

**Site Details:** former MBTA parking lot 38,000 square foot 116 apartment units, 10,000 square feet commercial space

**Zoning:** multi-family med, high density residential

**Funding:** Masshousing, Community Develop-

ment, City of Boston, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and Private Developer

**Date(s):** 2006-2008

**Goals:** neighborhood revitalization, MBTA parking lot reuse



The Carruth Development and adjacent Ashmont MBTA Station, 2011.

## Background

During the 1990s, both Dorchester's Ashmont MBTA Station and its location in Peabody Square were both in disrepair. The station was a forlorn place, known for its poor and deteriorating station design as well as poor car traffic circulation which made it almost impossible for residents and MBTA travelers to enjoy or traverse through the square. Efforts within the community to put pressure on the MBTA to fix up Ashmont station had been occurring for over 30 years at this point, but it was only not until 2004 when St. Mark's Main Street, a local neighborhood organization, banded together and finally made a difference. In the end MBTA promised to upgrade not only Ashmont Station, but all of Dorchester's Red Line Stations, including Savin Hills, Fields Corner and Shawmut Stations.

## Site Development

As a part of the station upgrades, community members urged the MBTA to carve out a parcel of the corner of the MBTA yard, which was previously a parking lot, for development and to condense station development to one lot. Main Street members envisioned creating more space for retail in an area which was deprived of quality retail, and argued that this would improve residents' quality of life. In 2005 the T put out the parcel to bid, and Vince Droser of Trinity Financial, Inc was urged to take on this project. Because of his familiarity with the neighborhood and his real estate background, many felt that he would best represent a holistic approach and create a successful neighborhood development. Trinity won the bid for the parcel in 2005 and opted for a mixed use residential and retail development. Originally many community members wanted the parcel to be primarily retail, but Trinity urged mix use as a much more effective way to revitalize the square. Mixing residences and retail would create a more active space and hopefully improve the quality of life in the area. The development is now home to 116 apartment units, 74 affordable rental units and 42 market-rate condominiums. There are six floors, with 80 underground parking spaces. The for sale condominiums are priced in the \$300,000 range, and 16 units have been sold to date and the balance are being leased as rental units at market rates until the local condominium market recovers. To allow a diverse array of households with different incomes, rental units are open to those earning no more than 60% of the area median income. Eight rental



Aerial view of The Carruth ,before and after, 2011.



Renovated Ashmont MBTA Station, 2011.

the developer to coordinate the two major construction projects – the new station and the new housing and retail – so that both projects could be undertaken simultaneously. While this required considerable time to reach agreements on phasing, utility connections, site access and lay down areas the community felt strongly that it didn’t want to endure still more years of chaotic construction activity if the projects were done sequentially. Because the former MBTA parking lot had no zoning, special permitting was needed to accommodate the new housing and retail.. The development process was subject to Article 80 of the city’s comprehensive zoning which entailed submitting detailed analysis of environmental impacts and mitigation – most especially concerning traffic and maintaining bus and pedestrian access to the station during construction. Many community meetings were held to give residents ample opportunity to review and approve preliminary and final plans. While there were other six story buildings nearby, there was considerable discussion concerning the height of the building. also, there was some skepticism over whether 80 spaces would be enough parking spaces to serve the needs of the new residents and future retail customers. (Parking turned out not to be an issue, as many of the residents have elected not to own cars because of their proximity to mass transit.) Community members, officials, and developers alike were in conversation through this process in order to ensure support for the project and to make sure it was successful.

## The Carruth and MetroFuture Goals

### Housing Choices

Of the 116 units, 72 of them are affordable housing rental units that are income restricted. The other 42 are market based condominiums for purchase. The variety of housing options opens this development up to all people from diverse economic backgrounds.

### Transportation Choices

The project encompasses principles of smart growth development, as it is located adjacent to the Ashmont Red Line train station, the Mattapan high Speed Trolley and many other major bus routes serving the southern tier of the city as well as many South Shore destinations. The project also involved revamping accessibility to transit for the development and neighborhood, in addition to a mixed use building component that encourages people to do more walking.

## Contact Information

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units are available to households earning no more than 30% of the area median income. The development also houses multiple retail spaces including a joint Wainwright Bank, Flat Black Coffee Cafe, and Tavolo, an Italian restaurant, all on the first floor. The development is almost completely occupied and has been hailed as a model for transit oriented development and as a symbol for neighborhood revitalization efforts.

## Development Process

The MBTA made the parcel available by way of an 85 year ground lease. Considerable efforts were made by the T and the



Flat Black Coffee Company located on the first floor of The Carruth, 2011.

*“This building stands as a centerpiece to the neighborhood. It is a beautiful example of a development that reflects community values and has helped to bring in a great mix of people and businesses that we have been trying to recruit for years.” -Dan St. Mark’s Main Street*