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### From Disinvestment to Displacement: Gentrification and Jamaica Plain's Hyde-Jackson Squares

Jen Douglas  
University of Massachusetts Boston, douglasjen@gmail.com

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# **From Disinvestment to Displacement: Gentrification and Jamaica Plain’s Hyde- Jackson Squares**

**Jen Douglas**

## **Introduction**

On a January day in 2011, the website of the *Jamaica Plain Gazette* broke the news that Hi-Lo Foods—an independent grocer selling food staples to Latino and Caribbean shoppers throughout Greater Boston—would close suddenly and permanently. The Hi-Lo had operated for 47 years on Centre Street in the Hyde Square section of Boston’s Jamaica Plain neighborhood, an area named in recent years by a local business group as the “Latin Quarter,” and anchored commerce in the immediate neighborhood. Although Hi-Lo had been a “busy” and “successful” store in JP, as the neighborhood is commonly called, the owners “got an offer so high they could not refuse it” (Helms, 2011a) and signed a 20-year lease with Whole Foods Market, Inc. (Helms, 2011b). A *Boston Globe* story captured the change: “For Jamaica Plain’s eclectic mix of hipsters, affluent professionals, and working-class Latinos, there has been no starker symbol of transformation in their neighborhood than the one announced yesterday: The tumbledown Latino grocery Hi-Lo Foods will close its doors and reopen as a sparkling new Whole Foods Market” (Irons, 2011).

Customers and employees of Hi-Lo were reported to be sad, some in tears (Morgan, 2011; Taber, 2011b; Zagastizábal, 2011). One spoke of the Hi-Lo as a

place to see old friends as well as to shop for food. Another had phoned friends in the Dominican Republic to share the news, but they had already heard. At subsequent neighborhood meetings, dozens of people testified, overwhelmingly in opposition to the change. Residents expressed concern about Hi-Lo employees, potential impacts on the surrounding businesses, shopping alternatives where residents would find the foods Hi-Lo had sold, and social ties that had cohered around the store being disrupted. Many described the Hi-Lo as a place tied closely to memories and events in their personal lives. Some perceived negative effects on the neighborhood, describing the replacement of the Hi-Lo with a Whole Foods as “an attack on us,” “a coordinated effort to make JP serve wealthy interests,” “getting robbed,” and “taking away a people’s culture.” One asked, “How did we let this happen?” Another warned, “if we keep taking it,” everything may be taken. A group of longtime Latina residents and newer residents, many of them queer, began to mobilize against Whole Foods’ arrival under the name “Whose Foods? Whose Community?: The Coalition for a Diverse and Affordable JP.” Among the key concerns of this group were that the presence of a Whole Foods would accelerate the pace and extent of rising property values in JP, bring those pressures to Hyde Square near the northeastern end of JP in an intensified form, and exacerbate the displacement of low-income residents and people of color that was already perceived to be underway in the neighborhood.

Counterprojects called “JP For All” and “We Are All Whole Foods” formed to support the company’s arrival, both of them rejecting the assertion that the store served a particular, more affluent, consumer and advocating for the purportedly shared benefits of rising property values and health foods. These groups were just one part of a raging debate in online English-language forums, where the tone was self-righteous, strident, and often nasty. Here, people shouted their defense of high property values. The rights of private parties to form business contracts were

hurled at those who argued for community input. The sorts of people who attend meetings to take part in public processes were summarily dismissed as unsophisticates in need of redirection to Internet-based communications. The specter of past decay and vacancy in Hyde Square was invoked to demonstrate what were seen as the obvious benefits of upscaling (e.g., Donnellan, 2011), and Juliette Hannan, speaking on WBUR's Radio Boston (Chakrabarti and Brooks, 2011). The Hi-Lo and its clientele were cast negatively in race- and class-coded language (the store was "dirty," its products "unhealthy," e.g., Rosenthal (2011), while JP's "diversity" was otherwise lauded. Doubts were raised about the validity of claims that groceries at Whole Foods cost more (e.g., Taber, 2011a), and assertions that low-income residents would not be well-served by a Whole Foods Market were attacked as classist campaigns to deny wholesome foods to all people. The popular dissemination of Richard Florida's "creative class" thesis (Florida, 2002)—in which a mobile population of affluent, young, and often gay in-migrants in the artistic and technical professions rescue cities with their vibrant lifestyles—was amply in evidence. Still, "hipsters" were despised, and people whose lives seemed to require "a bakery for their dogs" were put on the defensive. Lists were produced of more important issues to work on than resisting a Whole Foods in your neighborhood (almost anything else won). "Data" were demanded, "hypocrisy" was sniffed out and chastised (as in, "Do you oppose CVS or Dunkin' Donuts?" "Should I make arrangements for my state senator to write letters to every 'landlord I don't like?'" (e.g., Buckingham (2011), the signification and meaning of the events was denied altogether (as in, "It's just a supermarket replacing a supermarket" (e.g., Steve Garfield, speaking on Radio Boston (Chakrabarti and Brooks, 2011)), and everyone's ability to "accept change" was placed under scrutiny.

### **Whose Neighborhood?**

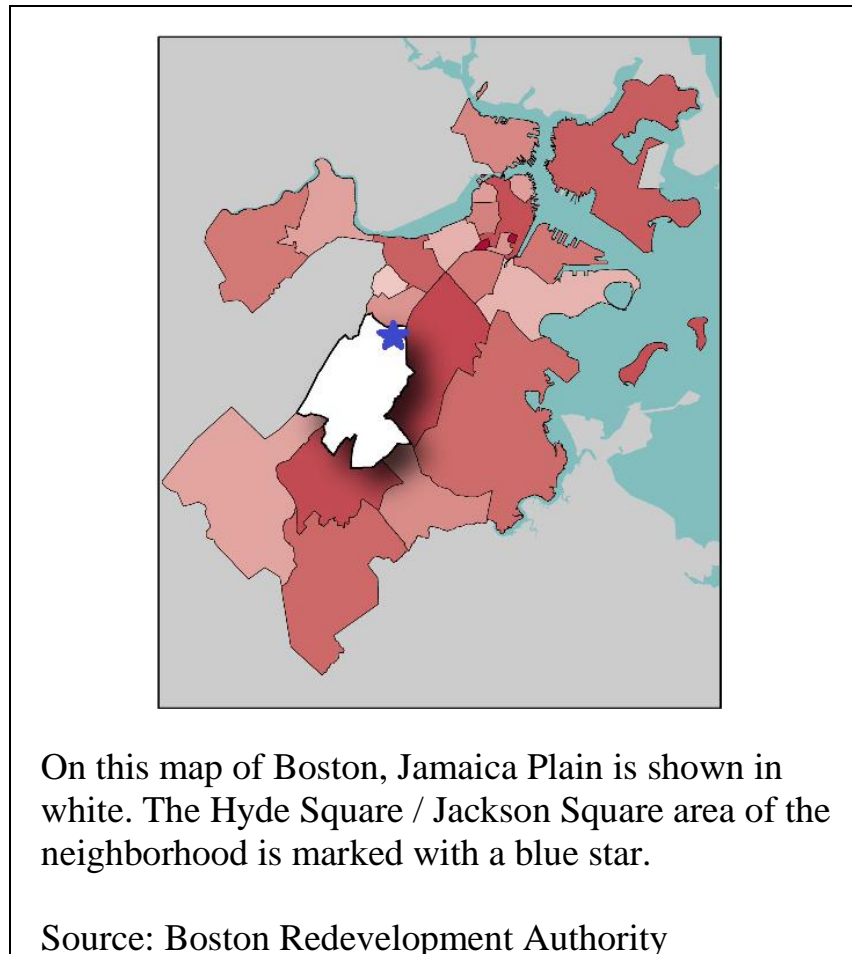
In this essay, I offer a place-based history of socioeconomic and demographic change in Hyde Square and nearby Jackson Square (henceforth “Hyde-Jackson Squares”). I document the area’s ongoing gentrification and describe the distribution of gentrification pressures. I situate this contemporary process against the socio-spatial patterns carved out by the area’s historical rise as an industrial suburb, its struggle amid decades of disinvestment, and the community efforts that ultimately stabilized the neighborhood. In these sequential transformations is the story of how Latinos and Blacks entered, departed, and have strived to remain in the neighborhood.

The above vignette offers a window into a local context of concern and dispute over the displacement of people of color from the broader Jamaica Plain neighborhood and the declining presence of Latinos in Hyde Square’s “Latin Quarter,” income inequality with an increasingly bipolar distribution, a steady rise in housing costs, more vocal homeowner politics, and a visible emphasis on certain kinds of consumer “taste” in more parts of the commercial and residential space—all of it against the backdrop of a well-disseminated commonsense booster ideology in which gentrification is presented as a desirable if not the only option. For the past several decades, Jamaica Plain has been undergoing a transformation of people and place in one example of the widespread process of urban restructuring called “gentrification.” Here, as in many places, gentrification appears to have begun “as a small-scale urban process, pioneered by a new liberal middle class but in which the state was involved from the beginning” (Lees, Slater, and Wyly, 2010, xv).

JP, known as a multiracial neighborhood with a dense web of community-based organizations, is also increasingly a place to make a solid real estate investment, where high house prices held steady during the housing-led financial crisis (Swenson, 2011), and recovery came early and strong. A local culture of

progressive activism and public interest reform exists alongside a growing defense of property values and intolerance from residents who fear that lower-income neighbors will harm their property and/or property values (e.g., Walker, 2012). There is steady interest from private real estate developers (Mercurio, 2013; Soto-Palmarin, 2013), some of them backed by global-scale institutional investors (e.g., Boston Residential Group LLC (n.d.)). Local community organizers find that, as “new residents who don’t necessarily share a commitment to affordable housing move in, we are continually challenged to find new ways to maintain a solid base of support for the housing agenda” (Barnett and Smith, 2004).

**Figure 1: Jamaica Plain**



It is common for community organizations (e.g., Racial Healing and

Reconciliation Team, 2012) and neighborhood residents (see Samuels (2011), Taber (2011c), Ruch (2011)) to speak of “two JPs.” As explained by a community organization, “in one part of JP incomes are likely to be higher, housing is in good condition, and youth are doing well overall [and] looking to a good future. But, in the other part of JP, where African American and Latino families are heavily represented, incomes are more likely to be low and many young people are struggling in school and dealing with issues of community violence” (Jamaica Plain Coalition, 2010). Some say, however, that it is more accurate to speak of “three JPs” to reflect the distance in social life between the residents of two public housing complexes and everyone else (G. Casey, personal communication, July 20, 2011).

These terms flatten the complexities of residents’ lived identities, yet they also reflect broad truths about lines of difference that impact daily life in the neighborhood. Versions of the “two JPs” are expressed across and within the neighborhood’s commercial districts. Higher-priced restaurants and “specialty stores where unique and higher quality clothing and food convey and reinforce a sense of status” (Beauregard, 2010, 11) predominate in some areas, while franchise chains, older Irish bars and restaurants, thrift stores, no-frills ethnic eateries, and corporate pharmacies remain in the mix. In the stretch from Hyde Square to Jackson Square, the commercial spaces are primarily occupied by bodegas, small Cuban or Dominican restaurants, takeout pizzerias, dollar stores, check-cashing outlets, and barbershops and salons. This area, named the “Latin Quarter” in the last decade through a community process initiated by a municipally backed local business group, has been home to numerous stores that cater to broad and niche Latino consumer tastes, needs, and cultural practices. These include a dress shop specializing in weddings and quinceañeras, a notary public office that offers immigration-related services, a car parts vendor that caters to young men who

customize vehicles, and others. There are businesses that serve low-income people, including two check-cashing stores and a Rent-A-Center selling home furnishings on installment. It also features an Irish pub and a growing number of offerings with appeal to subcultures within the gentry. These include a leftist bookstore, a bicycle repair shop, a tattoo parlor, an alternative video rental store, and an upscale café.<sup>1</sup> A review of the literature sets this local story within a critical and historical perspective, and establishes criteria for empirical observation of gentrification pressures in the local environment.

### **Literature Review**

Gentrification, “a complex urban process,” (Lees, Slater, and Wyly, 2008, 5) is both enabled by and an engine of “increasing residential polarization of the city by income, by education, by household composition, and by race” (Marcuse, 2010, 342). Sometimes described as the “*embourgeoisement* of the inner city” (Ley, 2010, 108), the term gentrification describes the transformation of “neighbourhoods from a status of relative poverty and limited property investment to a state of commodification and reinvestment” (Ley, 2003, 2527). It is characterized by “the purchasing of buildings by affluent households or by intermediaries such as speculators or developers, the upgrading of the housing stock, governmental investment in the surrounding environment, the concomitant changeover in local retail facilities, the stabilization of the neighborhood and the enhancement of the tax base” (Beauregard, 2010, 12) as well as “tenurial

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<sup>1</sup> This characterization of the Hyde-Jackson Squares business area was accurate at the time this research was completed in the fall of 2013. Since then, upscaling and displacement has become more visible in the commercial realm, altering this picture somewhat. Relevant recent changes include: the bridal/quinceañera shop and the Rent-A-Center closed, the video store moved to Egleston Square at the JP/Roxbury border in search of lower rent, the car parts vendor moved to a smaller storefront, a new restaurant owned by young White professionals opened, a pet supply store expanded into an additional storefront to provide grooming and spa services, and two real estate offices opened (one with brokers who migrated from the cluster of gentry-serving agents in JP center, the other based previously in Mission Hill).



transformation from renting to owning, property price increases, and the displacement of working-class residents by the incoming middle classes” (Lees et al., 2008, 5). The circumstances for gentrification’s emergence and gradual consolidation are the rise and decline of the industrial city in the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, the sustained growth over that period and into the present period of a class of professional and managerial workers, and the racial production of urban space.

*From the Industrial to the Service Economy*

Tightly linked to shifting patterns of investment and the transition from manufacturing to services, gentrification is one outcome of a “profound economic, social, and spatial restructuring” (Smith and Williams, 2010, 10). The mid-twentieth-century “urban crisis”—the withdrawal of jobs and investment from central cities and the subsequent struggles to cope with poverty, maintain services, deal with a disused or declining physical infrastructure, and generate sufficient revenue—is understood to be the seedbed for the widescale emergence of gentrification. At the mid-twentieth century, and most acutely in the postwar years, manufacturing activity was withdrawn from industrial cities as industrialists sought lower-cost labor. The consequences were severe. Older cities “lost between 20 and 40 percent of manufacturing jobs in the two decades after the war” (Fairfield, 2010, 246). Downtown central business districts retained administrative operations for the now far-flung corporate operations, a pattern that began taking shape in the 1920s.

Alongside the growing scarcity of jobs, practices like redlining and blockbusting combined to drive residents of color into city neighborhoods increasingly starved of capital investment, while massive federal supports for highway construction and mortgage lending pulled White residents into the suburbanizing ring. African Americans and other residents of color found

themselves largely confined to the disinvested ring around the urban core. Municipalities launched large-scale public works projects to restructure the cities in this new landscape, razing and disrupting city neighborhoods for new highways, luxury housing, infrastructure for the institutions of the service economy (finance, health, higher education), and sometimes the idle ruins of failed development schemes. Urban Renewal funding for the demolition of urban areas labeled “slums” supported the displacement of a million residents nationwide (Fullilove, 2005, 4). People of color were disproportionately impacted, comprising 75 percent of displacees (Fullilove and Wallace, 2011, 382) from the Urban Renewal program alone. The result was not just “a system of highways and infrastructural transformations, suburbanization” but “the total reengineering” of cities and “whole metropolitan region[s]” (Harvey, 2008, 27).

The General Renewal Plan for the City of Boston, designed in collaboration with the city’s business elites, aimed not just to redevelop the city’s physical space for a service economy and the white-collar workforce it required. It had an explicit goal to reduce the emerging concentration of residents with low incomes and of color (Medoff and Sklar, 1994, 18–20). Targeted neighborhoods included the West End (razed entirely, in part for the construction of luxury high-rise housing), Charlestown, and the South End. “As one area [of the South End] was demolished, families were forced to move on. . . . [M]ost white families went to South Boston, Dorchester and Jamaica Plain. Black and Portuguese families moved to Washington Park, Lower Roxbury, and North Dorchester. Some families have had to move four and more times in the face of renewal pressure” (King, 1981, 22).

In part because of protest, in part because of changing federal priorities, and in keeping with a broader policy trend away from large, centrally administered public programs, subsequent eras in this ongoing “urban renewal” have moved away from the centrally administered large-scale public projects. Key among the

array of decentralized, market-oriented strategies has been neighborhood gentrification, a back-to-the-city movement of capital and people made possible by the decades of devalorization of inner-city locations. In this “neo-liberal policy context, gentrification appears to many as an ideal solution to long-term urban decay” (Newman and Wyly, 2006, 26). The “prior disinvestment in the urban infrastructure creates opportunities for profitable redevelopment, where the needs and concerns of business and policy elites are met at the expense of urban residents affected by work instability, unemployment, and stigmatization” (Slater, 2011, 572).

### *The Growth in Professional and Managerial Workers*

Across and related to these changes in cities were changes in the class structure (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1977). The gentry are predominantly people drawn from the growing segment of college-educated workers that fill the higher-skill and higher-pay positions, the “new middle classes, with professional, technical, or managerial jobs” (Zukin, 1987, 141). Professional and technical workers were the fastest-growing group of workers through the twentieth century, increasing from 4.4% of workers in 1910 to 23.3% in the year 2000, with particular increases in computer specialists, accountants and auditors, college presidents and professors, engineers, health care workers, lawyers and judges, and teachers. Contributing factors were “technological development and the growing size and complexity of organizations; rapid growth in healthcare, education, and social services; and the expanded role of government” (Wyatt and Hecker, 2006, 38). Managers also grew from 6.5% to 14.2% of workers over the century, spurred by “more and larger bureaucratic organizations, some with many layers of managers” (Wyatt and Hecker, 2006, 47). Alongside these occupational shifts, there was a tremendous growth in higher education, with college enrollments growing 43 times over, and an increase in the percentage of the population with a college degree

from 2.7% to 25.6% from 1910 to 2000 (Wyatt and Hecker, 2006, 42).

Neighborhood gentrification can be understood as “a process of spatial and social differentiation” (Zukin, 1987, 131) to meet the consumption habits and social reproduction needs of people in this group.

Professional and managerial workers, drawn to urban regions in large part because of the central-city concentration of white-collar work, hold the “positions at the top of the employment hierarchy, whether measured by income or prestige,” and are the “population from which gentrifiers are drawn” (Ley, 1996, 83). The service economy has a two-tier labor market and an increasingly bimodal wage structure. In addition to growth of jobs at the top of the employment hierarchy, growing occupational sectors have been in lower-tier services, clerical, and sales positions, where pay has been flat and declining. Shrinking occupational categories include those where unionization was strong, like crafts (trades) and factory work (Wyatt and Hecker, 2006, 36). There is a low-paid tier of workers in restaurants, hotels, personal service, security, retail and other roles, along with large numbers of part-time and temporary jobs and high unemployment.

In Boston, as the city re-formed its economy around health care, higher education, research, and technology, “the emphasis on professional skills and managerial occupations requiring a high degree of education made [it] a predominantly white-collar city, and produced an extraordinary growth in jobs and wages during the 1970s and 1980s . . . [that] brought new residents into the city” (O'Connor, 1993, 291). In the post–World War II years, over one-third of all new employment in Boston was in these professional and technical fields, growing from 12% to 23% of total employment between 1950 and 1990 (Bluestone and Stevenson, 2000, 68). This change was “accompanied by a drastic decline in . . . the type of semiskilled trades that characterized the textile mills and other blue-collar employers” (Bluestone and Stevenson, 2000, 67).

These occupational and educational shifts developed with race as a defining characteristic. Despite “significant growth in both Black and Latino middle-class populations over the past three decades” (Anderson and Sternberg, 2012, 8) nationwide, employed White and Asian workers are overrepresented, and employed Black and Latino workers are underrepresented, in management, professional, and related occupations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). There are also income disparities by race, such that Asians and Whites have earnings above those of Latinos and Blacks in the same management and professional occupational groups for both men and women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). In Boston, Black and Latino workers increasingly filled the low-wage, low-skill jobs that were replacing the better-paying low-skill jobs that had been filled by earlier generations of predominantly White workers (Kahn, Martin, and Mehta, 2012, 30; McArdle, 2004, ii), while Whites disproportionately filled the growing high-pay, high-skill positions. Overall, “the racial/ethnic composition of the workforce varies greatly by occupation, with a strong relationship to wages. . . . Boston occupations with higher median wages have a much higher percentage of white workers” (Kahn et al., 2012, 26). Educational attainment rates in Boston are also “closely tied to race/ethnicity, and are not keeping pace with rapid demographic change” (Kahn et al., 2012, 31). Among Whites, 60.5 percent have a bachelor’s degree, compared to just 18.6 percent of Blacks and 15.8 percent of Latinos. Bostonians born in the U.S. are 64% more likely to hold a bachelor’s degree than are immigrants living in the city (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 2015, 9).

With its dual labor market and the persistent presence of disinvested areas alongside the redeveloped ones, “the post-industrial city [remains] the site of acute inequality” (Ley, 1996, 15), with the gentrifying neighborhood a key element in this uneven urban landscape. “Although often equated with neighborhood

improvement, in reality gentrification is a process of class transformation: it is the remaking of working-class space to serve the needs of middle- and upper-class people” (Newman and Wyly, 2005). For working-class populations, often the same people-of-color groups who were relocated in other phases of urban renewal, the consequence has been displacement. Displacement impacts individuals and families as well as communities, exerting “emotional, psychological, individual and social” effects (Slater, 2011, 581, quoting Chester Hartman, 1984) through such means as the loss of cultural space that may have been secured through struggle (Alicia, 2001), the emotional meanings attached to everyday experiences in the neighborhood (Cahill, 2010), and particularly through the disruption of a web of social ties and relationships (Fullilove, 2005). To this extent, “the right to community is a function of a group’s economic and political power [and] . . . community formations are as strong as their political and economic power” (Betancur, 2002, 807).

### *Reorganizing and Deepening Racial Inequities*

This “process of socio-spatial restructuring” (Gotham, 2009, 356) has entailed a racial organization of the city. The popular understanding that gentrification is defined by the movement of affluent whites into an African American or Latino neighborhood (Kirkland, 2008), while not true in every instance, nonetheless captures the overall characteristics of change. Even though White working-class neighborhoods have been remade through gentrification, and Black and Latino professionals are gentrifying Black or Latino neighborhoods in Chicago (Anderson and Sternberg, 2012; Pattillo, 2007), Harlem (Freeman, 2006; Prince, 2005; Taylor, 2010), Los Angeles (Mendez, 2005), and elsewhere (Bostic and Martin, 2003), racial change remains a central feature of the gentrifying city. Overall, gentrifying “processes of neighborhood change are associated with broader trends of neighborhood racial inequality” (Hwang, 2015, 320). The

available evidence suggests “that gentrification not only replicates but amplifies the contemporary system of racial residential segregation” (Kirkland, 2008, 18). Studies have found that the benefits of reinvestment in cities flow disproportionately to Whites, documenting such effects as a preference toward neighborhoods that have at least a minimum threshold of existing White occupants, diminished access to mortgage credit for Black and Latino borrowers in gentrifying neighborhoods, differences in the extent to which White homeowners and homeowners of color capture equity gains from appreciating property values, and broader neighborhood effects of reinvestment when the gentrifiers are White.

Wyly and Hammel examined patterns of investment in gentrifying neighborhoods at the national level. Across the 1990s, in the context of “a pronounced strengthening of capital investment in the urban core” (Wyly and Hammel, 2004, 1239), they found “intensified discrimination and exclusion in gentrified neighborhoods” (Wyly and Hammel, 2004, 1215). In an analysis of mortgage lending data for 23 large cities, they found that racial exclusion in gentrifying neighborhoods developed over the 1990s, such that by the end of the decade Black and Latino borrowers were less likely to be approved for loans in both core and fringe gentrifying areas, as compared to their approval rates in nongentrifying neighborhoods. Within gentrified districts, loan denial was more than twice as common for Black and one and a half times as common for Latino as compared to White applicants (Wyly and Hammel, 2004, 1238). “These results corroborate the hypothesis that gentrification was associated with intensified racial discrimination” (Wyly and Hammel, 2004, 1237), while leaving open the relationship between cause and effect. It may be that gentrification pressures led to increased discrimination in credit allocation, “but it is also possible that heightened barriers of exclusion were a precondition for expanded reinvestment” (Wyly and Hammel, 2004, 1237).

Similarly, upward house prices can create equity gains for homeowners, but these may be of limited benefit for Black and Latino homeowners in neighborhoods that gentrify. Glick explored the home-equity impacts for Black and Latino homeowners in gentrifying areas of seven U.S. cities. He found initial wealth increases for those who already owned homes in such areas, followed by “relatively high attrition to other parts of the metropolitan area” (Glick, 2008, 287) by residents of color. The effect was that White homeowners reaped the bulk of the benefits of increased property values while Black and Latino homeowners were “reconcentrat[ed] elsewhere in the metropolitan area” (Glick, 2008, 292).

Recent research by Hwang and Sampson measured the pace and extent of gentrification from 2007 to 2009 in Chicago neighborhoods that showed signs of gentrification in 1995 (or were adjacent to such neighborhoods). They found racially ordered patterns of reinvestment that favored neighborhoods where a minimum (about 35 percent) of existing residents were White (Hwang and Sampson, 2014, 746) and avoided neighborhoods where the proportion of Black residents was above a threshold (of about 40 percent) (Hwang and Sampson, 2014, 727). They also found reinvestment impacts related to the race of the gentrifiers. Gentrification of Black and Latino neighborhoods by Black and Latino professionals had little broad neighborhood effect, in contrast to those with larger White gentrifying populations, indicating that “minority gentrification does not result in substantial neighborhood reinvestment overall” (Hwang and Sampson, 2014, 746). Thus, gentrification’s racial reorganization of the city goes beyond the impacts of displacement—“the rising housing expense burden for poor renters, and the personal catastrophes of displacement, eviction, and homelessness . . . , often at the expense of the needs of home, community, family, and everyday social life” (Lees et al., 2008, 73). Gentrifying reinvestment is characterized by the “reproduction of neighborhood racial inequality amid urban transformation”



(Hwang and Sampson, 2014, 726).

### *A Neighborhood Gentrification Process*

For gentrification to occur in a given place, there must be demand from potential gentrifiers, housing and amenities they find attractive, an existing resident population that can be relocated, and support from an array of real estate, financial, and government actors to facilitate change (Beauregard, 2010, 14). Potential gentrifiers—“middle-class professionals with a disposition towards central city living and an associated rejection of suburbia” (Slater, 2011, 572)—create the *demand* that is essential to a gentrification process. “‘Gentrifiable’ housing” (Beauregard, 2010, 14) exists where “financial and property interests. . . foresee the opportunities involved in the transformation of a residential area from low to middle income through investment in rehabilitation” (Beauregard, 2010, 20). Gentrifiable places will frequently have devalued and attractive residential stock, often with “architectural desirability or symbolic value as a landmark location” (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005a, 12); a viable commercial area with the possibility for transformation for a new category of use(r); a mix of amenities like parks, views, or recreational or cultural facilities (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005b; Ley, 1996); and access to the transportation infrastructure, allowing easy travel to the downtown business areas and jobs. In order for gentrification to advance, the existing residents must be “gentrifiable” (Beauregard, 2010, 17), such as tenants who cannot lay an ownership claim, people who may be marginally employed or low-paid (factors related to withdrawal of a prior industrial base and low-wage work in the service economy), or elderly people. It will be a “vulnerable population,” often low-income people of color (Bates, 2013), with less relative ability to garner political support for their housing and community needs. Though it may not “succumb without a struggle” (Beauregard, 2010, 19), it is typically difficult for communities to sustain the level of mobilization necessary over the long periods of

time for which it can be required (Dobson and Ley, 2008, 2477).

“[T]ransition typically occurs first, and over time most deeply, in areas that are of modest income, avoiding at first very-low-income areas” (Dobson and Ley, 2008, 2474). High crime, high poverty, and public housing are all likely to be deterrents to middle-class settlement, although in very tight housing markets gentrification pressures may push into these areas. As the process advances, the municipality may make new investments in the area, investors/renovators will become more numerous, banks will greenline the area, price escalation will increase, and displacement will continue. “The neighborhood is now viewed as safe for larger numbers of young middle-class professionals” (Lees et al., 2008, 32, quoting Clay). As the process advances, “rapid price and rent spirals are set off” (Lees et al., 2008, 33, quoting Clay), displacement may begin to impact homeowners in addition to renters, middle-income households may also be at risk of displacement (Ley, 1996, 70), and other neighborhoods within the city will start to see arrivals of young professionals. “[I]n the same way that older elite districts in the inner city<sup>2</sup> provided bases for a contagious diffusion process in the 1970s, so areas [that are] advanced in the gentrification cycle themselves act as nodes for subsequent advancing waves of reinvestment” (Ley, 1996, 58).

## **Methods**

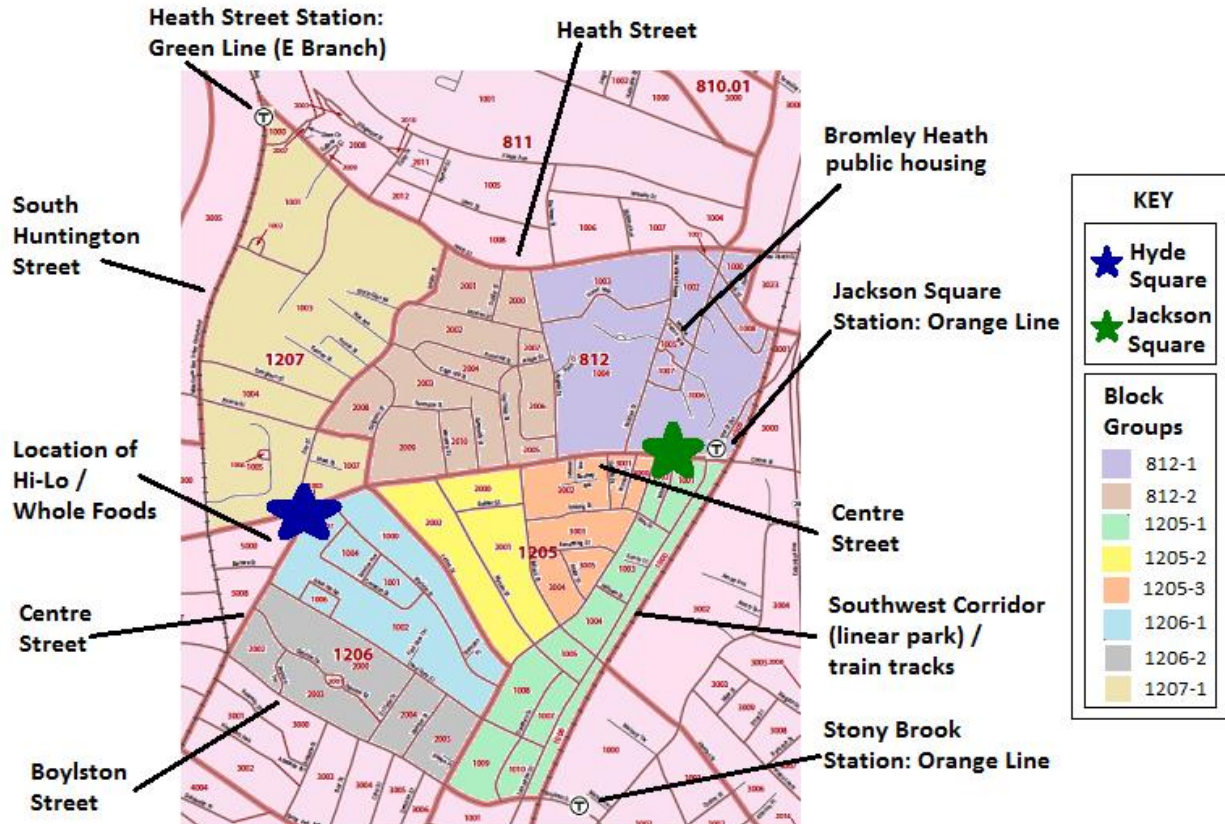
The study area—known as Hyde Square and Jackson Square and often called Hyde-Jackson Squares—is composed of eight block groups within four Census tracts, bounded by South Huntington and Centre Streets at the west, Boylston Street at the south, the Southwest Corridor at the east, and Heath Street at the north. Apart from a public housing development with large buildings, housing in the area is mainly detached two- and three-family structures that have three

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<sup>2</sup> “Older elite districts” refers to inner-city areas that were wealthier both before and after the declining conditions many cities faced at mid-century—they were not disinvested.

floors, with some six-unit and occasionally larger structures and one clustered area of single-family houses.

**Figure 2: Study Area—Hyde-Jackson Squares**



*Data and Procedures*

Data from several sources were brought together to enable observation of people and property characteristics associated with gentrification pressures, understand racial settlement patterns, and contextualize those attributes appropriately in relevant aspects of the local environment. The bulk of these data came from the Census Bureau’s decennial Census (1990, 2000, and 2010) and American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year samples (2007-2011). Additional data on property sales for the period 1998–2012 came from the Multiple Listing Service (MLS) Property Information Network (PIN), the proprietary information system through which real estate agents list properties for sale (National Organization of

REALTORS, 2013), and the Warren Group. Additional rental data were drawn from annual reports of Boston’s Department of Neighborhood Development. Data on social housing—including public housing and other units that have been developed or owned by nonprofits and are sold or rented with affordability restrictions—was pieced together from municipal agencies (Boston Housing Authority, 2013), neighborhood nonprofits (Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation, 2012), and public records data compiled by the Warren Group.

I examined five people variables and six property variables for the period 1990–2010. The *people* variables included three core socioeconomic measures— income, education, and occupation—that, together, enable identification of in-migration by the higher-income, higher-educated managerial and professional workers who comprise the “gentry;” college enrollment (because college students have been forces of gentrification in other Jamaica Plain subdistricts (Draisen et al., 1980)); and race and ethnicity. The *property* variables—gross rent, tenure, vacancy, sales price, sales volatility, and extent of condoization—are those which enable observation of core gentrifying attributes in the residential environment, including declining numbers of rental units through condo conversion, rising rents, rising prices and increasing volatility in the ownership market, and changes in vacancy as opportunities for profitable use increase. I also enumerated and mapped the units that are part of the social housing stock.

Additional data were gathered to situate contemporary observations in the context of the history of the area’s development and settlement patterns. I drew on decennial Census data from 1940 to 1980, an archival collection of reports on Jamaica Plain and Hyde-Jackson Squares covering the period from the mid-1950s through the present (including Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) reports, commissioned research reports, and student theses), the Home Owners’ Loan

Corporation Residential Security Map of Boston from 1938, and one published account of the neighborhood's development as an industrial suburb.

### *Analyses*

The data were analyzed in a multi-step process. The first set of analyses, designed to examine gentrification pressures in the present, included three parts. First, I compared the above-described people and property characteristics in Hyde-Jackson to those in Jamaica Plain, to observe whether the area was becoming more or less like the gentrified area to its south.<sup>3</sup> Second, I assessed the extent of gentrification within block groups of the study area, assigning “high” and “low” scores for each variable and bringing the rankings together in a matrix to yield a composite understanding of the direction and extent of change in subareas of the neighborhood. Third, I examined the geographic patterns of residents' race and ethnicity to understand who is departing from and who is arriving in the neighborhood. The second portion of analysis strove to place the gentrifying neighborhood in historical context by examining how people and property characteristics in the present were shaped over the prior decades. This approach is designed following work by Wyly and Hammel (1996).

### **Results**

Results pertaining to gentrification in the present are as follows: first, gentrification pressures are present in Hyde-Jackson and grew more steeply during the 2000s than in the prior decade; second, in the decade 2000–2010, the growing change pressures varied in their intensity, had a direction of movement from the

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<sup>3</sup> The existence of gentrification in Jamaica Plain has been established by a range of observers over the past several decades (including: Barnett and Smith, 2004; Bluhm, 1978; Draisen et al., 1980; McAfee, 1986; NeighborWorks America, 2005; Parkman Center for Urban Affairs, 1977; Swenson and Ney, 2006). Note that for ease of comparison across decades, the boundaries of the JP Planning District are used (a Boston Redevelopment Authority geography), which differ somewhat from the neighborhood boundaries understood by residents in that they exclude much of Egleston Square and the Woodbourne area and include portions of Mission Hill.

south toward the north and east, and were associated with a squeeze on the rental stock and the displacement of Latinos; third, as the neighborhood gentrifies, Latinos and Blacks who remain are compressed into fewer portions of the study area, and social housing appears to play a key role in their ability to remain. The historical analysis also yielded three key findings: first, the contemporary socio-spatial patterns in the neighborhood were carved by the 1930s and earlier, and then racialized as Blacks and Latinos moved in and an era of disinvestment deepened the differences between districts; second, within the study area the intensity of disinvestment in earlier years is in reverse proportion to the strength of gentrification pressures in the present; and third, successful community-based efforts to stabilize Hyde-Jackson Squares appear to have exerted contradictory impacts, with some of the social value that was created going to market as gentrification pressures advanced.

#### *Documenting Gentrification in Hyde-Jackson Squares*

Managerial, professional, and technical workers were an increasing presence in the study area; these and service workers were the only growth occupations, while all other kinds of workers declined. Hyde-Jackson's share of professional workers as a percentage of Jamaica Plain's share grew. In 1990, H-J's percentage of professionals was much lower than JP's percentage of professionals (about two-thirds the JP level), but by the end of the 2000s professionals had a nearly equivalent presence in H-J as in the larger neighborhood (the H-J share of professionals was 95 percent as high as the JP share of professionals). The share of college graduates grew from 21 percent to 52 percent of the Hyde-Jackson population age 25 and older, closing the gap with JP (in 1990, H-J's share of college grads was only two-thirds as high as JP's share, but by 2010 it was 99 percent as high as the JP share). There was an increase in the bipolar distribution of income in the study area and broader neighborhood—consistent with gentrification

in the context of an area with a sizable proportion of subsidized housing units—with rising incomes at the 75th percentile (the highest-earning quarter of the population), stagnating incomes at the median, and declining incomes at the 25th percentile (the lowest-earning quarter of the population). Growth at the top of the income distribution was steady for JP, with 46 percent growth in each decade, and accelerating for H-J, with a 29 percent increase in the 1990s and a 64 percent increase in the 2000s. Notably, Hyde-Jackson's upper quartile shrank slightly as a percentage of JP's upper quartile, suggesting perhaps that slightly less-resourced upper-income residents were locating in that area as compared to the broader neighborhood.

As college-educated professionals with higher incomes pressed into the neighborhood, the proportions of Latino and Black residents declined. In 1990, Latinos comprised 26 percent of JP's population and 48 percent of Hyde-Jackson's, while Blacks were 19 percent of JP's residents and 25 percent of Hyde-Jackson's. Through the 1990s, the Latino population declined in JP to 24 percent (Melnik and Borella, 2011) but held steady in Hyde-Jackson. Latinos continued declining over the 2000s in JP, representing 22 percent of the population in 2010. These changes were concentrated in H-J, which saw a 13 percent decline in Latinos between 2000 and 2010, emerging as 42 percent of the area's residents in 2010. The Black presence decreased substantially in both decades, to 13.5 percent of JP's residents and 17 percent of Hyde-Jackson's in 2010 (a decline of 40 percent in the 1990s and another 6 percent in the 2000s).

Property changes during these decades were toward rising rents, increasing sales prices and higher sales volatility, fewer rental units, and reduced vacancies. Jamaica Plain was one of four neighborhoods outside the central city with the

highest increases in asked rents<sup>4</sup> from 1995 to 1998, the years immediately after rent decontrol in 1994, with increases of 42 percent (Department of Neighborhood Development, 1999b, 1) to 64% (Boston Tenant Coalition and City Life / Vida Urbana, n.d.) in the first five years after rents were decontrolled. Rents continued to increase overall through the year 2012, though less steeply and with some leveling and a few years of decreases along the way (Department of Neighborhood Development, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). In the study area, exclusive of block group 812-1, where 98 percent of units are within the public housing complex that was called Bromley Heath until early 2016, median gross rent<sup>5</sup> rose an estimated 23 percent from 2000 to 2007–2011. When two additional block groups (812-2 and 1205-1) that have the highest concentrations of other subsidized (nonprofit-owned) housing are excluded, median gross rent in the study area increased by 32 percent.

Vacancies declined in the study area through the 1990s, when the trend was toward stabilization, with increases in occupied rental and ownership units. In the 2000s, however, looking at just the block groups outside Bromley-Heath (since renamed the Mildred C. Hailey Apartments), the percentage share of owner-occupied units increased by 27 percent while the share of renter-occupied units decreased by 13 percent. In 2000, no block group had less than 60 percent rentals, while in 2010, all but two did, with a declining share of rental units occurring in every block group except 812-1 (98 percent public housing). This trend toward the (re)development of housing for the ownership market was driven in large part by conversion of the rental stock to condominium ownership, along with some newly

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<sup>4</sup> Asked rent is the advertised price for an available unit, understood as the market price.

<sup>5</sup> Gross rent is a measure of rent that includes monthly utilities, thus standardizing values across units that do and do not include heat or other utilities. Gross rents are what tenants actually pay, including households who may be paying less than market, whether because they have been in their units for a length of time or for other reasons.



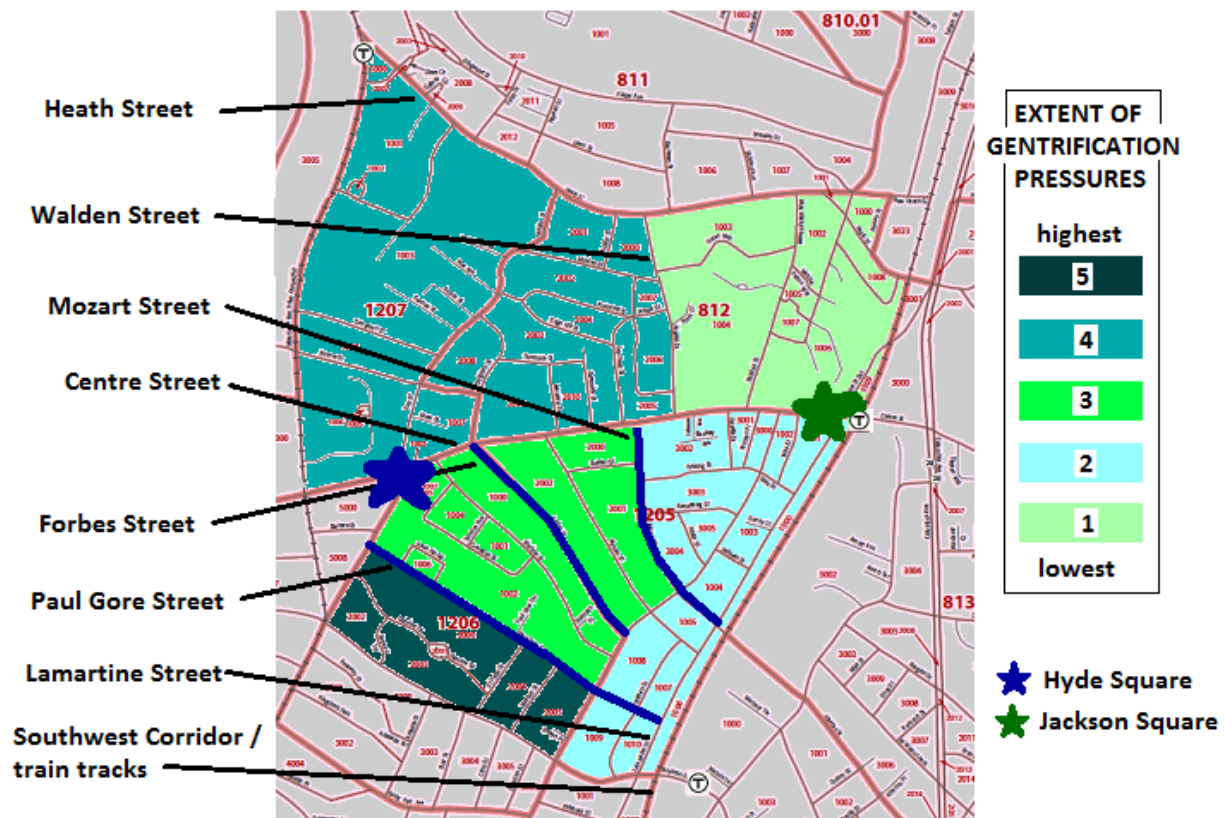
built condo structures. Separate analysis of condominium trends in a sample of streets in and around the H-J area found that 6 percent of total units had been converted to condos between 2000 and 2005 (Nafici, 2006). From 1998 to 2011, the volume of condo sales in the study area grew more than fourfold, while H-J condo sales as a proportion of JP condo sales grew unevenly but distinctly.

Condo prices in H-J caught up with those in JP: from 1998 to 2003, the median H-J condo price was less than JP's; from 2004 to 2011, it was equal to or higher than the JP median. The single-family picture is a bit more mixed, with H-J prices unsteadily gaining on JP prices through 2006, dropping to roughly half the JP price in 2008–2009 following the housing-led financial crisis, and rising to surpass the JP price in 2011. Overall, condo prices in H-J rose 97 percent in comparison to a 74 percent uptick in JP, and single-family prices increased by 138 percent in H-J and 58 percent in Jamaica Plain. This evidence is suggestive of a revalorization of housing in Hyde-Jackson Squares, with rising price pressures for both renting and owning and a squeeze on the quantity of rental housing.

#### *Disaggregating Gentrification Pressures in Hyde-Jackson Squares*

As gentrifying changes pressed into the study area, they varied in their intensity and characteristics across five subareas, as depicted visually in Figure 3. The disaggregated analysis revealed that stronger gentrification pressures are consistently associated with a lower presence of Latino and Black residents in an area.

**Figure 3. A Differentiated Space**



Gentrification pressures are strongest at the southwestern edge of the study area (area 5 on the map in Figure 3), and advance consistently but unevenly in a north and east direction. Block group 1206-2 evidences higher and rising income, the highest concentration of professionals (though declining as a percentage share), a higher presence of college graduates, a higher and growing share of owner-occupied units, the highest rents, a higher condo rate, and the second-densest

cluster of higher prices. This block group had a small and declining presence of Latinos.

Pressures appear to be moving most strongly into the two northern block groups (area 4 on the map in Figure 3), despite a concentration of affordable housing along the eastern edge. In 1207-1, at the northwest, managers and professionals grew to be a majority (but alongside increases in service workers) and the proportion of college graduates was high and rising. It had the highest presence of college students, high condo-conversion levels (yielding the highest share of owner-occupied units), some upward pressure on rents, and higher sales volumes. Income, however, moved from low to middling, and sales prices were lower on most study blocks. In block group 812-2, the middle section north of Centre Street, nonmarket housing exists alongside growing market pressures. Here, the share of managers and professionals increased to become a majority, the proportion of college graduates grew the fastest to become a majority, the share of college students grew to be the highest, and incomes rose from among the lowest to among the highest. There were higher levels of development for owner occupancy. Rents are still low, perhaps the consequence of a combination of subsidies (33–43 percent of rentals in 2007–2011) and transitional friction (a higher uptick in rental vacancies, perhaps reflecting anticipation of opportunities to redevelop for the incoming population). Racial-ethnic migrations are particularly visible, with the second-highest and highest decline in the number of Latinos in the two block groups, and the largest increase in the percentage of Whites in 812-2.

The middle areas south of Centre Street, labeled area 3 on the map in Figure 3, show distinct signs of change, but the picture is more mixed. Block group 1206-1, next to the area with the strongest pressures, had higher incomes and a higher share of college grads, with a growing percentage of managers and professionals. But property variables present a mixed picture, with middling to higher condo

rates, the densest cluster of higher prices, and low transaction volume. To its east, block group 1205-2 is a place with competing pressures. On one hand, it had declines in income, among the lower increases in the percentage share of professionals and managers, and a low to middling (though growing) presence of college graduates. On the other hand, it experienced the highest relative amount of development, with the biggest growth in owner-occupied units, a higher loss of renter-occupied units, higher rents, and middling to high condo rates. College students' percentage share was middling but rising, as were median gross rents. 1206-1 had the second-lowest presence of Latinos at the beginning and end of the decade, while 1205-2 had among the larger declines in the percentage of Latinos.

Pressures appear to be least strong in the southeastern block groups, labeled area 2 on the map in Figure 3, although there is some evidence of widening income inequality, growing numbers of college students who may be exerting some upward pressure on rents, and housing price and condoization pressures. In block group 1205-1, subsidized units are the highest as a percentage of units. Rents remained lower and an increasing share of service workers outpaced the share of professionals. There was new development of owner-occupied units, with a low associated decline in renter-occupied units (likely made possible by larger quantities of remaining buildable vacant land), and little upward pressure on median gross rents (likely a result of the strong presence of nonmarket housing). Here, nonmarket housing may serve to "hold" existing residents, while comparatively lower-cost market rentals serve as a resource for college students, among others. In block group 1205-3, gentrification pressures have not taken hold substantially. In this area, incomes were lower (with some uptick at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile), professionals were a minority, development and conversion pressures were low as was the loss of rentals, condo rates were low, and there was the densest cluster of lower sales prices. This area emerged with the highest

percentages of rental units outside Bromley-Heath. Latinos retained a strong presence, with 1205-1 showing the smallest decline and 1205-3 ending the decade as the only block group outside of 812-1 that remained majority Latino.

Still, signs of the changes to come are visible. In 1205-1, data at the street level indicate condo rates and sales prices moving into the higher ranks at the southern end (much of the subsidized housing is in the north), and the highest percentage gain of college students of all block groups may portend future upward pressure on rents. In 1205-3, higher upward pressure on rents, the largest percentage share increase of college students, and higher transaction volume (of mainly multifamily buildings) on some streets indicate changes on the horizon. Despite retaining a majority-Latino status, 1205-3 saw the second-largest decline in the number (not percentage) of Latinos and the second-largest increase in the percentage share of Whites of all block groups.

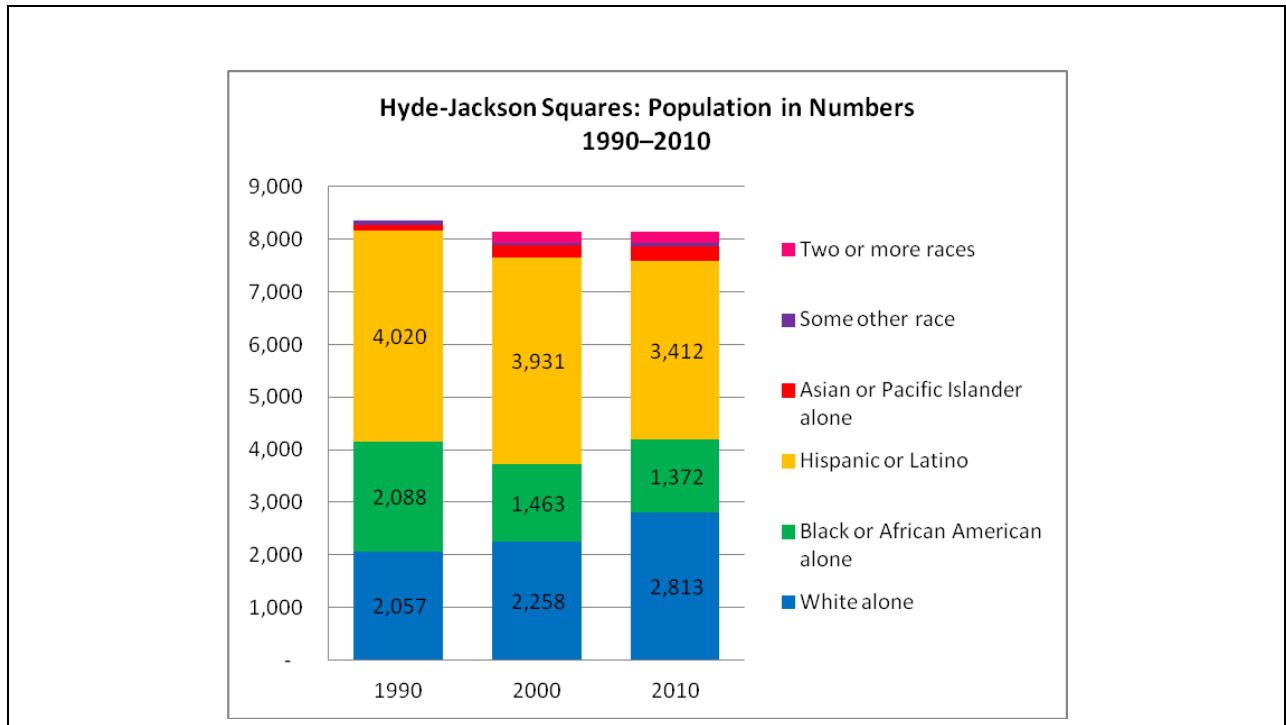
Finally, gentrification is inhibited in block group 812-1, labeled area 1 on the map in Figure 3, where 98 percent of units are within public housing. Here, over 150 units came out of vacancy, and 30 new units were added during the decade. The number of Black residents remained steady (although their percentage declined), while Latinos grew to become a majority of residents. This housing played a substantial role in moderating the displacement of Latinos from market housing in Hyde-Jackson, while also holding space for Blacks to reside in the area.

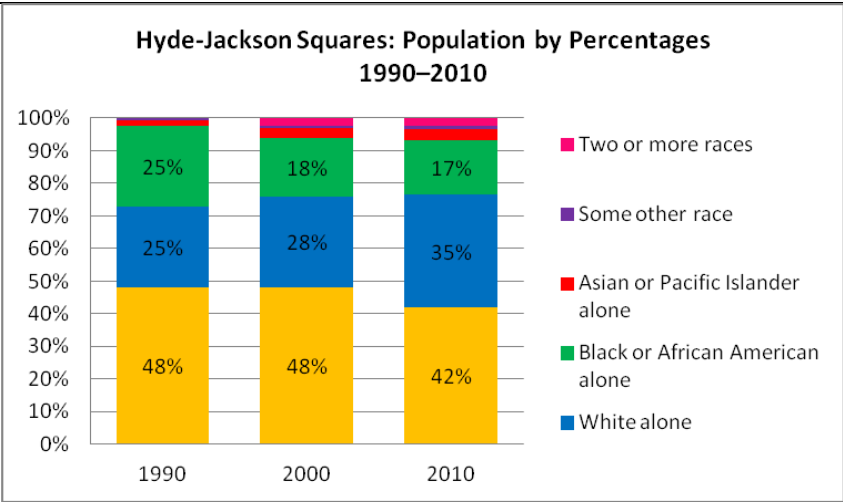
#### *Displacement and Compression of Latino and Black Residents*

For Black residents, displacement from and concentration within portions of the study area began in the 1990s. The biggest element of that change was a total population decline in block group 812-1, Bromley-Heath, all of which was explained by Black departures. Small Black population losses in most block groups against some gains within the block groups of tract 1205 round out a general picture of a comparatively small Black population increasingly concentrated in a

shrinking portion of the study area. Latinos declined somewhat in their total number during the 1990s, but the presence of Latinos as a percentage of the population was unchanged during that decade. During the 2000s, Latino departures grew, with the Latino population shrinking from 48 percent to 42 percent of the total study area. White residents increased numerically and as a percentage, with arrivals during the 2000s more than two and a half times greater than those during the 1990s. These changes are depicted in Figure 4: Racial/Ethnic Population Change in Hyde-Jackson Squares, 1990–2010.

**Figure 4: Racial/Ethnic Population Change in Hyde-Jackson Squares, 1990–2010**





Source: U.S. Census Bureau

To understand the displacement of Latinos in the 2000s, it is necessary to take a more fine-grained look at the study area, and in particular to disentangle public housing from the areas of mostly market housing. Bromley-Heath had been the source of most of the Black departures in the 1990s, during a time of rehabilitation and construction work. When those units came back online in the 2000s, most of the new occupants were Latinos. That increase in the Latino population served to moderate an exodus of Latinos from the rest of the study area and to understate the displacement occurring within market housing. A depiction of these changes is presented in Figure 5. Racial-Ethnic Migration Patterns in Hyde-Jackson Squares: Arrivals and Departures, 2000–2010, and summarized narratively here.

Over the 2000s, the total population of Hyde-Jackson Squares was steady, with 8,149 residents in 2000 and 8,147 residents in 2010. The net loss of Latinos from the study area in the 2000s was 519 people, for a 13 percent decline in the percentage share of Latinos in Hyde-Jackson. During this time, however, 987 Latinos moved out of the seven non-Bromley Heath block groups, representing a 25 percent decline in the population share of Latinos (and a 31 percent decline in

their number) within those subareas. One possible scenario (the one indicated in Figure 5) is that these departures fell into one of two flows—a minimum of 519 Latinos moved elsewhere (outside the area), while the remaining 468 Latinos moved into the rehabilitated and new units within Bromley Heath.<sup>6</sup> Only if this scenario holds is it accurate to state that only 13 percent of H-J Latinos were displaced from the area during the 2000s. While the Census data cannot tell us how many of the Latinos dislocated from H-J were resettled at Bromley Heath, it is unlikely to be the dominant migration pattern given the very high levels of competition for public housing units throughout the region, with estimated wait times of 10 weeks to 5 years before an application to the Boston Housing Authority will be processed ([www.bostonhousing.org](http://www.bostonhousing.org)). An alternate scenario is that all of the 987 Latinos leaving the seven non-Bromley Heath block groups moved outside the area, while all 468 newly arrived Latinos at Bromley Heath came from elsewhere. If this version of events is true, then in the year 2000 Latinos who left grow to 25 percent of the population and include 90 percent more people than was visible when looking at the study area as a whole. Since the concern is with the extent of disruption to place-based human communities, not simply the count of people in an area who identify with a given racial and ethnic category, these differences matter.

Out-migrating Latinos were joined by 94 departing Blacks, 91 of whom left the area, while 3 conceivably were newly arrived at Bromley Heath. In the place of these 1,081 Latino and Black residents, 558 Whites moved in, just 3 of whom could have originated from within the study area, with the other 555 coming from elsewhere, along with 46 Asians and people from mixed and other racial

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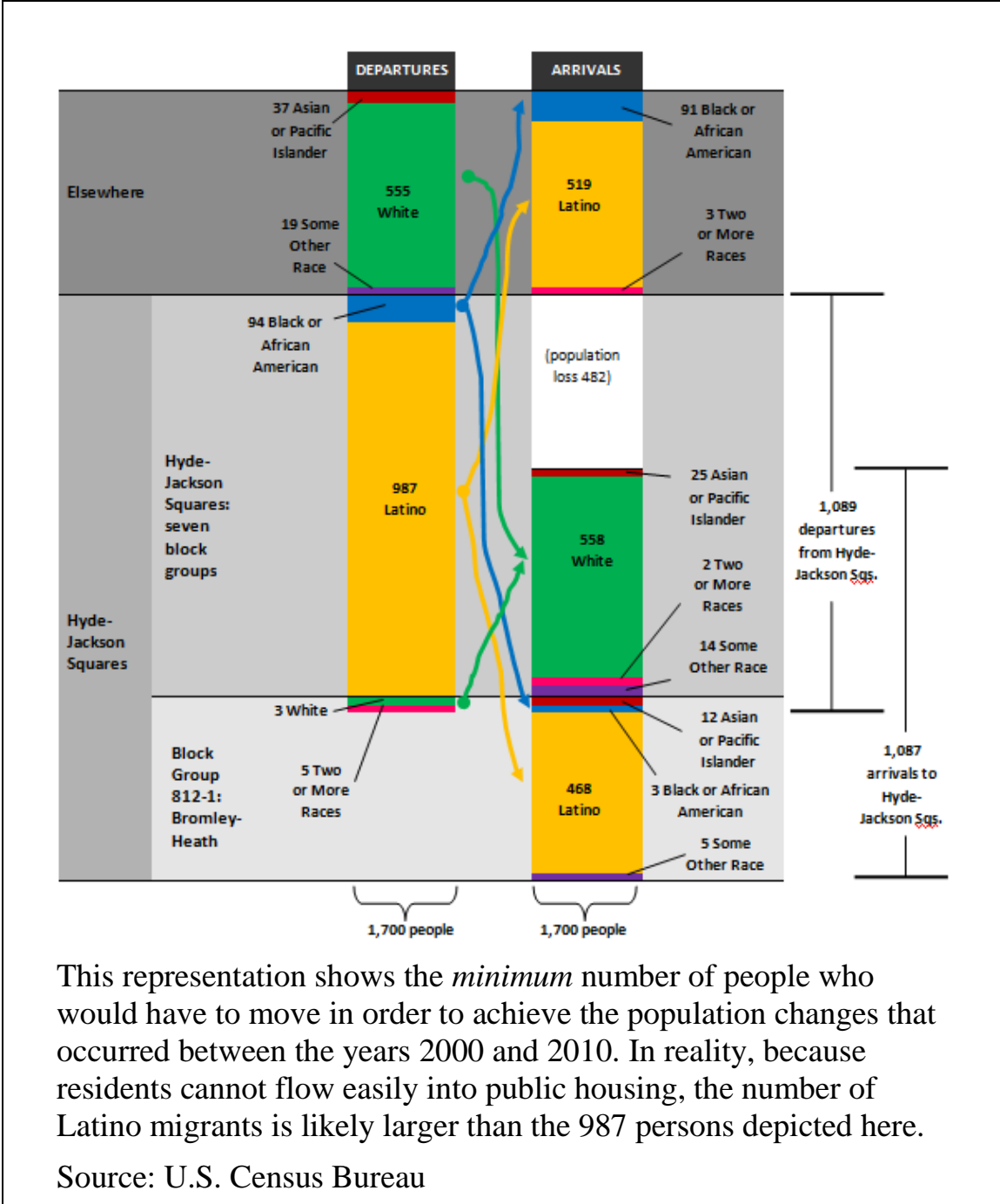
<sup>6</sup> While some of these arrivals to block group 812-1 could have come from the other block groups, as depicted in the image, in reality we would assume that more people are involved in these migrations, with arrivals to Bromley Heath coming from outside the area and more Latinos displaced from the seven block groups moving elsewhere. The



backgrounds. The result was a 35 percent increase in the population share of Whites (and a 25 percent increase in their number), alongside a net population loss of 482 people (nearly equivalent to the 488 new residents who moved into the restored and new units at Bromley Heath). Stated another way, of people leaving this seven-block group (non-Bromley Heath) area, 91.3 percent were Latino and all of the remainder were Black. Of people arriving, 93 percent were White. Thus, during the decade from 2000 to 2010, smaller households of White residents replaced larger households of predominantly Latino and, to a smaller extent, Black residents.

Intra-neighborhood differences were not limited to those between Bromley Heath and the rest. Departing Latinos came from all the non-Bromley Heath block groups but were not evenly distributed. In the year 2000, four block groups were majority Latino, ranging from 50 percent to 74 percent: 812-2, 1205-1, 1205-2, and 1205-3. These areas are farther away from the direction of arrival of professionals and college graduates. By the end of the decade, only 1205-3 remained majority Latino. The majority of Black residents lived at Bromley-Heath in both 2000 and 2010.

**Figure 5. Racial-Ethnic Migration Patterns in Hyde-Jackson Squares:**  
Arrivals and Departures, 2000 – 2010



The broad trend is one of displacement: Latinos and a smaller number of Blacks left and their departures made way for incoming White residents who live in smaller households (yielding fewer total residents). This analysis makes visible that the growth of higher-income residents in professional occupations and

reduction in the proportion of rental housing in Hyde-Jackson has entailed a substantial transfer of occupancy of the housing stock from Latinos to Whites. Also revealed is a compression of Blacks and Latinos into fewer spaces in the neighborhood, with Bromley-Heath serving as a key housing resource for those populations. These patterns emerge out of a longer historical process of development and settlement.

### *Disaggregating Disinvestment in Jamaica Plain*

To understand the contemporary gentrification pressures in Hyde-Jackson Squares, it is necessary to take a longer view of the area's development. Here, I sketch in broad terms the historical contours of property and people in the study area and surrounding JP neighborhood. Analysis of the historical record reveals that today's displacement and gentrification are part of processes of investment, disinvestment, and uneven development in the neighborhood, with settlement patterns that reflect and reproduce differences of class, ethnicity, and race. These patterns, first laid out in the second half of the nineteenth century, were reinforced through policy and practice, and proved durable across substantial racial change at the mid-twentieth century.

### **Uneven Development at the Neighborhood Level**

Before and while Hyde-Jackson Squares area was becoming a place of concentrated settlement of Latinos and, to a smaller extent, Blacks, it was also emerging as a concentrated location of disinvestment in the neighborhood. The multiple determinants of this disinvestment include: uneven socio-spatial patterns carved when the neighborhood initially took shape in the industrial era; differential access to mortgage capital across neighborhood subareas (redlining); local-level consequences of deindustrialization; demolition and decay in the wake of a failed highway project to connect the "New Boston" with the growing suburbs; and a combination of race-based assignment practices and public abandonment of public

housing. The effect has been a process of deepening and racializing the uneven spatial order of the neighborhood.

A hierarchy organized around nativity/ethnicity, occupation, and income was built into the spatial order of Jamaica Plain when it developed over the second half of the nineteenth century as an industrial suburb. Industrial districts were constructed throughout the neighborhood, forming “a chain of factories that extended virtually the length of Jamaica Plain” (von Hoffman, 1994, 58), intermingled with an unplanned mix of residential districts. Housing for semiskilled and unskilled workers, predominantly European immigrants drawn by the rapidly growing numbers of manufacturing operations and construction projects, was clustered closely to the industrial areas and “vigorously expanded up and down the length of the neighborhood” (von Hoffman, 1994, 55). Much of it was “triple-decker” housing, with one modest unit on each of three stories. Tucked here and there in leafy hills throughout the neighborhood were districts with more spacious housing on larger lots. Residents in those areas were typically white-collar workers, the majority of whom were native born, while some were from ascending immigrant groups (von Hoffman, 1994, 41).

By the 1930s, and likely earlier, bank lending practices appear to have played a role in the social and physical shape of the neighborhood. A thorough and close treatment of access to mortgage capital over time and its relationship to the racial composition of residents is outside the scope of this study; however, some preliminary observations can be made from the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) 1938 residential security map for Boston alongside other data on property conditions and settlement patterns.<sup>7</sup> On this map, areas where industry was

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<sup>7</sup> HOLC was created as part of the federal government’s effort to create and support a stable mortgage market in response to widespread Depression-era foreclosures. The agency produced a series of “residential security” maps reflecting risk assessment of areas within real estate

clustered and where residential concentrations of unskilled immigrant laborers had been prevalent are marked out for restricted or no access to mortgage credit. These were also the areas where Latino and Black residents would settle most densely in the late 1950s through the 1980s. Thus, while there appears to be a close relationship between race and credit availability, redlined areas were marked for decline prior to significant Latino or Black in-migration.<sup>8</sup>

Within Jamaica Plain, there were no “desirable” (green) areas on the HOLC map. Areas marked “stable” (blue) hug Jamaica Pond and extend south along the Arnold Arboretum, including districts of grand housing initially built for the pastoral leisure of a wealthy class and stately streets developed for the earliest suburban-dwelling businessmen who could afford daily stagecoach travel (von Hoffman, 1994, p. 12). Much of Jamaica Plain was designated “declining” (yellow). Redlined “hazardous” areas are those that had a concentration of industrial activity, abutted the train tracks, or abutted tracts that had some Black settlement (as of two years after the map’s printing, comprising 4 percent to 9 percent of the population (United Community Services of Metropolitan Boston, 1952)) in Mission Hill at the north and Roxbury at the east. Three of the four Jamaica Plain tracts overlapping with the redlined zone were home to the majority

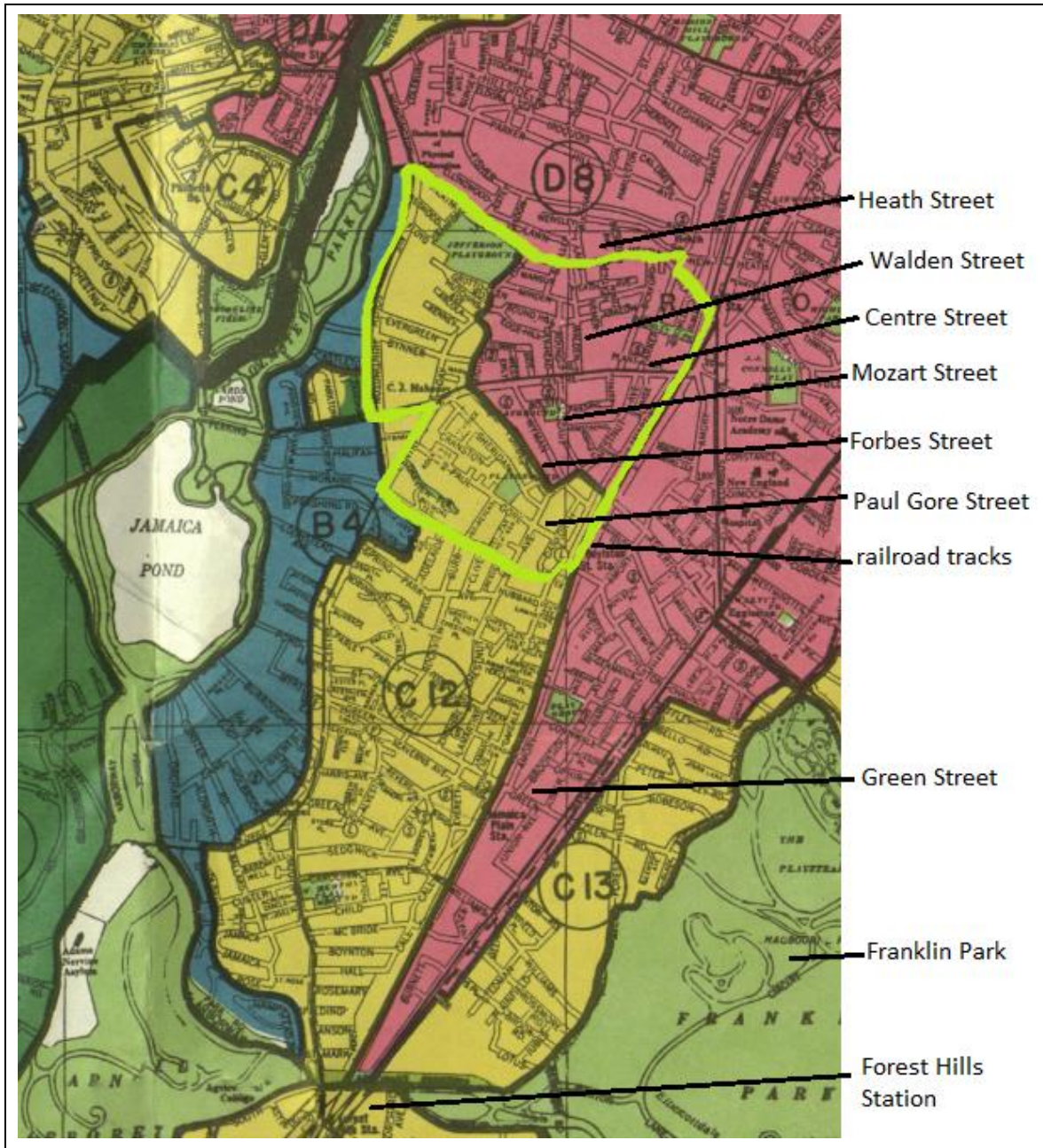
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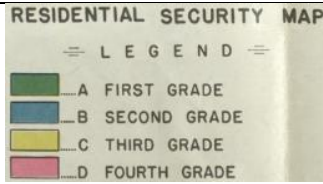
markets. Areas considered hazardous for lending were marked in red, declining areas were coded yellow, stable areas were colored blue, and the areas thought to be most promising were marked in green. The green areas were in newly built suburbs, while the red areas were in central cities, “particularly those home to African Americans, certain ethnic groups including new immigrants, and with older, cheaper housing” (Hillier, 2003, p. 414). HOLC maps were used by the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) in making decisions about which mortgage loans it would back with its insurance. The FHA’s *Underwriting Manual* “openly stated that ‘if a neighborhood is to retain stability, it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes’” (Oliver and Shapiro, 2006, p. 18).

<sup>8</sup> There is debate about whether the maps are better understood as reflections of then-existing practices of appraisers and lenders in allocating credit, or whether they initiated redlining practices (Hillier, 2003). But there is no doubt that these national lending standards functioned to deny credit to Black borrowers in particular and to restrict it in entire areas that had some Black residents (Oliver and Shapiro, 2006).

of the neighborhood's residents of color, where they comprised less than half a percentage point of all residents. Figure 6. Redlining in Jamaica Plain, 1938, provides detail from the HOLC map.

**Figure 6. Redlining in Jamaica Plain, 1938**





Note: The study area is marked in bright green.

Source: Detail from the Home Owners' Loan Corporation  
Residential Security Map of the Boston Area (1938)

In the study area, the pattern of credit allocation described in the HOLC map bears a strong resemblance to the pattern of gentrification pressures in the present. The areas that were marked yellow and were proximate to areas marked blue in 1938 are those that have the highest (area 5, from Paul Gore Street toward the south) and second-highest (area 4, the western half of the portion north of Centre Street) evidence of gentrification today. The area in which contemporary gentrification pressures are moderate (area 3, between Paul Gore and Mozart Streets) straddled the 1938 line between yellow and red. The redlined areas that bordered other redlined areas either show weaker gentrification pressures (the majority of area 2, in the triangle formed by Centre Street, Mozart Street, and the railroad tracks) or were identified as blighted and razed in the 1950s for construction of public housing (area 1, east of Walden Street and north of Centre Street). The exception to this overlay is the area west of Walden Street and north of Centre, which was redlined in 1938 and yet faces strong gentrification in the present. Further investigation at the street level is necessary to explain this circumstance, but it may have to do with the area's physical difference from the surrounding housing, with a concentration of single-family housing on hilly, winding roads (clustered among other housing serving industrial workers as part of a philanthropist-financed nineteenth-century project to provide simple quality housing for "the working man") (Heath, 2005).

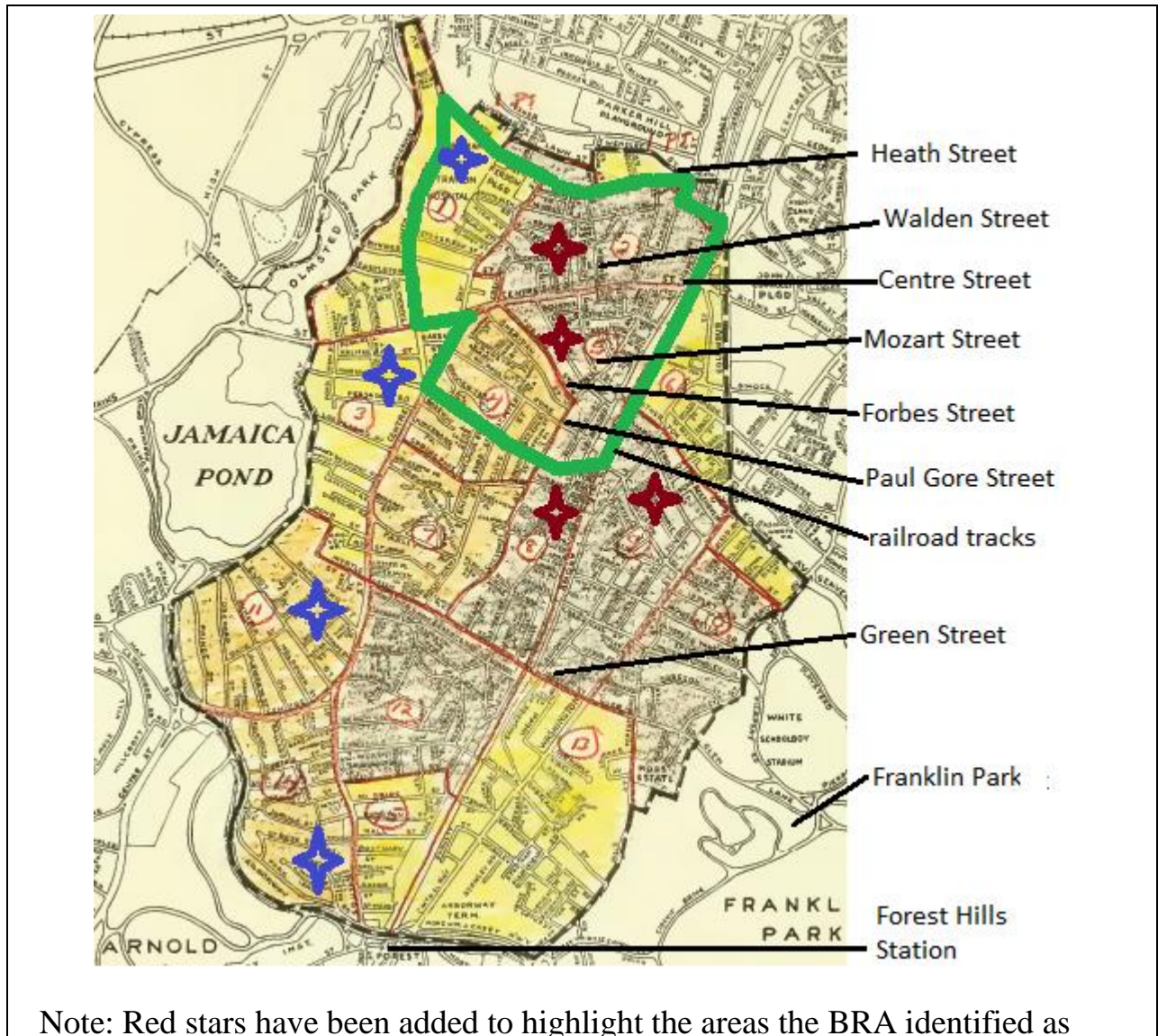


The mid-century process of deindustrialization only widened the differences between districts at the neighborhood level, and within the study area it pushed blighting forces farther south. Deindustrial pressures, beginning throughout New England in the 1920s when industrialists seeking escape from unionized workforces relocated their factories to the south, accelerated in the postwar years (Bluestone and Stevenson, 2000, 58). In Boston between 1947 and 1975, “manufacturing jobs decreased from about 112,000 to about 50,000; concomitantly, wholesale and retail trade jobs fell from about 150,000 to 91,000” (M. Gastón and Kennedy, 1987, 183).

In JP, over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s, a “definite pattern of blight” (Boston Redevelopment Authority, n.d.-a, III/1) began to be visible, following the same general pattern. A Boston Redevelopment Authority survey of property values and conditions in 1953–1955 found a concentration of higher value west of Centre Street along Jamaica Pond, but said that in the rest of the neighborhood “deterioration is scattered and there appears to be no pattern” (Boston Redevelopment Authority, n.d.-a, III/1). By 1965, the emerging pattern of distress followed familiar lines: properties in deteriorating and dilapidated condition were disproportionately found within the redlined parts of the study area and on either side of the redlined strip that ran north-south along the railroad tracks. These areas, once bustling sites of industrial activity with jobs for surrounding residents, were increasingly home to the blighting influence of abandoned factory buildings. In tract 812 north of Centre Street, even with hundreds of units at the then-new Bromley Park public housing, deteriorated and dilapidated housing constituted just fewer than 10 percent of the total units. See Figure 7. “A Definite Pattern of Blight,” 1962–1965 for a map of these neighborhood conditions. These circumstances would be reinforced over the subsequent decade, with redlining a growing problem into the 1970s. In 1975, a

city government report found that “the whole band of central Jamaica Plain has been recently hard hit by bank lending practices which have placed a fairly tight lid on mortgages and housing rehabilitation money” (City of Boston, 1975, II:9). In many areas of the neighborhood it was “extremely difficult, if not impossible, for some owners or potential buyers to obtain a mortgage or home improvement loan” (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1975, 14).

**Figure 7. “A Definite Pattern of Blight,” 1962–1965**  
 Jamaica Plain Housing Market Survey



suffering from a pattern of blight. The northern two are within the study area. Blue stars have been added to mark the areas the BRA identified as concentrations of value. The green border has been added to mark the study area.

Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority (n.d.-a)

These uneven conditions were deepened by public policy action—highway-related demolition—that was part of the overall effort to remake Boston for the “New Economy” and support the process of suburbanization. “The late 1960s saw the destruction of older factory and warehouse areas near the central city, and the demolition of entire working-class neighborhoods to make way for luxury high-rise housing, government and commercial office towers, the expansion of elite medical and educational institutions, and the development of fancy shopping and entertainment districts” (McAfee, 1986, 409). Urban Renewal projects in Jamaica Plain were limited. Unlike the West End, the South End, and other areas, JP was not a neighborhood targeted for massive demolition and redevelopment. Significant to JP’s development was the plan to build an interstate highway along the same path the railroad tracks followed in the Stony Brook Valley, effectively cutting the neighborhood in half. Plans for the highway were first put forth in the 1948 “Master Highway Plan” from the Massachusetts Department of Public Works, but construction did not get underway until the 1960s. It included an “Inner Belt” eight-lane highway that “would circle the city’s core through Roxbury, the Fenway, Brookline, Cambridge, Somerville, and Charlestown, and would feed into a number of radial roads” (Lupo, 1971, 14).

Demolition for I-95 reached Jamaica Plain in 1969 (Hirsch, 1998, 100) and cut through the portion of the neighborhood where property conditions already showed the most severe effects of disinvestment. Houses between Lamartine Street and the train tracks along the entire eastern edge of the study area were razed,

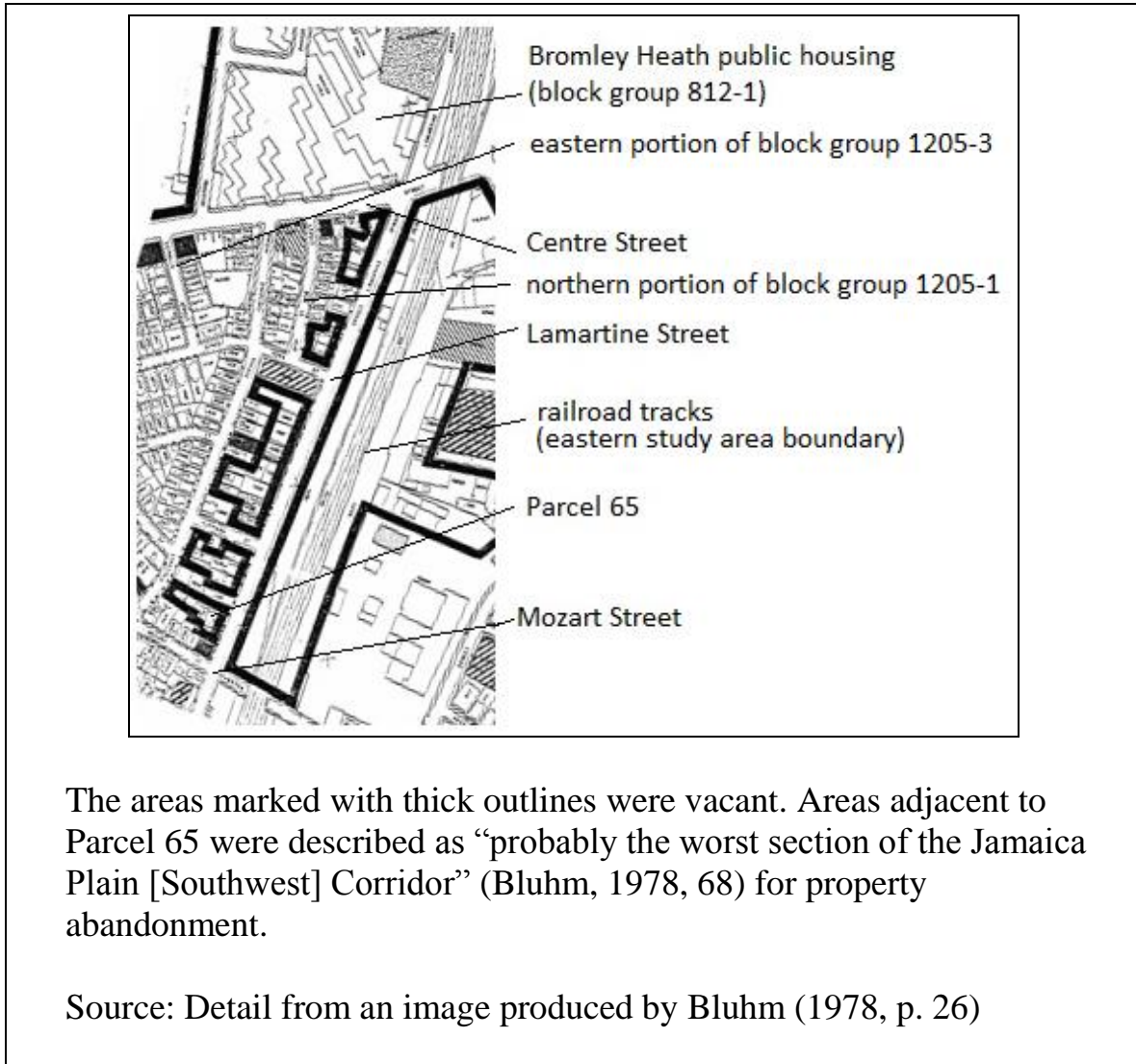
extending from Heath Street to just beyond Boylston Street (the southern border of the study area), “shred[ding] the edge of a dense residential area on the west side of the embankment from Jackson Square southward” (Bluhm, 1978, 55).

Demolition would have gone further, but popular mobilization and resistance—cross-neighborhood, multi-racial action by working-class communities from the South End, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain, in collaboration with young planning professionals—was successful and in January 1970 the governor halted the project (Hirsch, 1998, 100). The cleared stretch of land was ultimately redeveloped as a subway line and linear multi-use parkland through a highly participatory community-planning effort (Gastón, 1981), but that was not completed until the late 1980s.

Highway demolition had an impact on the area even before it happened. The decade-plus of “uncertainty of plans for development of the Southwest Corridor” as a highway “led to hesitations by some in making home improvements” (City of Boston, 1975). In the wake of the demolition, which occurred in late 1969 to early 1970, the differences between thriving and struggling areas deepened yet further, with particular consequences in the impacted portion of the study area. Census data in the immediate aftermath showed rental vacancies along the demolished strip (block group 1203-1) that were three times higher than the neighboring block groups (1205-2 and -3) (Bluhm, 1978, 66). Nearly a decade later, when much of the rubble-strewn “flat dirt wasteland” (Lupo, Colcord, and Fowler, 1971, 9) was still in disuse, vacancies remained high. Abandonment and arson—whether from vandals or from property owners “selling to the insurance company” in an effort to extract value from properties devalued by neighborhood conditions (Bolger, 1988)—were other contributors to instability and decay. “Among the most predominant of land 'uses' is the Corridor's cleared land. . . . Most. . . lies unused and often in a state of disrepair, either overgrown with weeds or covered with

abandoned automobile parts and trash” (Bluhm, 1978, 28). See Figure 8. Vacant Parcels A Decade After Highway Demolition, 1978 for a visual.

**Figure 8. Vacant Parcels A Decade After Highway Demolition, 1978**



A further contribution to negative property conditions came from the failure to maintain the Bromley Heath public housing. Coinciding with the establishment of Bromley Heath as one of the developments where the Boston Housing Authority assigned Black residents—see below for more discussion of the population change—and a nationwide abandonment of the commitment to adequate funding for public housing (Roessner, 2002, 85), the eighteen seven- or eight-story brick

buildings had been allowed to fall into severe disrepair. The consequences extended into the surrounding area. In 1975, the City of Boston estimated that only 40 percent of housing units in tract 812, about half of which is occupied by Bromley Heath, were in good condition (City of Boston, 1975, II:9). As of 1977, 25 percent of units within Bromley-Heath were vacant, many with boarded-up windows (Bluhm, 1978, 47). By 1980, the development was described as “plagued by vacancies, vandalism, crime, and a bad reputation which depresses surrounding property values” (Draisen et al., 1980, IV:5).

The consequence of these multiple contributions to shaping the space of the neighborhood was a very uneven physical environment, with negative impacts that were concentrated in the Hyde-Jackson Squares area. By 1980, “no other district in Jamaica Plain exhibited as large a share of boarded-up units” (Hafrey, 1986, 25), with 46 percent of the 1,523 vacant units and 84 percent of the 366 boarded-up units in JP located in the Hyde-Jackson area. These physical characteristics shaped and were shaped by the social changes that occurred at mid-century.

### **Historicizing Contemporary Settlement Patterns**

The population of Jamaica Plain, and that of Boston as a whole, grew steadily through the 1940s. At mid-century, JP’s predominantly White population began to leave in a flow shaped by new housing and employment opportunities open to them in the suburbs, declining employment options and shrinking bank credit in the city, and racism. Black and Latino in-migration to JP occurred mainly from the 1950s through the 1980s. In more recent decades, this in-flow was halted and then reversed as predominantly White higher-income, college-educated professionals pressed into the neighborhood. These movements out of and into Jamaica Plain represented both a substantial racial reorganization of the space and the endurance of the social structures that had been laid earlier. Pertinent to the study area, these decades of flux and upheaval had three predominant outcomes: a

gentrifying neighborhood, a Latin Quarter, and a large public housing development with a majority-Black population.

In the 1950s, with the departure of industry and the national shift toward suburban development, Boston began to depopulate. The city as a whole lost 13 percent of its population in the 1950s, 8 percent in the 1960s (Bluestone and Stevenson, 2000, 16), and another 12 percent in the 1970s (United Community Services, 1971). In the Jamaica Plain planning district,<sup>9</sup> as in the city as a whole, these were racial migrations. JP's population in 1950 stood at over 55,000 people, of whom about 99 percent were White. During the 1950s, 7.7 percent of the population left, followed by another 10.8 percent in the 1960s and 17.9 percent in the 1970s (Boston Redevelopment Authority, n.d.-b, 4; Hafrey, 1986). Thus, "even before the school desegregation crisis of the 1970s," during which net departures from Jamaica Plain rivaled those during the 1950s and 1960s combined, despite a strong inflow of Latinos, "the process of urban depopulation had been under way for a generation" (Bluestone and Stevenson, 2000, 16). As these prior White residents left the neighborhood, in-migrating populations predominantly fell into three groups: Latinos, Blacks, and young professionals. As we saw in the examination of Hyde-Jackson over the past 20-plus years, the majority of the young professionals have been White.

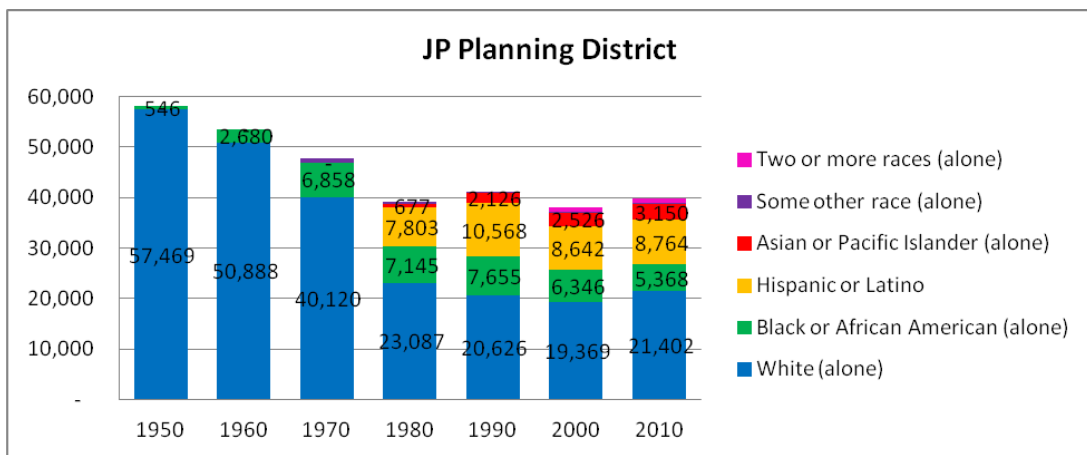
In-migration of Black and Latino residents grew steadily, but in numbers smaller than those of departing Whites, resulting in overall population loss. The White exodus peaked in the 1970s, while Latino and Black arrivals peaked in the 1980s, resulting in slight total population growth during the 1980s. By the 1990s,

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<sup>9</sup> The planning district, a geography created by the Boston Redevelopment Authority as part of its Urban Renewal planning, differs from the neighborhood by *excluding* Egleston Square (the area in the neighborhood's northeast between the train tracks and Franklin Park) and the Woodbourne area (southeast of Forest Hills station) and *including* about half of Misison Hill to the north of Heath Street.

perhaps related to new price pressures unleashed by rent decontrol in 1994, the population again shrank, with declines in all three of the largest racial/ethnic groups. When population growth returned in the 2000s, it was because White in-migration outpaced the ongoing departures of Latinos and Blacks.<sup>10</sup> See Figure 9: Race and Ethnicity in Jamaica Plain 1950–2010 for visuals of these changes.

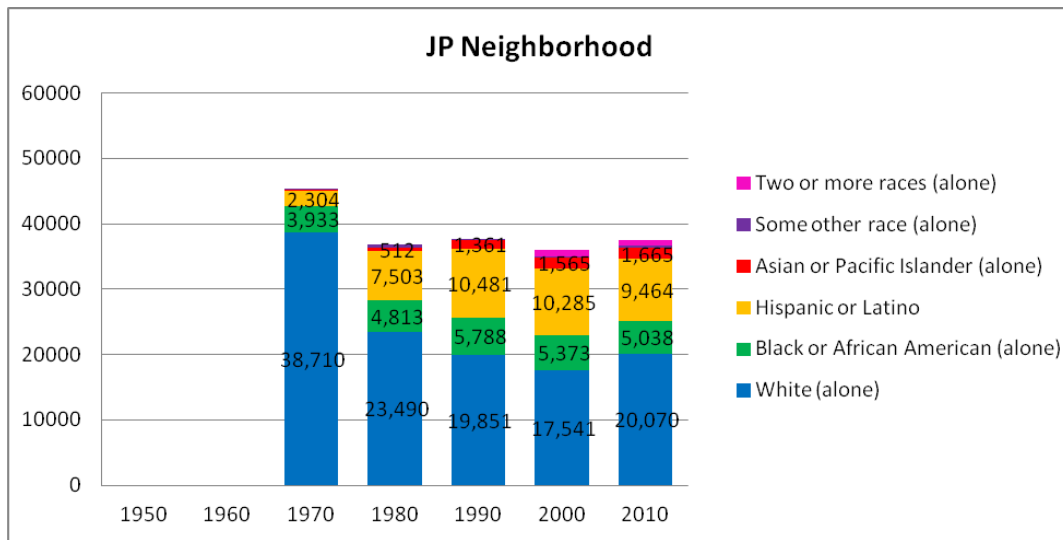
**Figure 9: Race and Ethnicity in Jamaica Plain 1950–2010**



Note: The planning district data for 1950–1960 included only White and “Non-White” as categories, while Census data from those years was collected with separate counts of people who were “White,” “Negro,” and “Other Nonwhite.” Recognizing that 92% of residents of color in Census tracts overlapping with the JP planning district in 1950 and 1960 were Black, the non-white count in the planning data is presented here as a count of Black residents. The advantage of this approach is comparability of racial categories with those used in later years, while the limitation is that up to 40 (7% of) people of color in 1950 and 129 (5% of) people of color in 1960 may be misclassified as Black. Planning district data for 1950–1970 did not include counts of Hispanic or Latino persons.

<sup>10</sup> The neighborhood data depicts a decline in the number of Latinos during the first decade of the 2000s. Planning district data shows an increase in Latinos, likely due to inclusion of a large swath of Mission Hill.





Note: Neighborhood data for 1950–1960 is not available.

Data from both the planning district and the neighborhood definitions are provided because planning district data is available across a longer period of time, while neighborhood data gives a more accurate picture of who lived within boundaries consistent with residents’ ordinary understanding of the neighborhood. The two counts track each other closely in terms of the growth and decline of each racial group, although if planning district data is used to understand the neighborhood it would slightly overstate the presence of Black residents in 1970–1990.

Sources, planning district: Boston Redevelopment Authority (n.d.-b); Goetze and Johnson (1992); Melnik and Borella (2011); Selvarajah, Goetze, and Vrabel (2003)

Sources, neighborhood: Boston Redevelopment Authority Research Division Analysis (2014, 2015a, 2015b)

Significant Black settlement in JP began in the 1950s, concentrated along the areas where Roxbury and Jamaica Plain meet, into Mission Hill at the north and Egleston Square at the south. Two key forces were urban renewal–related displacement and race-based public housing assignment practices. Northern Jamaica Plain is situated along one of the corridors for Black and Puerto Rican migration out of the South End (Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1964, 14), a pattern that began in the late 1950s after urban renewal projects razed large areas of housing and subsequent rising housing costs left many additional households priced out (King, 1981, 26). This “trek from booming real-estate markets to less

vibrant markets” in “Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and outside communities like Brockton” (Euchner, 2002) continued for decades.

Beginning in the late 1950s and consolidating through the 1960s, the Bromley Heath public housing development became a site of Black settlement. In these years, the Boston Housing Authority assigned Black families only to certain housing projects, or to certain areas within projects, where vacancies and turnover were higher and buildings often less well-maintained (Roessner, 2002, 87-88). Black residents comprised 58 percent of the Bromley Heath population in 1970 (Boston Redevelopment Authority, n.d.-b, 4) and over 80 percent by 1977 (Bluhm, 1978, 47). Black residents grew from less than 1 percent of the population of the JP-Parker Hill Planning District in 1950 to 11 percent in 1970, comprising a majority of the residents of color at both time points (Boston Redevelopment Authority, n.d.-a, III:2-III:3; n.d.-b, 4), and grew from 9 percent of the JP neighborhood population in 1970 to 15 percent in 1990 (Boston Redevelopment Authority Research Division Analysis, 2015b).

Significant Latino settlement in Jamaica Plain began in the 1960s. The early arrivals were predominantly Cuban, “of middle-class origins and with professional and business backgrounds” who led “in the revitalization of the business district” (Bluhm, 1978, 23), anchoring what would become “the largest Hispanic population center in Boston” (Bluhm, 1978, 12) over the next decade. Latinos led the commercial revitalization of Hyde Square, bringing it from vacancy rates of almost 25 percent to “near complete occupancy (including many stores with specialty goods for the Spanish speaking population”) (City of Boston, 1975, II:9). In the late 1970s, Cubans were still about 40 percent of the Latino population in JP. Puerto Ricans constituted most of the remaining 60 percent. A small percentage was from the Dominican Republic or Central American countries. In 1970, Census Tract 1205 was the densest location of Latino settlement in Jamaica Plain, at 28

percent of total residents, with Latinos also residing in all the surrounding tracts as well as north into Mission Hill and south into the area between Washington Street and Franklin Park (Bluhm, 1978, 137-139). By 1977, residents in tract 1205 were estimated to be 65 percent Latino, (Bluhm, 1978, 22-23; Boston Redevelopment Authority, n.d.-a, III:2-III:3; n.d.-b, 4) and at Bromley Heath, just under 20 percent of residents were Puerto Rican (Bluhm, 1978, 47). Latino migration to the area continued over the 1980s, with many of the new arrivals in that period coming from the Dominican Republic and some from Central and South America.

Also coming into the neighborhood by the late 1960s were young professionals, drawn by Jamaica Plain's abundant greenspace, appealing architecture, and rail service to downtown. Many of the first arrivals became involved in neighborhood affairs through the mobilization against the interstate highway (Hirsch, 1998, 97-98). Their presence was highlighted in a 1975 city proposal for funding through the federal "Urban Homesteading" program, which sought to stabilize neighborhoods by placing residents in abandoned properties at low or no cost and connecting them with (otherwise unavailable) bank financing for repairs. The city clearly saw the presence of young professionals as a boost to the program, saying "replacement buyers are still plentiful in Jamaica Plain. The area is becoming increasingly popular to the so-called 'modernizers'" (City of Boston, 1975, II:11). Jamaica Plain participants in a 1977 study of "Young Professionals and City Neighborhoods" were a highly mobile group, "constantly . . . totaling up the pluses and minuses of their living situations," as part of "a lifetime of choosing where and how to live" (Parkman Center for Urban Affairs, 1977, 17). A couple was described who had first renovated a house in East Boston, spent several years fixing up another in the South End, and finally "discovered this little jewel, the oldest house on its street" that they were renovating in Jamaica Plain (Parkman Center for Urban Affairs, 1977, 4).

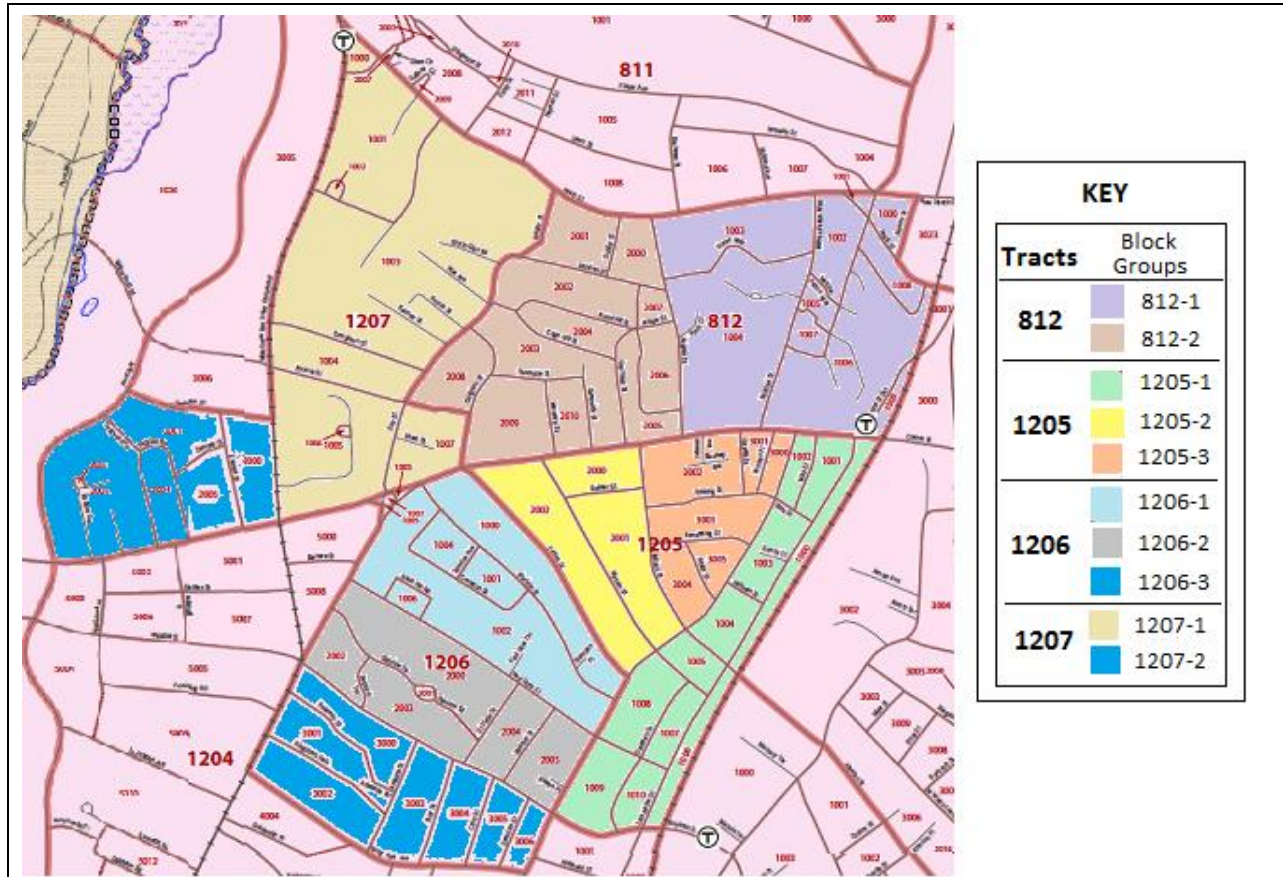
These incoming populations were unevenly distributed in the neighborhood. One research team was struck by the distinct “social distance” between thriving areas of professional settlement and struggling areas of working-class residence in 1974 as well as “the degree to which it had widened by 1979” (Draisen et al., 1980, II: 20). Even though there was not a “consistent or simple model of neighborhood transition from one combination of owners and renters to another” (Draisen et al., 1980, II: 24), the overall picture was of deepening segregation and more disparity in the quality of the physical environment. Incoming professionals were concentrated in certain areas like Sumner Hill (a leafy area with large lots and historic houses some distance south of the study area) (Draisen et al., 1980), where property values and conditions were never as depressed as in other areas. They were less thickly settled throughout the neighborhood, with some present in areas just south of the study area by the late 1970s (Bluhm, 1978, 64).

As Latinos and Blacks flowed into JP, their most dense locations of settlement were those with the most challenging physical conditions, including within the study area. For example, in 1980, residents of color comprised a total of 17 percent of all JP owner-occupants (Blacks were 6 percent, Latinos 7 percent, and “other” 4 percent). They were just 3 percent of owner-occupants in the Pondside and the surrounding area, and 7 percent of those in an area stretching from Sumner Hill north alongside the tracks. In contrast, in Hyde-Jackson Squares, 54 percent of owner-occupants were either Black (8 percent), Latino (27 percent), or of an “other” race (19 percent; many of them likely Latinos, the group that most frequently selects “some other race” on Census forms (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez, 2011)) (Hafrey, 1986, 24).

Even within Hyde-Jackson, Latinos and Blacks found residence in those portions of the area that were closest to industry and the train tracks, that were within the zone marked early for redlining, and that abutted the blighting stretch of

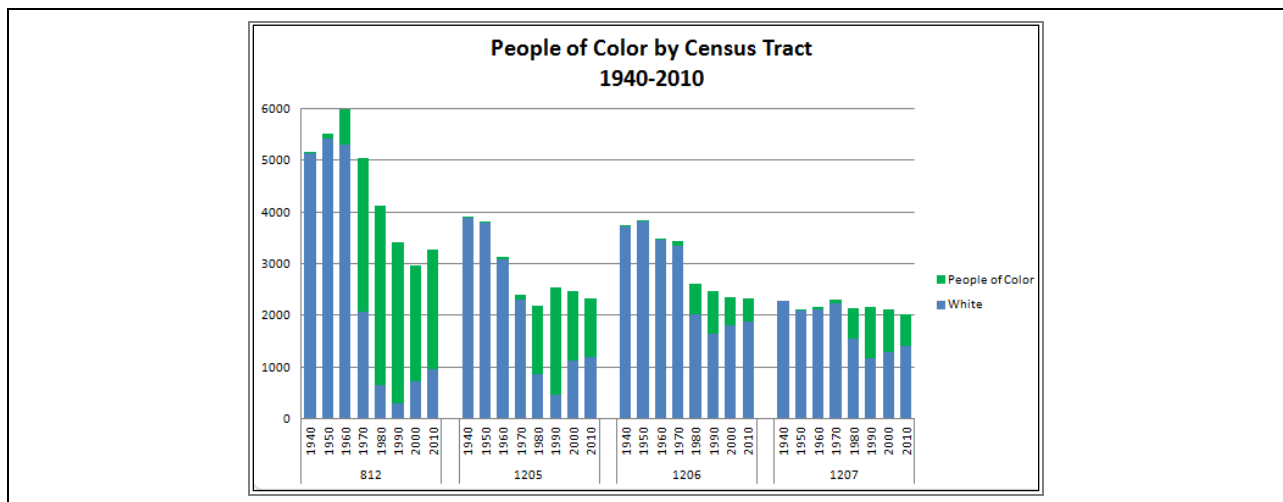
land where highway demolition had occurred. I looked at data that approximate what I want to know about settlement patterns and race from the mid-twentieth century forward: a geographic area I called “Hyde-Jackson Plus” that includes the study area plus two neighboring block groups, to avoid complex parsing of changing block group boundaries within the Census tracts (apart from the inclusion in some decades of a couple of blocks north of Heath Street in tract 812, the tract boundaries are quite consistent); racial designations that group all people of color together, to enable comparisons between Census years with just two racial categories and years with many categories, from 1940 to 2010; and Latino identity alone (regardless of race) from 1970–2010. See Figure 10 “Hyde-Jackson Plus” and Figure 11 Race and Ethnicity in “Hyde-Jackson Plus,” 1940–2010. From these loose data, alongside that presented above showing that most of the people of color in the neighborhood are Latino or Black (see Figure 4: Racial/Ethnic Population Change in Hyde-Jackson Squares, 1990–2010 and Figure 9: Race and Ethnicity in Jamaica Plain 1950–2010), we can see the now-familiar general picture. The contemporary compression of Latinos and Blacks into portions of the study area has a longer history. Tract 812, site of Bromley Heath, was home to the earliest and most substantial Black settlement, gradually supplanted by Latinos in recent decades. Latinos have concentrated in 1205, where they are shrinking in number and percentage. Residents of color in tracts 1206 and 1207 have been mostly Latino and were present in much smaller numbers.

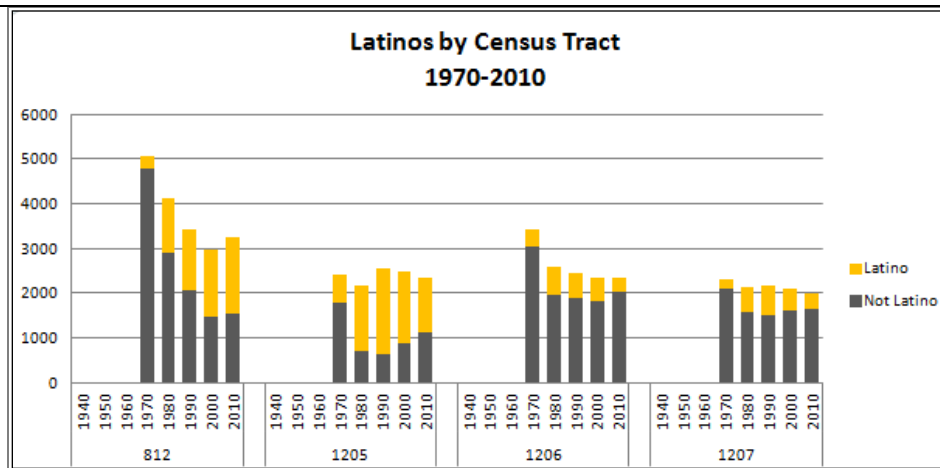
**Figure 10. “Hyde-Jackson Plus”**



Note: The bright blue areas mark two block groups adjacent to the study area.

**Figure 11. Race and Ethnicity in “Hyde-Jackson Plus”  
1940–2010**





Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 1940–1990 data via Minnesota Population Center (2011).

### Neighborhood Stabilization

Over the past forty-plus years, a dense web of community organizations has been active in the study area and broader Jamaica Plain neighborhood. New and longtime residents—many of them empowered by their successful mobilization in the late 1960s and early 1970s to stop a major highway (Interstate 95) from being built through the center of the neighborhood, and subsequent involvement in a highly participatory effort (Gastón, 1981) to design public transportation and greenspace infrastructure in an eight-mile strip of cleared land—created numerous organizations to develop affordable housing, assert tenants’ rights and combat slumlording, reengage banks in local mortgage lending, support small-business creation, provide a range of social services, influence land-use decisions, facilitate the participation of residents in local governance, and confront youth violence with leadership development and civic engagement programs. Residents fostered multicultural neighborhood life through such means as annual festivals, arts programs, community gardens, and bilingual community organizations.

Some of these organizations—such as the Bromley Heath Tenant Management Corporation (TMC), formed in the early 1970s to give tenants control

over the poorly run development and a national model for tenant-controlled public housing; the Hyde Square Task Force, launched in the early 1990s to engage youth in positive civic and community activities in a context of rising youth violence and local gang activity; City Life / Vida Urbana, a tenant rights organization that organized residents to fight slumlords and speculators; the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC), which combined resident engagement with affordable housing construction and local business development; and many others—focused on improving circumstances within the Hyde-Jackson Squares area. While a full treatment of this community work is outside the scope of this project, certain impacts are central to the story.

During the 1990s, community actors focused on improving the physical environment and social conditions for residents in Hyde-Jackson, and succeeded in addressing some of the most blighting influences on property conditions. Notable is the work of the JPNDC and Urban Edge. Formed in the wake of the highway opposition and deliberately organizing across race and ethnicity, the JPNDC by the late 1980s had already renovated a few existing properties in Hyde-Jackson for low-income occupancy under community control (some of which had been wrested from slumlords by tenant action) (K. Brown, personal communication, Feb. 9, 2012). In the 1990s, the JPNDC brought a strategic focus to the Hyde-Jackson area, indicated on the map in Figure 12: Community-led Redevelopment in Hyde-Jackson Squares, 1990s. The neighborhood nonprofit redeveloped vacant lots on Walden Street and adjacent streets, some of which were being used for open-air drug trade, into 43 new units in two- and three-unit structures, cooperatively owned by their low-income residents. They partnered with the Bromley Heath TMC and a private developer to transform the decaying Plant shoe factory—an enormous facility situated on Centre Street alongside Bromley Heath, which had been in disuse for decades and a hulking ruin since burning spectacularly in 1978,



the result of arson—into a plaza with a supermarket and community health center (Galster, Levy, Sawyer, Temkin, and Walker, 2005, 34–35). And they transformed a legendary decrepit multifamily building on Lamartine Street into housing and community space for low-income seniors (called the Nate Smith House, [jpndc.org/history/](http://jpndc.org/history/)). Urban Edge, another community development corporation working at the edges of Jamaica Plain and Roxbury, developed the “worst parcel” in the Southwest Corridor (Bluhm, 1978, 68) and the surrounding vacant area into a 50-unit coop for low-income families (called Stony Brook Gardens, Urban Edge, 2014, 5).

**Figure 12: Community-led Redevelopment in Hyde-Jackson Squares, 1990s**



The green “JPNDC Development Area” is the same as my study area (apart from their inclusion of two extra blocks where the Hi-Lo/Whole Foods was located). The labeled landmarks show where the JPNDC and Urban Edge completed significant affordable housing and community-development projects during the

1990s.

Source: Image excerpted from the Urban Institute (Galster et al., 2005, 35).

As the gentrification analysis showed, these neighborhood-stabilization efforts proved crucial for anchoring parts of the space for a predominantly low-income Latino community. Those successful outcomes are particularly visible in block group 1205-1, where a concentration of affordable housing (including the Nate Smith House, Stony Brook Gardens, and some of the scattered site JPNDC property acquisition) coincides most neatly with block group boundaries. There, fewer Latinos were displaced, there was a higher presence of workers in nonprofessional occupations, and incomes were lower (refer back to area 2 in Figure 3 A Differentiated Space).

But neighborhood stabilization also had contradictory effects. In short, community action to stabilize Hyde-Jackson for the Latino and Black population came up against the gentrification dynamics. By acting as “the lead investor in a program of residential and commercial real estate improvements” (Galster et al., 2005, 34), housing and land that remained in the speculative market began to increase in value. When gentrifying changes picked up speed in the 2000s, real estate actors were reaping the benefits of significant community efforts. The people who worked to improve the neighborhood were increasingly priced out and unable to remain to enjoy it when the fruits of their labor went to market and were captured in monetary terms by real estate actors. Numerous additional community-development projects were completed in the 2000s, but by that point the focus had shifted. Instead of bringing disinvested and devalued land into productive use for low-income residents, the rush was on to get the rising-value land into community control before private developers could seize it for market projects (Faigel, 2013). Cheap properties were no longer available, much of the city-owned land had been

developed, and neighborhood actors were increasingly outbid when they went up against for-profit developers (Barnett and Smith, 2004; Swenson and Ney, 2006). Despite sustained community action, some of it explicitly “anti-gentrification” (e.g., Rowher, 2005), to create subsidized and to preserve affordable private housing, steady upward movement of rents and sales prices has meant sustained displacement pressures for unsubsidized residents who cannot compete in the new price structure, with particular consequences for Latinos.

These sequential neighborhood challenges, of disinvestment and upscaling, were depicted by community activists in a mural at Mozart Park, located at the corner of Mozart and Centre Streets between Hyde and Jackson Squares. When it was originally painted in 1987 with scenes from the neighborhood, it included “Matchstick Man” to symbolize the landlords who burned buildings they found insufficiently profitable in order to collect insurance money. Matchstick Man was shown running from the orange glow of fire with a fistful of cash. When the mural was renovated in 2001 by Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF), they added “Monopoly Man.” Styled after the character from the popular board game, in which players compete to acquire domination of a real estate market, Monopoly Man is shown proudly admiring his acquisitions with the fires literally behind him. Together, they illustrated how the two seemingly different real estate actors had similar consequences for many residents. “Now we don’t have the case of people being burned out of their houses. . . . They’re being priced out of their houses” (Jesús Gerena, quoted in Shoberg, 2004).

**Figure 13: “Matchstick Man and Monopoly Man,” Mozart Park Mural**



Photo credit: Diana Shoberg (2004)

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

The Hyde-Jackson story, in depicting some of the forces behind processes of transformation in this residential environment, is a tale about inequality, the centrality of race and class in organizing residential space, and the fragile claim of community to place in the context of speculative ownership of housing and land. In this research paper, I documented gentrification pressures in Hyde-Jackson Squares and situated this racially marked social-spatial transformation in a longer history of uneven development at the local scale. I observed the contemporary remaking of the space to serve a different group of occupants than the one most recently present—measured by occupational, educational, income, and racial/ethnic characteristics—and the acceleration of these changes in the years after 2000 alongside price increases and a residential shift from rentals to ownership. The changes are from some people to other people (they are not because existing residents acquired more education, different occupations, or higher income) and they evidence clear racial patterns with displacing effects for

Latinos in particular, as well as for Blacks. I examined the historical evidence on development and settlement in the neighborhood, finding that neighborhoodwide socio-spatial hierarchies were established prior to the in-migration of residents of color and racialized across the mid- and late twentieth century, as Latinos and Blacks came to comprise nearly half the neighborhood population and the White population underwent substantial class change. I described Hyde-Jackson Squares as a place of both concentrated disinvestment and concentrated Latino and Black settlement. Within the Hyde-Jackson area, these two groups were always disproportionately found in just two of the four Census tracts, and those tracts are the places where they have been most able to remain as gentrification advances. These are also the locations where access to credit was most restricted, where blighting deindustrial ruins were more concentrated, and where negative effects of failed highway demolition existed most intensely. In this light, gentrification pressures in Hyde-Jackson Squares:

- constitute just one part of a longer-running and varied collection of forces that threaten to keep stable, affordable, and safe housing out of reach for Latino and Black residents;
- are the central contributors to contemporary disruption of the place-based community that has fought to improve the area since the 1970s.

For Blacks, the claim to place in Hyde-Jackson has been anchored from the start by social housing, whereas for Latinos, the importance of social housing has grown as speculative pressures have increased.

### *Limitations*

The project design had several limitations. First, while it is clear that issues of race and racism figure strongly in the Hyde-Jackson housing market, with implications for the pattern and duration of disinvestment and subsequent unfolding of gentrifying effects, this analysis does not explicitly address the role of

racism in shaping Latino and Black access to housing across different subsections of the neighborhood and in the avoidance of tracts 812 and 1205 by in-migrating White professionals until recent years. Second, the boundaries of the data and the boundaries of the phenomena under observation may not always align, making it difficult to observe phenomena that are confined to a portion of a block group or that straddle block groups (e.g., the circumstances in block group 812-2, where there is a concentration of social housing and also high and rising gentrification pressures). Third, empirical analysis of the real distribution of mortgage credit (as opposed to relying on the credit rationing that is reflected and recommended in the HOLC map) before and after Latino and Black residents were present in significant numbers would more closely anchor the production of space to the policies and practices of financial institutions. Fourth, closer empirical analysis of the advancing forces of gentrification—including the real estate actors that drive change and the policies and practices of the municipal government (e.g., street maintenance, service provision, policing)—would provide more grounded information about how changes occur (and how to potentially alter their trajectory) and what the most significant driving forces have been. Finally, this study investigated neither the elements beyond social housing that enable prior residents to remain (Section 8 vouchers, homeownership, intra-community networks for property transaction, sources of mortgage capital, etc.), nor the mechanisms through which prior residents have been separated from their homes (whether rent hikes, foreclosures, poor conditions, decline of Section 8 voucher-accepting landlords, brokering practices, etc.), as gentrifying changes press in. The absence of such information limits the extent to which policy recommendations can be tailored to the forces of change in the local environment.

## **Recommendations**

What strategies can reduce displacement of Latinos and Blacks in the face of

growing gentrification pressures in the neighborhood? Is it possible to have development without displacement? What can be done at the local level to mitigate the effects of circumstances with outside origins? The recommendations advanced here are chosen to reduce the vulnerability of neighborhood and community to the twin risks of both upscaling and disinvestment by achieving the following goals: increase the ability of current residents to choose to stay put; get housing and land out of the speculative market; thwart redevelopment that seeks profit by setting population migrations in motion; and increase community control over development through increasing participation in democratic decision-making. These are summarized in Figure 14. Anti-displacement Goals and Strategies.

**Figure 14. Anti-displacement Goals and Strategies**

Goal →	Keep current residents in place	Get/keep land and the current housing stock out of the speculative market	Slow and block speculative development	Expand democratic participation and community control over land use
Strategy ↓				
Rent control	✓			
Just cause eviction policy	✓			
Protections against foreclosure eviction	✓			
Property tax breaks for longtime owner-occupants	✓			
Property tax breaks for elderly owner-occupants	✓			
Restructure the existing stock as social housing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use vacant land (especially city-owned) for social housing		✓	✓	
Establish a (scattered-site) community land trust		✓		✓
Preserve existing public housing and other affordable housing		✓		✓
Condominium conversion ordinance	✓		✓	

Tax on property speculation			✓	
Inclusionary development that targets the scale and type of all development related to resident displacement			✓	✓
Municipal racial equity planning and practice			✓	✓
Community resistance				✓

Strategies to keep current residents in place include protections for tenants and owners. Ideally, tenant protections will include some form of rent control. Where that is not politically feasible, many jurisdictions are creating prohibitions on evicting tenants without cause, some of which include limits on evicting tenants simply because they cannot pay steep rent increases. A campaign for a “just cause eviction” policy is currently underway in Boston ([www.clvu.org](http://www.clvu.org)). Owners and tenants can be aided to stay in place by preventing banks from automatically evicting in the event of foreclosure. In Boston, foreclosures have been a key means by which homeowners of color and their tenants have been removed from properties; many foreclosed properties in turn have been bought by corporate landlords who seek higher-paying students and professional occupants, hence becoming forces for gentrification. Property tax breaks that target longtime owner occupants are being tried in some cities for the purpose of aiding homeowners with roots in the neighborhood to stay in place as gentrification fuels rising property values (Williams, 2014). Targeted tax breaks for elderly owner-occupants, already in place in Boston, also would help protect some from displacement.

Strategies to reform housing and land should take at least two forms: restructure the current stock as social housing;<sup>11</sup> and use available land for social

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<sup>11</sup> “Social housing” describes a range of ownership structures, all of which have the effect of removing housing from the speculative market, ideally permanently. Following Stone, social housing must meet each of three criteria: “it is not owned and operated for profit; it cannot be



housing, thus blocking its use for speculative development. A community land trust can be used in either strategy. Where possible—in markets where prices have not risen to the point of making property acquisition prohibitive for community-based actors—combine efforts to assist current residents to remain in place with strategies to get the current housing and land out of the speculative market. One approach would target owner-occupied properties (additional criteria could be added for income eligibility and number of years in residence) and pay the current owner for the speculative value of the property, leaving them with an asset valued within guidelines for affordable homeownership and a home in which to continue living (Stone, 2002). The land would then be placed permanently into a scattered-site community land trust managed by a nonprofit, and subsequent owners (and their tenants, if the property is multifamily) would meet income-eligibility guidelines. Funds for such a project might come from a municipal housing trust fund or other sources.

Establishment of a community land trust (CLT) may be a strategy on its own. A CLT establishes a shared-equity structure in which a trust is established to hold and manage parcels of land “in nonspeculative ownership in perpetuity” (Stone, 2006, 253), while individuals are granted rights to use the land, usually by owning a house on it. Owners have autonomy in how they use the land, but the trust may establish certain ground-lease terms intended to “enhance affordability, security of tenure, resident ownership and nonspeculative transfer of houses in perpetuity” (Stone, 2006, 253). Rules are set to ensure that ownership and rental of properties is affordable within certain income limits, and to set guidelines for

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sold for speculative gain; and it provides security of tenure for residents” (Stone, 2006, p. 241). The owning party can be public or private, incorporated or individual, so long as the three criteria are met.

capturing asset appreciation at sale.<sup>12</sup> Community involvement in stewarding the land is central, with governance boards composed of residents from the community along with other public representatives.

Building new social housing in disinvested locations is an effective way to claim space for community use instead of real estate profits. Despite the contradictory effects such housing can have—serving as both a critical resource for residents and a “location leader” in attracting the market pressures that displace residents in the surrounding housing—there is no doubt that it blocked upscaling in Hyde-Jackson’s block group 1205-1. There severe disinvestment left a large quantity of vacant parcels that would surely be attractive for developers today, but was already reused for affordable housing that appears to be playing a key role in enabling low-income and Latino residents to remain in place. At a minimum, it should be a goal to use all city-owned land for social housing for low-income residents.

In addition to expanding the supply of social housing, it is important to preserve existing units. Public housing is and has been under threat nationwide, with significant pressures to demolish large complexes (like Bromley Heath, although it has not been a target thus far) and convert them to privately managed, mixed-income developments, almost always with a loss of total units for the lowest earners and frequently with regulation and policing of resident conduct that can have negative consequences for youth of color in particular. Thus it is important to undertake efforts to organize public housing residents, and to build broader community support for maintaining and improving this social housing. In some areas there also may be a need to preserve other affordable housing that is privately

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<sup>12</sup> The land trust concept is rural in origin (Stone, 2006), but it is a growing trend in affordable homeownership (Curtin and Bocarsly, 2008), with 250 in operation nationwide, including Boston’s Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative’s Dudley Neighbors, Inc. (National Community Land Trusts Network, 2013).

owned and at risk of “expiring use” (developed with public subsidy to be affordable for only a set period of time).

Additional strategies can serve to block or slow the kinds of development that is intended to serve people other than a neighborhood’s current residents. Some of these would also generate additional funds for affordable housing preservation or additional units for the social housing supply. Condominium conversion ordinances can be used to regulate the rights of tenants in the event of a conversion (and prevent their automatic displacement) and limit the rights of owners who want to transfer units from rental to ownership stock. Speculation taxes can be used to disincentivize property “flipping” (quick sales to capture profits in a rising market).<sup>13</sup> An inclusionary development policy that is well-tailored to the scale of development in the very local area could add public process and scrutiny to some of the practices that create displacement, perhaps slowing the pace of change and giving local actors information and time to respond.<sup>14</sup>

Equity concerns should be brought explicitly into planning and public

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<sup>13</sup> There is little (if any) simple speculative buying and selling in JP’s overheated real estate market, where “there are no deals” left (Stamatos, 2013), but such a tax could be relevant in other areas or if assessed on initial condo sales for those who buy multifamilies for the purpose of quick conversion.

<sup>14</sup> “Inclusionary development policies” (IDP) require that a percentage of units created by new development be affordable to low- or moderate-income residents. It is one way of capturing some of the rewards of development for public benefit, recognizing that “for-profit real estate development is an attempt to reap an economic reward from property values created by others,” a “web of externalities’ that dumps value onto his or her site simply because it is uniquely and opportunistically *there*” (Davis, 2006, p. 367). Boston’s policy applies only to new construction of projects with 10 or more units that require a zoning variance. As a consequence, it bypasses the scale and type of much of the development that displaces residents from such neighborhoods as Hyde-Jackson Squares, which is likely to be the upscaling and conversion of the existing stock of two- and three-family structures, along with infill construction of two- to six-unit buildings on vacant lots. Note: An IDP will create additional affordable units, but since they will be comparatively small in number and probably cannot be targeted to current residents (they will be distributed on an income-eligible basis only), while the development as a whole may contribute to upscaling and displacement, these units are unlikely to exert significant anti-displacement effects at the local scale.

policy. In Boston today, there is no doubt that residents of color are bearing the brunt of displacement pressures arising from gentrification (a phenomenon that is more closely tied in other neighborhoods to opportunities created for investors by the foreclosure crisis, which also disproportionately uprooted people of color from their homes). But too much of the public framework for development reflects the drift toward “urban policies that favor middle-class settlement at the expense of housing affordability” (Slater, 2011, 577). For example, the city’s eligibility guidelines for affordable housing rely on area median income, which is much higher than the median income of Black, Latino, and Asian households in Boston, with the consequence that more higher-middle-income White households are able to benefit from these public subsidies. Similarly, the city’s plan to increase housing production to meet ambitious goals by 2030 is geared toward the needs of the upper-income residents who are most likely to be White, suggesting a need for more than two new units for every new upper-income household and just one-third of a unit for every new low-income household. Some cities, notably Seattle, are implementing racial equity plans that broadly engage communities and decision makers to build racial equity goals into all municipal initiatives and use “community-level racial inequity data” (<http://www.seattle.gov/rsji/our-work/2012-2014-plan>) to evaluate success. Local resistance can be effective in advancing the demand for racial equity. One local example is the “Keep It 100% for Egleston” campaign. In Egleston Square, southeast of the study area and bordering Jamaica Plain and Roxbury, residents also face substantial displacement pressures. Youth residents of color have taken the lead in using public processes to attempt to stop a project to redevelop existing housing for upper-income occupancy, instead demanding that 100 percent of units should be affordable to households earning the median income of Black and Latino renters in the area, a mere \$26,000/year (<http://www.eglestonkeepsit100.org/>).

If our goal is to arrest gentrification in Hyde-Jackson Squares, we may find those objectives frustrated and even believe that it is impossible to make change. After all, gentrification and displacement at the local scale is driven by broader outside trends: an ongoing and worsening housing affordability crisis in Boston (Bluestone et al., 2015) and deepening concentration nationwide of people of color in the most distressed neighborhoods (Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2015, 6); continuing occupational shifts amid unabated demand for more highly educated workers to fill positions in professional and business services, education, and health services (Clifford, 2012); wage stagnation and declining wages for the lowest earners (Mishel, Gould, and Bivens, 2015); growing income disparity, with Boston ranking third in a recent national study of income inequality (Berube and Holmes, 2015); and unabated disproportionate loss of wealth by Blacks and Latinos in the wake of the 2008 housing-led financial crisis (Kochhar and Fry, 2014). “It is a difficult and ambiguous question the extent to which problems *in a spatially defined community are community problems*—given that so much of what produces communities are relations and decisions that exist well beyond any single community” (DeFilippis and Saegert, 2008, 3). Instead of pursuing local reforms with only the immediate local goals in mind, what DeFilippis, Fisher, and Shragge call “working *about* a place,” we might conceive of work in any one neighborhood as the place where one pursues bigger goals, what they term “working *within* a place” (DeFilippis, Fisher, and Shragge, 2006, 686, emphases added). If our goal is to be one site among many in a broad effort to bring land under community control, and to pursue that project in a way that builds democratic engagement and understanding of the root causes of housing instability and displacement, we can appreciate local efforts for their transformative potential.

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