

Finding Common Ground

*The Fenway CDC's
Partnerships and New Plan
for The Next Five Years*



Prepared for the Annual Meeting of the
Fenway Community
Development Corporation

9 May 2007
(with minor revisions, May 2008)

Introduction

A STRATEGIC LOOK AT THE FENWAY CDC

In 2008 Fenway CDC will turn 35. This milestone has provided an opportunity for reflection on our organizational history and on the changing face of the Fenway neighborhood. It has also offered an occasion for looking ahead to envision the kind of neighborhood the Fenway can be.

Fenway CDC board and staff developed this strategic plan during a period of transition and recovery following a series of significant setbacks. It reflects an effort to assess realistically what we can accomplish on our own, how and with whom we must collaborate, how to maintain a sharp focus on our mission, and how to navigate the risks of bold new ventures. We have tried to use the lessons of the past 18 months to create a long-range plan that reflects our current organizational capacity and a renewed vision and strategy to guide our work. The process of creating this document reinforced our conviction that Fenway CDC offers unique services to the Fenway and a distinctive perspective on the community in which we live and operate.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Our planning process included a detailed examination of available data about the Fenway. With students comprising two-thirds of the neighborhood's population—more than four times the average proportion citywide and 2.5 times the level in the next most-heavily affected neighborhood—understanding the Fenway's demographic dynamics is both critically important and extremely challenging. The large student population at once drives demographic trends and masks the true picture of our permanent resident profile. With the understanding that some of the data are old (dating back to the 2000 Census) and that in some cases they are organized in ways that preclude definitive conclusions (requiring inference or interpretation to separate student and non-student statistics), we have identified several key facts and trends, which appear on page 2.



CHILDREN

Families with children—approximately 600 in both 1990 and 2000—comprise about 7% of the non-student households in the Fenway.



HOUSEHOLD INCOME

In 2000, 19% of all Fenway households—a total of 409—were living below the federal poverty line. This is a somewhat higher than the citywide percentage of 16.8%.



LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

Both an increase in the median family income (in constant dollars) and a decrease in the number of families in poverty between 1990 and 2000 suggests that the number of lower-income families in the Fenway is declining.



STUDENT POPULATION

Students represent 42% of the population and 29% of the households that occupy private housing in the Fenway. These figures barely changed between 1990 and 2000.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The neighborhood needs more than 1,550 affordable housing units to accommodate current low-income, non-student residents; this shortfall forces many of them into market-rate housing.



RACE

Taken as a whole, people of color represent only one-third of the Fenway's population. However, when the 18-to-24-year-old group—largely university students—is excluded, that percentage rises to 43%.



VOTER PARTICIPATION

Fenway voter participation in local elections—percentage of registered voters who actually vote—falls below the even the low citywide average of 25%. Only about 14% of the non-student adult population of the neighborhood is registered and votes in local elections.

During the next five years Fenway CDC will focus its energy and resources on:

- preserving and developing affordable housing; and
- community planning for a sustainable and diverse neighborhood.

If not directly providing them, we will advocate for provision of quality social, community and employment services, especially for families and seniors living in the Fenway

We will pursue these objectives by

- deepening and broadening our relationships with our institutional neighbors, identifying and building on mutual interests; and
- redefining and strengthening the social compact with our members, clarifying what the CDC owes to and expects from its members.

Fenway CDC's board has adopted a new mission statement:

The Fenway CDC is a membership organization that works to achieve greater residential stability and diversity in the Fenway neighborhood. We engage residents in community planning, develop affordable housing, and advocate for community services aimed primarily at meeting the needs of low- and moderate-income residents. We envision the Fenway as an urban village—a model of smart growth and sustainability where both residential and institutional neighbors thrive. Toward this end, we seek to capitalize on the opportunities and address the challenges that arise from the Fenway's unique concentration of world-renowned institutions, which are important drivers of the regional economy.

We are setting measurable goals—what we refer to as our “intended impacts”—for both ourselves as an organization and

for the neighborhood as a whole. These set the context and the standards for our real estate development, community planning, civic engagement, community service and advocacy work. **Taken together, these goals represent our vision for the Fenway.**

Within the next five years we envision and will work toward a Fenway neighborhood where:

- at least 18% of housing stock is available and affordable to low- and moderate-income households;
- the existing inventory of government-assisted housing for low- and moderate-income households has remained intact;
- the percentage of people of color matches that found in the city at large;
- greater housing and community program opportunities exist for families;
- greater residential stability prevails, as measured by people making a long-term commitment to living in the Fenway;
- fewer private housing units are occupied by college students;
- more residents work at nearby institutions—both through current employees settling in the Fenway and through Fenway residents's working at the institutions;
- more residents have become involved in civic life, measured in part by resident participation in local elections.

As one important measure of our progress towards these goals, we will collect and update all relevant social and economic data about the Fenway, ideally with help from students and faculty at Fenway colleges and universities. We will make establishing baseline information about current student occupancy of private housing a high priority.

Moving from 'Community Relations' to Productive Partnerships

The Fenway is home to one of the densest and largest concentrations of nationally and internationally renowned educational, medical and cultural institutions in the United States. Tension over land use between neighborhood and institutions for the past 30 years has eclipsed the many contributions these institutions have made to the neighborhood. Fenway CDC has participated in a long-term partnership with Longwood Medical Area institutions to develop and improve health career opportunities for Boston residents. The CDC has also received linkage, targeted PILOT payments,* and discretionary grants from institutions to support its projects and operations.

These institutions are now the major driver of our regional economy. For the city and the region, the good news is that the institutions are not going anywhere; they will continue to grow, serving more students, patients, and visitors, and seeking more land, parking and staff. This growth and institutional policies designed to support it have sometimes put Fenway residents at odds with the institutions.

Quite apart from resident resistance to institutional growth, the institutions increasingly face new challenges:

- The availability of land in the densely developed neighborhood already constrains where they can locate new facilities.
- Gridlock and insufficient public transportation will increasingly influence decisions of consumers and employees about continued affiliation with Fenway institutions.
- The high cost of housing in the city and region makes it harder to recruit and retain the “knowledge workers” that have made most of the institutions pre-eminent.

* *Under the City of Boston's Payment in Lieu of Tax program.*

All of these challenges also affect the quality of life and the character of this residential neighborhood. None of these issues can be addressed solely through improved community relations, or larger gifts to neighborhood organizations; though necessary, they don't represent sufficient recompense in

themselves nor do they respond fully to the new challenges. We must pursue more productive and mutually beneficial approaches to addressing these problems.

We have seen institutions collaborate with each other, with developers and even with other neighborhoods in pursuit of their institutional goals. Fenway CDC believes these kinds of partnerships will enable both the institutions and the neighborhood to craft creative solutions to the challenges facing both the Fenway neighborhood and its institutional neighbors.

A critical component of this strategic plan is to better position the CDC to use its organizational capacity, track record, membership, and political capital to shape partnerships that address common problems and deepen relationships with our institutional neighbors. Partnership and collaboration can be expanded in several specific areas:

- **Housing partnerships:** Pursue institutional investment in Fenway CDC-sponsored housing, with some units set aside for institutional employees who want to live in a vibrant and diverse neighborhood and walk to work. This concept, originally explored in earnest by Fenway CDC and Medical Academic Scientific Community Organization (MASCO) 20 years ago, has only become more attractive with recent shifts in residential preferences and the rising cost of commuting.
- **Expanded and improved service learning:** Over 70,000 college and graduate students are enrolled at academic institutions in and around the Fenway. We have seen few efforts by these academic institutions to create intentional, systematic educational opportunities within the Fenway neighborhood for their students. With an ambitious housing development and community planning agenda, and with declining resources for social, employment and community programs, Fenway CDC sees tremendous potential and necessity in building relationships with faculty from neighbor institutions to craft student projects that offer real educational benefit and can support the neighborhood in concrete and meaningful ways. Equally important, this work will give college students a stronger appreciation of the civic life of the neighborhood, and present an opportunity for them to engage in it—which will lay the foundation for their own participation in civic life wherever they choose to live after graduation.
- **Employment:** Institutions in and around the Fenway employ thousands of people. Significantly improved access to clerical, technical, administrative and even professional positions at the institutions would bolster economic security for many Fenway residents while making the neighborhood

more environmentally sustainable. Increased employment of residents would also open another avenue for institutions to communicate to Fenway residents—those they employ—their perspectives on growth and development. Employment discussions should be an element of all institutional development plans, from the construction phase to commercial and retail leasing negotiations.

- **Community access to institutional resources:** Sharing an expanded menu of institutional resources will improve quality of life for Fenway residents, increase their appreciation of their neighbors, and provide institutions with connections to the families and individuals that live all around them. Services could include community access to undersubscribed college courses; to parking facilities in off-peak hours; and to shuttle bus service; discounted memberships in/season tickets for cultural institutions; and greater access to libraries and health and wellness programs.

We understand that institutions are not monolithic, that deepened relationships will not occur on the same timetable with every institution, and that the kinds of partnerships we pursue and propose will depend on both an individual institution's impact in the neighborhood and our joint ability to leverage resources for mutual benefit.

Membership Equals Civic Engagement

One of Fenway CDC's great strengths over the years has been an engaged and devoted membership base. The CDC tries to communicate regularly with its membership and has reached out to engage members through committees, events, and campaigns. Membership support and development have been less comprehensive in the last few years as our staff and board focused on "righting our ship." We have committed ourselves to reviving a robust membership-development and membership-engagement agenda.

Over the next five years we are committed to:

- **Achieving stable dues-paying membership of at least 500.**
- **Involving at least 30% of our members each year in CDC activities or public hearings and meetings held in or concerning the Fenway.**
- **Demonstrating a steady increase in our members' and all Fenway residents' participation in elections.**

Our strategic planning process has helped us reassess the role and meaning of membership for Fenway CDC. The CDC must clearly articulate both what it owes to and what it expects from its members. We intend to go well beyond membership as a numbers game. While we value a large membership, we value even more an engaged membership that supports the CDC's mission and vision and is engaged in advancing it.

We will encourage individuals and families to understand and support our goals at the time they enroll or renew memberships. We will explore offering expanded membership benefits, including ones that our institutional neighbors can offer, as noted above. We will also work to increase our visibility, especially among newer residents of the community.

We think that Fenway CDC, with a compelling mission and vision, offers members and residents yearning to make a social contribution many opportunities to become engaged and feel connected to their community. We will look increasingly to our membership as a source of energy and human capital for achieving some of our ambitious organizational goals. We believe

that there are many Fenway residents with special skills, knowledge, and life experiences who could lead or participate in Fenway CDC-sponsored programs, projects and events. Through the revival and revision of our periodic membership survey we can identify some of these individuals and will utilize these resources.

In addition to recruiting members to undertake important projects for the CDC and for the community, we will look more than ever to our members to restore and sustain the sense of community that Fenway CDC has nurtured for so many and for so long.

Fenway CDC will continue to participate actively in the Civic Engagement Initiative and maintain its focus on registering new voters and increasing voter participation in general elections. We will not only encourage our members to vote, but we will enlist them for active roles in our voter registration and turnout work.

The Next Five Years' Work

Affordable Housing Development

Fenway CDC remains committed to the development of affordable housing as a strategic priority. Over the next five years Fenway CDC expects to:

- **Produce and preserve 175 units of mixed-income, affordable rental and ownership housing.**
- **Add at least 66 units of housing for families with children (two bedrooms or larger), matching or exceeding the proportion of family-sized units in our current portfolio.**
- **Match the income mix of the current FCDC portfolio in future housing development: 50% low income, 25% moderate and middle income and 25% market-rate.**
- **Set a standard for affirmative fair housing marketing of our properties to achieve greater racial diversity at all the income levels we serve.**
- **Introduce green features and technologies into every new project to the maximum extent feasible.**

Our production/preservation goal represents roughly a 50% increase in the average annual housing production by Fenway CDC over the past 25 years. We expect to develop rental, home ownership, and cooperative housing. We will also devote ourselves, through advocacy, acquisition, and development strategies, to preserving affordability in more than 500 units of government-assisted housing where subsidy contracts and regulated mortgages expire in the next five years.

The tremendous challenges of developing affordable housing in the Fenway—an expensive real estate market, a dearth of publicly owned land, and intense competition from well-capitalized developers and institutions for unimproved land—are daunting. They are not, however, entirely new, nor do we believe them to be insurmountable. We will seek and expand relationships with private developers, both those who have recently become active in the Fenway and those who have had a long-standing presence in the neighborhood. We will especially seek out opportunities to build partnerships with neighboring institutions to develop housing that meets both institutional and community needs and advances our vision for the Fenway. In addition to private partnerships, we will continue to work with local government to

develop and leverage the resources necessary for innovative housing solutions to meet residents' and the city's needs. This includes acquiring existing housing that we can shift from the speculative real estate market to the supply of permanently affordable housing.

To advance our goal of increasing stable residency, we will explore strategies for helping cooperatives and high-owner-occupancy condominiums to address the capital needs of aging properties.

Community Planning

Fenway CDC's involvement in community planning goes back almost as far as its involvement in the development of affordable housing. Several major projects and programs have grown out of the CDC's impressive community planning or community organizing work.

Over the next five years Fenway CDC will continue to engage in community planning in the following ways:

- **Help maintain the quality of the neighborhood, including housing and economic development, by serving as visionary, advocate, and partner for the Urban Village Plan.**
- **Actively engage in the review processes for large or significant real estate development projects, institutional master plans and master plan amendments.**
- **Participate actively in any future neighborhood-wide planning exercises initiated by the City.**
- **Increase the CDC's capacity to undertake community planning by restoring a staff position for an experienced full-time community planner.**
- **Undertake planning charrettes for specific sites, clusters of sites or sub-areas of the neighborhood with a focus on locations where development is expected or needed and where such planning can positively influence future land uses.**

In addition to the usual issues of land use, zoning, and urban design, the goals for our neighborhood that constitute our vision for the community (set out above) will frame our community planning activities. We will monitor and report regularly on progress toward achieving the kind of community we envision, using as a yardstick the intended impacts detailed in this plan.

By early 2008 we will issue a “report card” for the Urban Village Plan that will evaluate the success of public, private, and nonprofit organizations in making the urban village vision a reality. We envision the first report card’s serving as a pilot effort for regular and comprehensive community planning scorecards. They will provide a framework that we will use to evaluate and endorse or oppose major development projects. The scorecards will reflect the measurable goals that we have set out for the Fenway.

We believe that the goals and intended impacts that together form our vision for the Fenway can be embraced by other community organizations, the mayor and other elected representatives, the BRA and other public agencies, our institutional neighbors, and private developers who are active in the Fenway. We will strive to build a consensus among the various stakeholders around this vision of the Fenway in the hope that during the next five years we can launch a comprehensive planning process that transcends the fragmented regulatory processes governing specific development initiatives and finds common ground among the interests that have often been at odds over the community’s future. Such a consensus will require compromise on the part of each stakeholder group based on the recognition that any neighborhood is stronger where institutional and residential interests, and commercial and public goals are balanced.

Continued Commitment: Community, Employment and Social Service Programs

Throughout the 1990s Fenway CDC developed an array of programs to meet the non-housing needs of low- and moderate-income residents of the neighborhood. The Health Care Research and Training Institute has been a robust partnership with institutions and has enjoyed a broad funding base. Other initiatives, such as the Fenway Family Coalition, were low-budget efforts run largely by volunteers but still dependent on staff support and coordination.

One of our most difficult choices during the planning process was the decision to curtail sharply our allocation of resources to social programs, at least in the next few years. Nevertheless, for the foreseeable future Fenway CDC will continue to

- **Support and sponsor the Peterborough Senior Center.**
- **Provide some job/career counseling and placement services and support to low-income Fenway residents.**
- **Operate the Computer Learning Center adjacent to the CDC’s offices at 73 Hemenway Street.**

While mindful of the good counsel of our organizational experts to focus our efforts on a limited set of initiatives with the most mission impact, and knowing that many nonprofit organizations have found new homes for cherished programs that don't meet that criterion, we are also painfully aware that no agency or organization currently provides any social services on a sustained, systematic and programmatic basis in the Fenway. Fenway CDC has been it.

The **Peterborough Senior Center** provides vital supports for Fenway seniors who would otherwise be isolated from each other and the services they need. It also offers an important link between the CDC and seniors with long tenure in and strong commitment to the Fenway. The effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the center owe themselves to a collaborative approach that draws on the many resources, talents, expertise, and amenities of the Fenway and surrounding institutions. This approach serves as a model for how the CDC or others could serve the various needs of the Fenway's diverse residents and for the greatly expanded partnerships with our institutional neighbors described above.

The **Computer Learning Center** has been an important venue for young people and many lower-income residents who don't own computers. While its services have been scaled back from several years ago, the center represents an important service and connection to the CDC's members and other community residents. Over the next few years we will review how to fully integrate this resource into the CDC's overall strategy, programs, and projects.

Services and programs for families are especially important, both as a means of attracting more families to the community and reducing the isolation of current family residents. Therefore the board is committed to devoting the necessary time during the next year to exploring how needed services might be provided for Fenway families and other residents. This is one obvious area where the intellectual assets and professional expertise of our institutional neighbors can be brought to bear.

As noted, Fenway CDC made a major commitment to workforce development in the last decade. Our approach has been largely service-oriented. Because we continue to believe that stable, well-paid employment is a necessity on par with good, affordable housing, we are not prepared to abandon workforce development. While it is increasingly less common that people live and work in the same neighborhood, the powerful central premise of our Walk to Work programs was that employment of Fenway residents by our neighboring institutions benefits them both. We will, therefore, explore how we can best enable Fenway residents to have better access to employment opportunities at neighboring institutions.

The Next Five Years' Work

Resources: Chicken or Egg?

During our eight months of planning we seesawed back and forth between crafting a plan that would set a clear and bold direction for Fenway CDC and the reality of our limited resources. Earlier this year, Fenway CDC was able to pay off a costly line of credit that had kept the doors open for the past year. Our 2007 operating budget is balanced, but with an organization that is 25% smaller than it was two years ago. We are very aware that the strategic plan presented above cannot be fully implemented without new resources. We have published and circulated the plan with the conviction that it can attract funder investment.

We are also thinking of resources broadly, especially human resources. There is no substitute for qualified, committed, and adequately paid staff. However, if we can truly engage our institutional neighbors to invest not only financial capital in the Fenway and Fenway CDC's work, but also their intellectual capital and the time and intelligence of students, faculty, and staff, a great many things can be accomplished to improve this community. So too with our members, many of whom have skills and life experiences that are well-matched for projects and programs that Fenway CDC hopes to undertake in the next five years. In sum, we expect to rely heavily on volunteers, interns and students for both the muscle and the brainpower that will fuel much of our work. The CDC's staffing will need to be augmented or reorganized so that sufficient staff time is dedicated to coordinating the work and projects carried out by students, staff and faculty.

Ultimately, we will need both traditional and non-traditional funding. We believe the Fenway is poised to become one of America's model smart-growth neighborhoods, that Fenway CDC is an essential partner in making that happen, and that a broad group of stakeholders is ready to invest in such a future.

Conclusion

What Fenway CDC proposes to do in the next five years does not appear radically different from what it has done for the past 34 years. The solid foundation of our previous work compelled us to continue to build and adapt the activities we have most effectively pursued in the past. It is *how* we will do our work in the next five years that will be most noteworthy...and challenging.

As presented in the plan we envision a body of work and activities framed and driven by two important forces. The first is a robust and productive engagement with the Fenway's intuitional neighbors. The second is an engaged citizenry whose civic commitment is expressed through support of and involvement in the Fenway CDC. We believe that the Fenway will become the 21st-century sustainable, smart-growth urban village to which we aspire only if these forces can pull in the same direction. This five-year strategic plan makes that its principal aim.