

RECLAIM ROXBURY SUMMARY REPORT
December 2015



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Reclaim Roxbury: Summary of Progress Thus Far

Reclaim Roxbury is an ongoing community-driven effort that is working to build a new community-based structure and process for Roxbury to respond to development pressures and the City of Boston's planning processes. The goal of this effort is to enable the Roxbury community to have more influence over the future of their neighborhood. This effort was convened by City Councilor Tito Jackson with the technical support of Ceasar McDowell and graduate students of the MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

This effort began in October with a set of community surveys and meetings to address development and planning in Roxbury and to understand the community's concerns. During these meetings participants discussed the problem that planning and development present for the community, and the opportunities that exist in Roxbury to address this problem. The following problem and opportunity statements were discussed, edited, and affirmed by meeting participants:

Problem: There is currently no comprehensive, community-driven engagement structure in Roxbury to reach agreement around issues of development and planning and to influence decisions that impact Roxbury, and no process to monitor and enforce implementation of agreements after they are made.

Opportunity: Boston is experiencing a development boom that is putting pressure on Roxbury. There is an opportunity for Roxbury to be proactive in shaping development decisions by creating a comprehensive, community-driven structure for engagement and governance and community visioning.

Questions to consider while moving forward:

Throughout the fall, a number of questions raised by community members came up multiple times at different meetings. Answering these questions requires ongoing discussion by the community, and should be kept in mind while moving forward in the next few months. These questions are:

- How does this process achieve legitimacy?
- Who needs to be involved? Should only Roxbury residents be involved? What should the relationship be between Roxbury residents and other community organizations and institutions in this process?
- What role could outside actors play in providing technical or financial support? What should the process be for letting these outside actors in? What role should MIT have in this process?
- How are decisions made within the process?
- How can the process be accessible to all residents and actively engage those whose voices are not currently heard?
- How will diverse interests in Roxbury work together to collaborate and avoid duplicating efforts?
- What are the values guiding this process?
- How will the process be recognized, both by the community and by the city government?

Next Steps:

The community meeting, “Reclaim Roxbury: Roxbury Planning for Roxbury Residents,” held on December 3rd, 2015 brought together 130 residents and representatives from a range of community organizations and institutions. At this meeting, participants came together to discuss a set of concrete strategies for influencing planning and development in Roxbury: an organizing strategy, a strategy for governance and decision-making, a strategy for developing standards and intentional process design, and an information strategy. Working groups formed around each strategy, and a set of action items was identified for moving forward in the next three months.

Councilor Jackson’s office has committed to continue to provide support for this effort in the new year. Specifically, in January he will be convening a meeting with each of the four working groups to discuss next steps. Subsequently, a larger meeting with all of the working groups will be held in February for groups to report out on progress and to determine how the strategies of each of the working groups can be integrated.

The meeting dates and proposed topics for the next four months are outlined below:

January 28, 2016

Working Groups Meet Separately

Working groups should set the agenda for next 3 months, confirm action items and strategic goals, and delegate responsibilities.

February 25, 2016

Reclaim Roxbury, Community-wide Meeting

Overall community meeting to share progress and goals of each working group. Working group goals should be approved by the larger group and large group should determine how to coordinate between the four working groups.

March 31, 2016

Working Groups Meet Separately

Working groups should discuss implementation of the goals and actions established in the previous meetings.

April 28, 2016

Reclaim Roxbury, Community-wide Meeting

Overall community meeting to discuss progress on implementation and discuss how the process will move forward over the next several years.

Keep in mind, Imagine Boston neighborhood engagement is scheduled to begin in May.

With this timeline in mind, we have created a summary document for each working group with notes on the action items discussed at the meeting, and a possible pathway forward. The pathway is meant to provide each group with a synthesis of the ideas discussed at the first meeting, along with flexible recommendations for how each group might begin to act on these. This is a suggestion based on what emerged as priorities in the group discussions. However, each group should decide for themselves if the pathway outlined makes sense for those involved, or if changes should be made. The community needs commitment from as many stakeholders as possible to build momentum and keep this process going. If you are interested in joining a working group or helping with the Reclaim Roxbury process in any way please contact Councilor Jackson at tito.jackson@boston.gov or attend the next community-wide meeting on February 25, 2016.

Working Group Strategy Summaries



Organizing Strategy

An organizing strategy for Roxbury would seek to increase resident engagement, organizational collaboration, and citizen power in community visioning and development decisions. The need for an organizing strategy to mobilize Roxbury residents emerged from the November 19th Working Group meeting and was further developed in the community-wide December 3rd meeting.

The primary goals of an organizing strategy are to build power in the community as well as to increase the legitimacy of any future planning process or structure by democratizing and expanding resident engagement. The action items identified by meeting participants focus on the creation of an organizing committee, a community mapping project, and the development of independent media resources that could be used to inform and connect Roxbury residents.

The following points were identified during the December 3rd meeting as possible strategic goals and action items that should be discussed further during the next working group meeting:

Potential Strategic Goals

- Develop an initial organizing strategy for Roxbury residents
- Develop independent media and informational resources to be distributed throughout the community
- Strategize and pursue funding and resources for organizing
- Recruit, train, and organize block captains and volunteers throughout Roxbury
- Draft and vet neighborhood demands through a community-wide process

Potential Short-term Actions

- Create an open sign up for an organizing committee
- Create a comprehensive list of resources in Roxbury, including organizations, businesses, neighborhood associations, schools, programs, and faith institutions
- Create a community map to document a diversity of community assets and facilitate collaboration
- Create a comprehensive mailing list for outreach to key community groups

Potential Pathway

Based on the potential action items identified by the small groups at the December 3rd meeting, one pathway forward for the working group is outlined below. This is merely a suggestion and the group should decide if this is the pathway that makes the most sense for those involved.

Working Group Meeting on January 28th, 2016.

The desired outcomes of this meeting should be: (1) set the agenda for the next three months, (2) agree to the goals for the working group, (3) identify and agree to action items and (4) delegate responsibilities. Finally, the following questions should be discussed at the first meeting to move the identified actions forward:

- Should the working group establish a smaller Organizing Committee to take on deeper actions between monthly meetings to move the organizing strategy forward?
- Who else needs to be included in the Organizing Working Group?
- What participants and scale of engagement are necessary to achieve legitimacy?
- When and how frequently will the working group meet?
- How will the working group communicate with each other between meetings?
- Who will move forward actions identified by the working group?

Research: Between January 28th and February 25th meeting.

Between meetings, working group members can develop a community map and informational resources to aid in organizing efforts. This will involve:

- Creating a comprehensive list of Roxbury's resources, including organizations, businesses, neighborhood associations, schools, programs, and faith institutions
- Developing initial media with information and branding of campaigns in Roxbury to increase neighborhood control over development
- Creating a comprehensive mailing list for outreach to key community groups

There is an opportunity to collaborate with the Information Working Group on resource mapping in the neighborhood.

Reclaim Roxbury, community-wide meeting on February 25, 2016.

This meeting will bring together all four working groups and community members. The Organizing Working Group should be prepared to share the goals and action items identified at the first working group meeting with the larger group. This will be an opportunity for the larger community and other working groups to provide feedback on the goals and actions and to agree to the working group's plan. The working group should also work with the larger group to identify human and financial resources, and to discuss ways in which the different working groups could collaborate and coordinate next steps.

The working group has already identified the goal of recruiting, training, and organizing block captains and volunteers throughout Roxbury. The larger group meeting could provide an opportunity for identifying volunteers to assist in this effort.

Action: Between February 25th and March 31st.

Between meetings, working group members can take actions to further the organizing effort. This might involve:

- Continuing to recruit and train organizers and identify block captains
- Beginning a canvassing campaign to publicize the organizing effort and opportunities for residents to get involved

Working Group Meeting on March 31st, 2016.

The working group should discuss outcomes and agreements from the February Reclaim Roxbury meeting to move forward in developing and implementing the organizing strategy. Components of this strategy that have already been identified and should be discussed in more detail include:

- What are the basic components and timeline of an organizing strategy necessary to increase citizen power in development decisions in Roxbury?
- How will the Organizing Working group gather demands for future development and planning in Roxbury from residents?
- What are short-term or winnable development fights in the community that could help galvanize residents?
- How will the organizing strategy integrate with the other groups' strategies to create a cohesive strategy and structure for Reclaim Roxbury?

Action: Between March 31st and April 28th meeting.

Between meetings, working group members can take actions to further the organizing effort. This might involve:

- Convening additional community meetings to communicate with residents, build community support, and establish a process for discussing community demands and engaging in the Reclaim Roxbury process
- Rolling out an independent media campaign including mailings, door tags, hand outs, leaflets, mass texts, surveys, livestreams and YouTube videos of public meetings to increase awareness of Reclaim Roxbury
- Taking direct public actions to influence ongoing development decisions and the Imagine Boston 2030 process

Reclaim Roxbury, community-wide meeting on April 28th, 2016.

This community meeting will be organized to discuss working groups' progress on implementation and to determine how to move the strategies forward over next several years to create a cohesive and impactful process. The meeting is also an opportunity to evaluate and reflect on progress made with the larger group. Some questions to consider:

- How will the Organizing Working Group continue to connect Roxbury residents to opportunities to influence neighborhood development during the Imagine Boston 2030 planning process and beyond?
- How will the Organizing Working Group continue to collaborate with other working groups to keep Roxbury informed, craft community demands, and increase community power over the coming years?

Governance and Decision-Making Structure

Participants in the Reclaim Roxbury process identified the need to create a neighborhood governance structure that represents the interests of Roxbury residents and provides a space for the neighborhood to make decisions about Roxbury that are binding. Additionally, this governance structure would help the neighborhood more directly influence development and planning in Roxbury by serving as a decision-making body on behalf of the community. Ultimately, this sort of structure could build Roxbury's political power within the city.

The small groups at the December 3rd meeting identified the following as some potential functions that the governance structure could undertake:

- Accept or reject development proposals
- Influence local zoning ordinances
- Provide a clear definition of the community of Roxbury
- Help residents understand the planning process (and specifically the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan) and identify ways the public can get involved
- Provide a record of what is happening in the neighborhood and the decisions that are being made
- Monitor and enforce a set of standards decided upon by the community
- Help coordinate and direct diverse community efforts
- Provide information and a space to discuss community issues

The small groups at the December 3rd meeting also identified the ultimate goal of this strategy as reinstating the Roxbury Neighborhood Council or a similar body to serve as a governing and decision-making body for the neighborhood. The groups highlighted that the new structure should be established by inclusive and equitable means. Because of this focus, the groups concentrated on identifying longer-term goals for the new structure.

The following points were identified during the December 3rd meeting as possible strategic goals and action items that should be discussed further during the next working group meeting:

- Making sure the process and structure is inclusive and equitable
- Developing a system of neighborhood representation to make decisions or enact legislation
- Undertaking community education efforts around the development process, land use, real estate speculation, including the formation of databases and real-time information update
- Reviewing the policies around the formation of a new neighborhood council to determine the proper process
- Reinstating the Roxbury Neighborhood Council or a similar body

Potential Pathway

Based on the action items identified by the small groups at the December 3rd meeting, one pathway forward for the working group is outlined below. This is merely a suggestion and the group should decide if this is the pathway that makes the most sense for those involved.

Working Group Meeting on January 28th, 2016.

The desired outcomes of this meeting should be: (1) set the agenda for the next three months, (2) agree to the goals for the working group, (3) identify and agree to action items and (4) delegate responsibilities. An important point for discussion in this meeting is whether the group wants to keep the goal of reinstating a new version of the Roxbury Neighborhood Council (RNC). If the group wants to maintain that goal, it should discuss what it would take to reinstate the RNC and what information is needed to inform the work. Some questions to consider in this process:

- What are the steps that need to happen to reinstate the RNC or create a new governing body?
How will this group work through those steps?
- What support is necessary to complete this work?
- Who else needs to be included in the Governance and Decision-Making Working Group?
- When and how frequently will the working group meet?
- How will the working group communicate with each other between meetings?
- Who will move forward actions identified by the working group?

Research: Between January 28th and February 25th.

Between meetings, working group members can conduct research on the following points:

- What is the legal process necessary to reinstate the RNC and grant it decision-making power?
- What was the structure of the first RNC? What about the RNC worked and what didn't work?
Why did the RNC dissolve? What can prevent a new council from dissolving?
- Are there examples of other neighborhood governing structures that the group could look to for examples?
- How does the new council gain legitimacy? How are members appointed?

The working group should coordinate with the Information Working Group to share the results of the research on the information sharing platform that the Information Group is developing.

Reclaim Roxbury, community-wide meeting on February 25, 2016.

This meeting will bring together all four working groups and community members. The Governance and Decision-Making Working Group should be prepared to share the goals and action items identified at the first working group meeting with the larger group. This will be an opportunity for the larger community and other working groups to provide feedback on the goals and actions and to agree to the working group's plan. The working group should also work with the larger group to identify human and financial resources, and to discuss ways in which the different working groups could collaborate and coordinate next steps. Also, the group could share the research completed on the Roxbury Neighborhood Council and discuss the following questions with the larger group:

- What information is still outstanding that is necessary for designing a new governance structure?
- How should the community provide input into the design of the new governance structure?

- Is there wider support for the working group's initial findings and recommendations? Does the group need to change direction at all?

Working Group Meeting on March 31st, 2016.

The Governance and Decision-Making Working Group should discuss outcomes and agreements from the February Reclaim Roxbury meeting to move forward in developing a strategy for implementing the group's goals and actions. Some questions to consider:

- **Scope of potential governance structure:** Does the governance structure focus only on development in the neighborhood? Or does it address other separate issues?
- **Authority:** How is authority derived? Should the process start within the city government? Or should the community bring the process to the city government?
- **Legitimacy:** Who needs to approve the recommendations in order to create a legitimate governance structure?
- **Involvement:** Is there anyone else that the group needs to engage? Does the City of Boston need to be involved?
- **Next Steps:** What actions need to be accomplished before others can be completed?

The working group should coordinate with the Standards and Intentional Process Design and Organizing Working Groups to make sure that each group's recommendations and actions complement one another.

Reclaim Roxbury, community-wide meeting on April 28, 2016.

This community meeting will be organized to discuss working groups' progress on implementation and to determine how to move the strategies forward over next several years to create a cohesive and impactful process. The meeting is also an opportunity to evaluate and reflect on progress made with the larger group. Some questions to consider:

- How will the Governance and Decision-Making Working Group continue to connect Roxbury residents to opportunities to influence neighborhood development during the Imagine Boston 2030 planning process and beyond?

How will the Governance and Decision-Making Working Group continue to collaborate with other working groups?

Standards and Intentional Process Design

Standards and Intentional Process Design was a strategy added by the community during the introduction of the small group activity at the December 3rd meeting. This strategy is intended to help define what standards need to be applied to the process of designing a new public engagement strategy (who needs to be included and how community members will be involved in defining standards), as well as what standards should be applied to future development and planning decisions. Small groups at the December 3rd meeting highlighted the role of standards in improving economic, social, and physical wellness through future development and planning decisions, and in leading to better process evaluation and realistic goal setting. Having clear standards will help create an intentional process design that addresses the Roxbury community's main concerns and priorities.

The action items for this strategy center around understanding the current system of development and planning (drivers of gentrification, asset and deficit mapping, etc.), understanding how standards have been created and implemented in the past in Roxbury and other communities, and using that information to inform the development of a set of standards for the process and for development. One small group at the December 3rd meeting focused on identifying core values and potential pitfalls to help guide the development of standards. (See *Standards and Intentional Process Design Notes* in a separately attached document for entire list of values and potential pitfalls identified.) These will be helpful for the working group to consider as it moves forward on the proposed action steps, which are primarily focused on designing development standards.

The following points were identified during the December 3rd meeting as possible strategic goals and action items that should be discussed further during the next working group meeting:

Potential Strategic Goals

- Implement SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) goals
- Evaluate process on an ongoing basis
- Improve economic, social, and physical wellness in the community through standards for development

Potential Short-term Actions

- Hold regular meetings to define categories of “standards” (ie. inclusion, health & wellness, housing, economy, and education)
- Conduct environmental “scan” of other communities to understand what standards for development other communities have put in place
- Understand what standards have been created in Roxbury already and what has worked or not
- Identify community assets and deficits and create an asset map
- Learn about the drivers of gentrification and educate the community
- Share information about the City of Boston's inclusionary housing decision

Potential Pathway

Based on the action items identified by the small groups at the December 3rd meeting and the recognition that the group wants to focus on standards for development and for developing an intentional process design, one pathway forward for the working group is outlined below. This is merely a suggestion and the group should decide if this is the pathway that makes the most sense for those involved.

Working Group Meeting on January 28th, 2016.

The desired outcomes of this meeting should be: (1) set the agenda for the next three months, (2) agree to the goals for the working group, (3) identify and agree to action items and (4) delegate responsibilities. Finally, the following items should be discussed at the first meeting to move the identified actions forward:

- What standards for decision-making and process design should be applied to this Reclaim Roxbury process?
- What categories of standards should be established for future development?
- What support is necessary to complete this work?
- Who else needs to be included in the Standards Working Group?
- When and how frequently will the working group meet?
- How will the working group communicate with each other between meetings?
- Who will move forward actions identified by the working group?

Research: Between January 28th and February 25th.

Between the first and second meeting, working group members can research the following items or recruit students, organizations, or other residents to support the research.

- What standards have other communities implemented and were they successful in influencing development and planning decisions?
- What has been done in Roxbury already to identify and enforce standards for development?
- Who has done asset mapping already in Roxbury? How can these maps inform the process? What information is missing from existing maps?
- What are the drivers of gentrification?

The Information and Organizing Working Groups have also highlighted resource mapping in Roxbury as a priority. There is an opportunity to collaborate on this research. The working group should also coordinate with the Information Working Group to share the results of the research on the information sharing platform that the Information Group is developing.

Reclaim Roxbury, community-wide meeting on February 25, 2016.

This meeting will bring together all four working groups and community members. The Standards and Process Design Working Group should be prepared to share the goals and action items identified at the first working group meeting with the larger group. This will be an opportunity for the larger community and other working groups to provide feedback on the goals and actions and to agree to the working group's plan. The working group should also work with the larger group to identify human and financial resources, and to discuss ways in which the different working groups could collaborate and coordinate next steps.

Working Group Meeting on March 31st, 2016.

The working group should take any feedback and agreements from the February Reclaim Roxbury meeting to discuss and agree to a strategy for implementing the Standards and Process Design Working Group goals and actions. Some questions to consider:

- How will the Standards and Process Design Working Group coordinate with the other working groups?
- What actions need to be accomplished before others can be completed?
- How will the Standards and Process Design Working Group monitor and enforce the recommended standards?
- Does the group want to recommend any standards for engaging with Roxbury to the Imagine Boston process?

The working group should coordinate with the Governance and Decision-Making and Organizing Working Groups to ensure that each group's recommendations and actions complement one another.

Reclaim Roxbury, community-wide meeting on April 28, 2016

This community meeting will be organized to discuss working groups' progress on implementation and to determine how to move the strategies forward over next several years to create a cohesive and impactful process. The meeting is also an opportunity to evaluate and reflect on progress made with the larger group. Some questions to consider:

- How will the Standards and Process Design Working Group continue to connect Roxbury residents to opportunities to influence neighborhood development during the Imagine Boston 2030 planning process and beyond?
- How will the Standards and Process Design Working Group continue to collaborate with other working groups to keep Roxbury informed, craft community demands, and increase community power over the coming years?

Information Strategy

The need for a specific strategy dedicated to collecting, producing, and disseminating information in Roxbury emerged from discussions during the first stakeholder meeting on November 5th. Meeting participants expressed that without a clear, centralized way of accessing information, residents consistently go uninformed about important events, opportunities, development projects and decisions that affect the neighborhood. In addition to creating a streamlined process for accessing information, the collection, creation, and *ownership* of data and knowledge was highlighted as an important mechanism for increased community power and control. Guiding principles for the strategies identified by the information group included “putting people first” and making the process as inclusive as possible with different types of information: multi-lingual, visual, and accessible to all residents.

As information and knowledge creation will be a key component of the work of all of the four working groups, the information group will have an important role to play in coordinating efforts.

The following points were identified during the December 3rd meeting as possible strategic goals and action items that should be discussed and clarified further during the next working group meeting:

Potential Strategic Goals

- Gather, synthesize, and distribute information
- Communicate a shared vision for the future—a vision to Reclaim Roxbury
- Create centralized platform for collecting and disseminating information
- Evaluate and reflect on process

Potential Short-term Actions

- Identify community groups that need to be involved and groups who already have information, and reach into these existing platforms
- Identify places to share information
- Conduct research, verification and fact-finding; know the process
- Research history of BRA, Roxbury and urban renewal
- Think through how to take advantage of technology
- Create a strategy for disseminating information
- Conduct outreach through canvassing, going door to door, conducting a survey, using social media
- Develop messaging through open forums, multimedia and development of a common map
- Hold study groups, community meetings

Potential Pathway

Based on the action items identified by the small groups at the December 3rd meeting, one pathway forward for the working group is outlined below. This is merely a suggestion and the group should decide if this is the pathway that makes the most sense for those involved.

Working Group Meeting on January 28th, 2016.

The desired outcomes of this meeting should be: (1) set the agenda for the next three months, (2) agree to the goals for the working group, (3) identify and agree to action items and (4) delegate responsibilities. Finally, the following items should be discussed at the first meeting to move the identified actions forward:

- **Centralized location for information sharing:** Should information be centralized into a digital platform, a physical location in the neighborhood or both? How will residents both contribute to it and draw from it? In the case of a digital platform, who can be brought in to help develop this?
- **Creation of discussion forums/online presence:** Should this group create their own forums and social media presence, or should it act more as a coordinating body for existing forums/outlets?
- **Working group process:** What support is necessary to complete this work? Who else needs to be included in the Information Working Group? When and how frequently the working group will meet? How will the working group communicate with each other between meetings? Who will move forward actions identified by the working group?

Research: Between January 28th and February 25th.

Between meetings, working group members can create an inventory of existing information resources in the neighborhood. This process could involve online research, phone calls to local organizations, or even a community survey. Questions to address could include:

- What print news sources are circulating in Roxbury? Are there specific locations where print information can be collected? What local media outlets exist?
- How is information from the city being accessed by community members? What online platforms or discussion forums are Roxbury residents using? Who manages these?

The Organizing Working Group has also highlighted resource mapping in Roxbury as a priority. There is an opportunity to collaborate on this research.

Reclaim Roxbury, community-wide meeting on February 25, 2016.

This meeting will bring together all four working groups and community members. The Information Working Group should be prepared to share the goals and action items identified at the first working group meeting with the larger group. This will be an opportunity for the larger community and other working groups to provide feedback on the goals and actions and to agree to the working group's plan. The working group could also work with the larger group to identify human and financial resources, and to discuss ways in which the different working groups could collaborate and coordinate next steps. The following items should also be discussed:

- **Share research results and identify information gaps:** Of all the information sources identified, what is missing? What information do Roxbury residents want, but don't have access to? What is preventing residents from accessing existing information?

- **Identify human resources:** Are there graphic designers, web developers, programmers, translators, organizers, writers etc. who would be willing to collaborate with the information working group? If there are not already resources within the community, what assistance could be accessed outside the community?

Working Group Meeting on March 31st, 2016.

The working group should discuss outcomes and agreements from the February Reclaim Roxbury meeting to move forward in developing and implementing the organizing strategy. Other questions to consider at this stage could include:

- Does the Information Working Group want to engage with the Imagine Boston 2030 process and if so, how? Imagine Boston could provide an opportunity to test how residents access, contribute to, and engage with the information strategy that the group creates.
- Is outreach necessary to let residents know that new resources for information sharing are in place and what form should this take? This could involve canvassing or coordinating with other working groups or local organizations to get the word out.

Reclaim Roxbury, community-wide meeting on April 28, 2016

This community meeting will be organized to discuss working groups' progress on implementation and to determine how to move the strategies forward over next several years to create a cohesive and impactful process. The meeting is also an opportunity to evaluate and reflect on progress made with the larger group. Some questions to consider:

- How will the Information Working Group continue to connect Roxbury residents to opportunities to influence neighborhood development during the Imagine Boston 2030 planning process and beyond?
- How will the Information Working Group continue to collaborate with other working groups?