly as possible, in ways that improve the quality of life and economic opportunity for all residents, especially those suffering from economic and racial segregation.

establishing a civic space

As we have seen in these pages, Great Neighborhoods offers one way of creating a civic space where a long-term, transformational agenda can be discussed and stewarded, independently of short-term political interests. Planning, learning, and doing operate in a continuous cycle. Having clear goals and a common framework helps people see where they can plug in effectively, which so many individuals, organizations, funders, and businesses are eager to do.

This kind of real-world network-building is very old on the one hand, but very new in the intentional way that ownership and control is shared. The collective wisdom and experience of a well-functioning network surpasses any one person's—or organization's—ability to manage the complex and quick-changing environment we live in today.

A healthy community needs to do many things well at the same time, it needs to adapt quickly to crisis and change, and there needs to be a shared understanding about our values. Rather than having one flavor of agreement, this approach respects what each of us brings to the table and how we all have something valuable to contribute.

local projects

The local projects are critical to building a larger movement because it is only at the local level where all of the various policies and programs hit the ground. There we can see what works, and what works well together. Barriers that may have originated in far away halls of government, through well-intentioned policy decisions, may have perverse consequences when implemented.

a greater network

Different communities have different needs, yet everyone wants to live in a healthy and welcoming environment. Across the state, we have seen a strong demand for resources and guidance about helping our cities and towns grow and prosper without cultivating what makes them special places.

We have an opportunity to bring people together to gain the knowledge and inspiration to make every neighborhood a Great Neighborhood. Resources tend to follow when people work together to create a functioning civic space and build consensus around ambitious, shared goals.

As a result, over the next year, MSGA intends to invest in tools that will help community stewards across the state connect with each other and with new ideas. We believe that the ongoing work in their communities, and their successes, will contribute to a larger movement transforming the state.

policy change

Our partners are working to increase economic prosperity for all residents, with a wider range of homes people can afford, more choices for transportation, protection of air, water, and recreational opportunities, and community vitality and connection. In turn, the MSGA is evolving to become better at listening to local practitioners, documenting their challenges, and helping to craft new solutions.

Going forward, we anticipate working on a range of reforms to help encourage development in sensible places, such as those near infrastructure and transportation, and communities where housing and jobs are needed.

The resurgence of places like Lawrence and Roxbury would restore them to vibrant hubs

offering opportunities and amenities to surrounding areas. Meanwhile, suburban communities like Winchester would also benefit from the growth of their villages and town centers. Doing so in both kinds of places will help stabilize property values, generate new economic activity, save money and natural resources, make transportation options more viable, and reduce energy consumption and pollution. Ultimately, a larger percentage of regional growth will be absorbed by these core communities if we level the playing field in terms of financing, permitting, and civic leadership.



GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS



Great Neighborhoods Fairmount/Indigo Line:

Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation
Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation
Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition
Mattapan United
Millennium Ten
Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation

Great Neighborhoods Lawrence:

City of Lawrence
Groundwork Lawrence
North Canal Coalition
Lawrence Community Works

Great Neighborhoods Roxbury:

Gallery Basquiat
Greater Grove Hall Main Streets
Mission 180
Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation
Project Right
Quincy Geneva Housing Development

Great Neighborhoods Somerville:

Friends of the Community Path
Groundwork Somerville
Somerville Community Corporation
Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership

Great Neighborhoods Winchester:

Winchester Planning Board
Winchester Board of Selectmen
Winchester Housing Partnership

Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance

- Boston Society of Architects
- Citizens Housing and Planning Association
- Conservation Law Foundation
- Environmental League of Massachusetts
- Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston
- Massachusetts Alliance of Community Development Corporations
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council

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