

# NEWLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES IN GREATER BOSTON

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**T**hus far the case studies in this report have focused on areas with sizeable and often growing concentrations of a particular racial or ethnic group (e.g., Asian Americans in Quincy or Latinos in East Boston). Another key part of the changing faces of Greater Boston story is areas that are increasingly diverse across multiple groups. “Diversity” is often thought of as synonymous with “non-white,” but that is incorrect, strictly defined. Diversity means having a mix of different people represented across multiple groups. So, in this section we explore communities that were once predominantly white and have rapidly transformed to become more diverse in recent years. We also look at the increase in people who identify as multiracial; not only are Boston’s communities of color growing, but families are increasingly forming across racial and ethnic lines.

After detailing some of these trends at the regional level, we then look closely at Boston’s Hyde Park

neighborhood and the city of Malden to provide two brief case studies that illustrate how growing diversity is playing out on the ground. Through these case studies we focus on this report’s overarching three key dimensions and find that: 1) skyrocketing housing costs within Boston have forced many residents, but especially people of color and those with lower incomes, to search for housing outside of the urban core; 2) these newly diverse areas tend to have relatively lower levels of economic inequality; and 3) community-based organizations tend to respond more quickly than political institutions to represent the unique interests of newly diverse communities, although all forms of representation lag behind this rapid demographic change.

In recent years, these residential shifts have led some suburbs to become almost as diverse as Boston itself. Cities like Randolph to the south and Lynn to the north now rival Boston in terms of racial diversity (**Figure 6.1**).

FIGURE 6.1

## Several Boston suburbs are now almost as racially diverse as Boston.

Top 10 most diverse cities in Greater Boston, 2016.

City	Rank	Diversity Index	White	Latino	African American	Asian American	Native American	Other	Multiracial
Boston	1	69.7%	45.3%	19.0%	22.8%	9.3%	0.2%	1.0%	2.4%
Randolph	2	69.1%	37.6%	7.8%	38.4%	11.7%	0.1%	2.0%	2.6%
Lynn	3	68.3%	39.0%	38.0%	11.5%	7.9%	0.2%	0.9%	2.6%
Everett	4	68.0%	48.0%	21.9%	18.9%	7.0%	0.0%	1.2%	3.0%
Malden	5	67.9%	48.6%	9.7%	14.7%	23.0%	0.1%	0.9%	3.1%
Brockton	6	67.3%	39.6%	10.1%	39.5%	1.8%	0.3%	5.8%	2.9%
Lowell	7	66.9%	49.4%	19.4%	6.7%	21.0%	0.3%	1.1%	2.1%
Revere	8	57.2%	58.4%	28.4%	4.7%	5.5%	0.1%	0.5%	2.4%
Cambridge	9	57.2%	62.2%	8.5%	10.0%	15.2%	0.2%	0.3%	3.6%
Quincy	10	54.3%	61.2%	3.2%	5.1%	28.0%	0.2%	0.3%	2.1%

Source: 2012–2016 American Community Survey

There’s also a striking cluster of cities north of Boston that has diversified especially rapidly: Malden, Everett, Revere, Chelsea and Lynn all used to be majority white just a couple of decades ago and now are among the most diverse cities in Greater Boston. (All but Chelsea make the top 10 list; Chelsea is the 13th most diverse).

Comparisons of racial diversity can be tough to conceptualize because they involve looking across multiple racial/ethnic categories all at once. For this reason, we use the “diversity index” in several places throughout this section. The diversity index factors in the relative sizes of multiple racial groups, ultimately calculating the odds that two people chosen at random will be different from each other.

Among Boston neighborhoods, Mission Hill is the most diverse, having been near the top of the diversity rankings citywide for some time (Figure 6.2). Hyde Park, however, is unique in that today it’s among Boston’s most diverse neighborhoods, but was not 25 years ago. The share of people of color living in Hyde Park increased dramatically from 28 percent in 1990 to 74 percent in 2016.

As diversity increases throughout the region, more families are forming across racial lines. And as a result, our multiracial population is also growing rapidly. While traditionally the U.S. Census only allowed respondents to select a single race, this changed in 2000 when people could then select as many race categories as reflected their true identity. In Greater Boston, our multiracial population made up 2.5 percent in 2000, but has since expanded by about 30 percent to now comprise 3.3 percent of the region’s population. The multiracial population share for Boston proper is even higher, having grown from 4.4 percent to 4.9 percent between 2000 and 2016. These multiracial estimates are distinct from all others cited in this report because they include people of Latino ethnicity, who make

FIGURE 6.2

**Hyde Park is now among Boston’s most diverse neighborhoods.**

Top 10 most diverse Boston neighborhoods. 2016.

	<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Diversity Index</b>
1	Mission Hill	70.9%
2	Dorchester	70.8%
3	Hyde Park	66.6%
4	South End	64.0%
5	Roslindale	63.9%
6	Roxbury	62.2%
7	Allston	61.9%
8	Jamaica Plain	61.5%
9	Downtown	57.4%
10	Fenway	57.1%

Source: 2012–2016 American Community Survey.

up a significant portion of the multiracial population. Elsewhere, Latinos are separated into their own group, regardless of their race. The multiracial population in Boston is 4.9 percent when including Latinos and 2.4 percent when treating Latinos separately (as we do in Figure 6.1).

These local trends are directly related to the share of interracial newlyweds having steadily increased from 3 percent in 1967 to 17 percent of new marriages nationwide by 2015.<sup>i</sup> In this way, multiracial identity is also expanding at the level of the household.

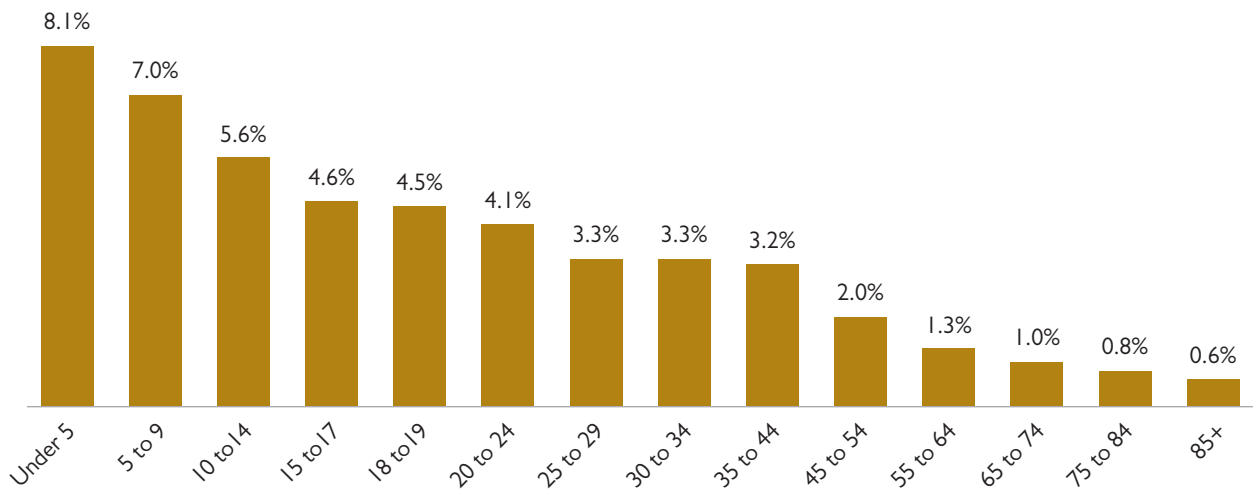
It’s important to note that these estimates of our multiracial population almost certainly understate the true share of individuals with multiple racial/ethnic backgrounds. Although respondents now have the option of selecting two or more races on the Census, they still do not have the option of selecting multiple

<sup>i</sup> Hansi Lo Wang. “Steep Rise in Interracial Marriages among Newlyweds 50 Years after They Became Legal.” National Public Radio (accessed March 13, 2019). <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/05/18/528939766/five-fold-increase-in-interracial-marriages-50-years-after-they-became-legal>

FIGURE 6.3

### Younger people are more likely to be multiracial, suggesting that growth in our region's share of people who identify as multiracial will continue over time.

Share of age group that identifies with two or more races. Greater Boston. 2016.



Source: 2012–2016 American Community Survey

ethnicities—people are only given the binary option of selecting “Hispanic/Latino” or “not Hispanic/Latino.”

Looking just at the share of the total population that identifies as multiracial masks a bit of the real growth that is occurring in Greater Boston. Younger people are much more likely to be multiracial, with over 8 percent

of children under age five being multiracial compared with less than 1 percent for people 75 years or older (Figure 6.3). The multiracial population share steadily declines as age increases, suggesting that increasing ethnic and racial diversity is associated with a new and steadily growing multiracial population.

With this broader context in mind, we analyze the cases of Malden and Hyde Park, where ethnic and racial diversity has increased rapidly in recent years.

#### Malden

Malden is a city of 60,000 people just five miles north of Boston. The city was once home to a robust manufacturing base along the Malden River that produced textiles, metals and military supplies. Malden

is deeply integrated with the city of Boston, connected by major roadways and transit lines. Its proximity and accessibility to Boston have made Malden a more affordable alternative to living within Boston's urban core. In recent years, Malden—along with neighboring cities like Chelsea and Everett—have become destinations for local and international families, immigrants and refugees from all corners of the world. Though a city in its own right, Malden is both closer to the heart of Boston and more urban than some outlying Boston neighborhoods, including Hyde Park.

Almost 90 percent white in 1990, Malden has dramatically diversified over a short period of time (Figure 6.4). Today, its population is over 50 percent people of color. The city lost 17,801 white residents during this period, but losses were more than offset by rapid growth in communities of color and new immigrants. Collectively, the non-white population grew 379 percent since 1990. The Asian and Pacific Islander population expanded the most, while African American and Latino groups more than tripled their (smaller) respective shares of the city population. Overall, this

**FIGURE 6.4**  
**Malden has gotten much more diverse since 1990.**

Population share by race and ethnicity.

	1990	2016	% change
White	88.0%	48.6%	-45%
Latino	2.6%	9.7%	+268%
African American	4.0%	14.7%	+269%
Asian American	5.2%	23.0%	+343%
Native American	0.1%	0.1%	+6%
Other	0.1%	0.9%	+598%
Multiracial	-	3.1%	-
Total	53804	60732	+13%
Diversity Index	22.1%	67.9%	+207%

Note: Respondents did not have the option of selecting more than one race on the 1990 Census.

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2012–2016 American Community Survey.

**FIGURE 6.5**  
**Immigrants to Malden come from many regions of the world.**

Top 10 places of birth outside the U.S. Malden, 2016.

<b>Total foreign-born:</b>	<b>25,972</b>
China	5,903
Haiti	3,248
Brazil	1,970
India	1,571
Vietnam	1,469
El Salvador	1,131
Morocco	943
Italy	551
Saudi Arabia	432
Nepal	425

Source: 2012–2016 American Community Survey.

amounts to a huge uptick in diversity, captured by the diversity index, which grew from 22 percent in 1990 to 68 percent in 2016. In fact, today Malden’s diversity index is just two percentage points lower than Boston’s.

Much of Malden’s increasing diversity has been driven by immigration. The wide-ranging origins of Malden’s growing foreign-born community truly make the city a center of multiculturalism. Between 1990 and 2016, the foreign-born population grew in share from 14 percent to 43 percent. The Chinese make up the largest foreign-born subpopulation, which has grown significantly to a total of 5,903 foreign-born Chinese residents (Figure 6.5). The number of residents born in Haiti has also jumped—to 3,248 in 2016—forming the second-largest foreign-born community in Malden. Other large foreign-born communities have come from Latin America, Asia and North Africa.

**ECONOMIC INEQUALITY ACROSS RACE AND ETHNICITY**

In 2016, median household income for the city of Malden overall was \$60,085, which is slightly higher than that of Boston. Interestingly, median income for white households in Malden is much lower than in Boston, but is higher or substantially higher for most other groups (Figure 6.6). This type of equity across ethno-racial groups may uniquely contribute to well-being and social cohesion within a region characterized by relatively stark economic disparities between racial groups.

Poverty rates are also lower in Malden than in Boston, especially for Latinos, whose poverty rate is about one third that of Latinos in Boston. Combined, income and poverty levels for the Latino group in Malden indicate that this group is faring much better here than in the region overall or in Boston, where Latino income is the lowest and poverty the highest.

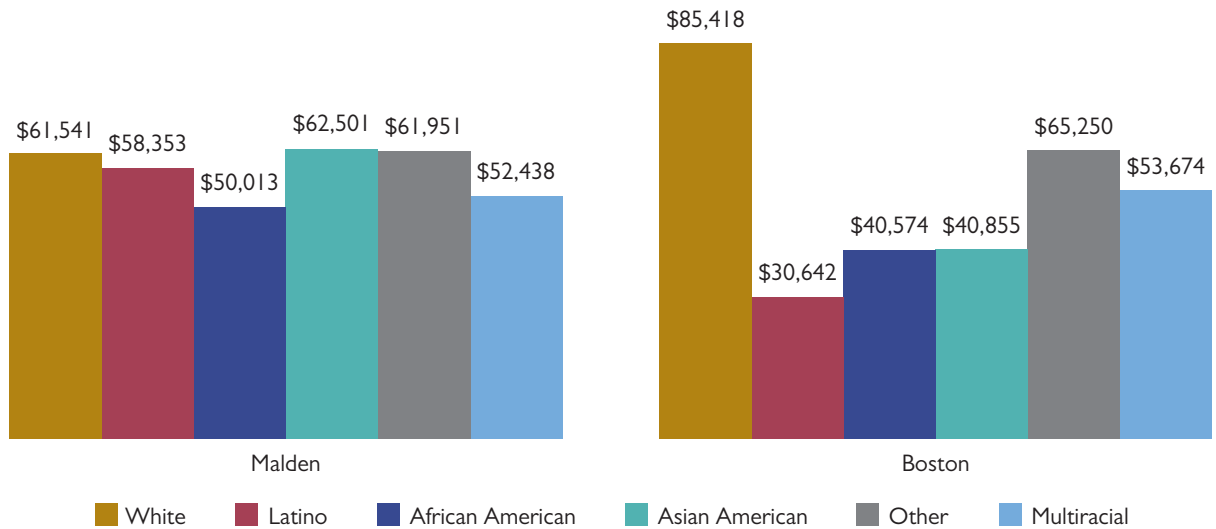
A more nuanced story emerges for Asian Americans, who have both the highest incomes and the highest poverty rate in Malden. This suggests some degree of intragroup economic inequality in the Asian American community. Educational attainment data seem to support this notion.

Asian Americans in Malden have the highest level of educational attainment, with nearly 45 percent holding a bachelor’s degree or higher. Thus, considering the characteristics of the Asian American community

FIGURE 6.6

**Racial income disparities are lower in Malden than in Boston.**

Median household income in 2017 inflation-adjusted dollars.



Source: 2012–2016 American Community Survey

in Malden along the three dimensions of 1) income, 2) poverty and 3) educational attainment, the data indicate a polarized or bimodal education and income distribution.

Overall, Malden has a lower share of college graduates and a higher share of individuals with a high school credential or less, relative to Boston. This is particularly true for white residents of Malden, who tend to be from working-class families. Lower educational attainment almost certainly contributes to white and Asian American residents of Malden earning less compared with their more highly educated counterparts in Boston and Greater Boston, respectively.

**THE COST OF HOUSING**

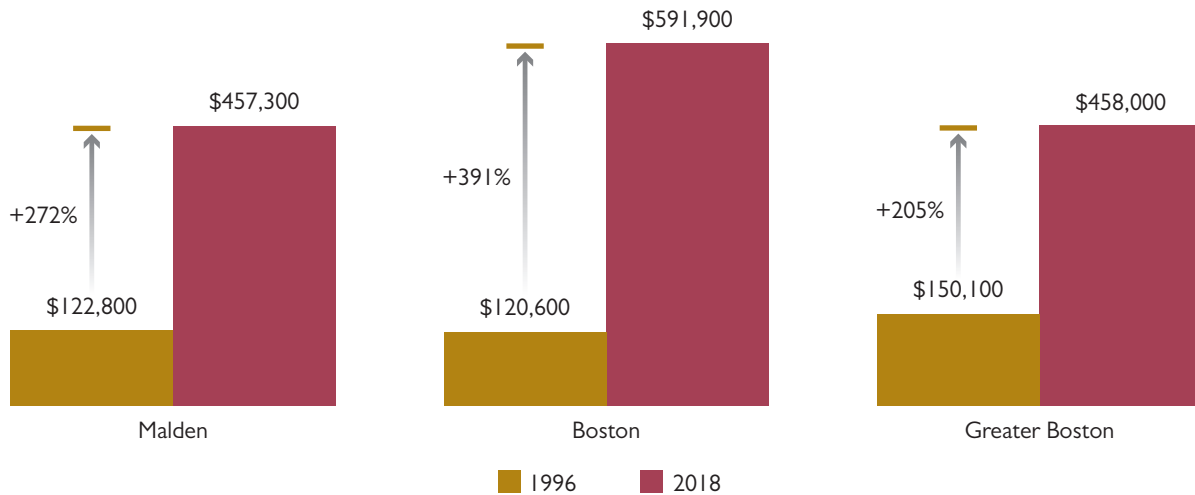
Located relatively close to downtown Boston, Malden shares many urban characteristics with inner core Boston neighborhoods. Malden has high population density and a relatively dense housing stock, particularly when compared with outlying Boston neighborhoods like Hyde Park. Growth in home values in Malden has been more moderate than in Boston, similar to Hyde Park. In fact, if Malden is placed into the context of

Boston neighborhoods, the city would be tied with Hyde Park for most affordable in Boston (Roxbury and Mattapan are cheaper but becoming more expensive more quickly). However, set against the backdrop of trends in the regional housing market, Malden has seen disproportionately high growth in home values (**Figure 6.7**). While a variety of new construction is currently underway, an affordability crisis is unfolding for the most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged. With a large and growing immigrant community, new housing development will have to be sensitive to the economic realities facing newly arriving and less established families. Trends in the housing market present serious risk for displacement from Malden as home values and rents continue to rise.

Homeownership is higher in Malden than in Boston, but is still much lower than homeownership throughout Greater Boston. Despite Malden's having higher homeownership rates than Boston for all race groups, disparities across groups follow a familiar trend. Homeownership is highest among white residents of Malden and Boston, and quite low for Latinos in both

FIGURE 6.7  
**Malden is comparatively affordable given its proximity to Boston, but home values are rising rapidly.**

Median home values.



Source: Zillow Home Value Index.

places. Specifically, Malden's white homeownership rate is 48 percent, versus Boston's 44 percent. For Latinos, the gap is a bit wider—23 percent of Malden's Latinos own homes versus just 16 percent of Boston's Latinos.

**CIVIC AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION**

Elected officials who represent the people of Malden at city, state and federal levels tend to not reflect the new diversity of their constituents. Malden residents are represented at the state level by Massachusetts Senator Jason Lewis and Congressman Steven Ultrino—both white men. Katherine Clark, who is also white, has represented the city in the U.S. Congress since 2013. Much like representatives for state and federal government, there seems to be little racial diversity among the city's elected representatives. Although it is difficult to establish the exact demographic characteristics of city officials without self-reported data, it appears there is one city councilor of color and four women among 11 city councilors and the mayor.

There are, however, a wide range of civic, community-based and religious organizations that provide services and support to Malden residents of all backgrounds.

For instance, the Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) office in Malden helps lower-income residents access public assistance and provides legal assistance to immigrants. The Malden Interfaith Association meets monthly, gathering together local reverends, imams and rabbis alongside local political leaders and other key stakeholders in the community.

Civic organizations provide a great deal of support for people of all backgrounds and work to minimize tension across groups in Malden. Groups like the Immigrant Learning Center (ILC) and the Muslim Outreach Community and Reform Center work to bring people together and increase cross-cultural tolerance and understanding. For example, since 2001, the ILC has administered an outreach program that promotes the ways immigrants contribute to society. As another example of cross-cultural cooperation in Malden, the Chinese Culture Connection (CCC) supports efforts to build cross-cultural connections with other local communities in the area through educational programs and the arts. Thanks to the hard work of civil servants and community-based organizations, one of the most

diverse cities in the state is also a place where people come together to support one another and stand in solidarity. For example, in the aftermath of an anti-Muslim incident several years ago, an interfaith vigil was held, where a representative of the ILC said, “The important message from the vigil was that we are one, and the only thing that really matters is not where we’re from, how we look or which religion we practice, it’s how we treat each other.”<sup>ii</sup>

### Hyde Park

The southernmost neighborhood in Boston, Hyde Park historically served as a manufacturing center and residential village for predominately Irish and Italian families. As manufacturing declined, Hyde Park continued to serve as a bedroom community, with a disproportionately large share of single family homes and greater affordability than other Boston neighborhoods

closer to the urban core. Connected to downtown by the Boston-Providence commuter rail line and filled with large greenspace areas, the neighborhood largely maintains its “small town in the city” character.

Since 1990, Hyde Park has undergone tremendous demographic change, losing more than 12,000 white residents—once its largest racial subgroup by far. Over the course of roughly one generation, the white share of the neighborhood plummeted from 72 percent to 26 percent (Figure 6.8).

Fast growth in communities of color, however, more than made up for these losses. The most significant growth took place in the Latino and African American communities. The African American population more than doubled in population share from 22 percent to 46 percent, while the Latino population grew even faster, jumping from 4 percent to 23 percent. In fact, by

FIGURE 6.8

### Hyde Park has gotten much more diverse since 1990.

Population share by race and ethnicity.

	1990	2016	% change
White	72.3%	25.6%	-65%
Latino	4.3%	22.8%	+428%
African American	21.9%	46.4%	+112%
Asian American	1.0%	1.7%	+70%
Native American	0.2%	0.1%	-62%
Other	0.2%	1.1%	+502%
Multiracial	-	2.2%	-
Total	30490	36123	+18%
Diversity Index	42.7%	66.6%	+56%

Note: Respondents did not have the option of selecting more than one race on the 1990 Census.

Source: U.S. Census 1990, 2012–2016 American Community Survey.

FIGURE 6.9

### More than two-thirds of Hyde Park’s foreign-born population is from the Caribbean.

Place of birth of foreign-born population, 2016.

Total foreign-born:	10,175
Haiti	3,638
Dominican Republic	1,320
Jamaica	1,218
Barbados	388
Nigeria	382
Trinidad and Tobago	297
Italy	205
Colombia	203
Ireland	159
Honduras	139

Source: 2012–2016 American Community Survey.

<sup>ii</sup> Nathan Lamb, “Interfaith Healing in Malden.” Wicked Local, April 24, 2013 (accessed January 30, 2019). <https://www.wickedlocal.com/x94497819/Interfaith-healing-in-Malden>. Additionally, to gain deeper understanding of the local Malden context, Boston Indicators interviewed the Malden Mayor Gary Christenson, as well as representatives from the Immigrant Learning Center and the Action for Boston Community Development Malden office – the Mystic Valley Opportunity Center.

2016, Hyde Park became the third most diverse Boston neighborhood (after Mission Hill and Dorchester), according to the diversity index.

Much of the growth in communities of color in Hyde Park comes from an increase in the foreign-born population. In 2016, nearly 7,000 African American residents and about 2,000 Latinos were born outside of the United States. Growth in foreign-born black and Latino communities comes largely from the Caribbean, with more than half of Hyde Park’s foreign-born community coming from Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago (Figure 6.9). The Irish and Italian foreign-born, however, remain among the 10 largest foreign-born groups, as members of longstanding communities of European origins in Hyde Park.

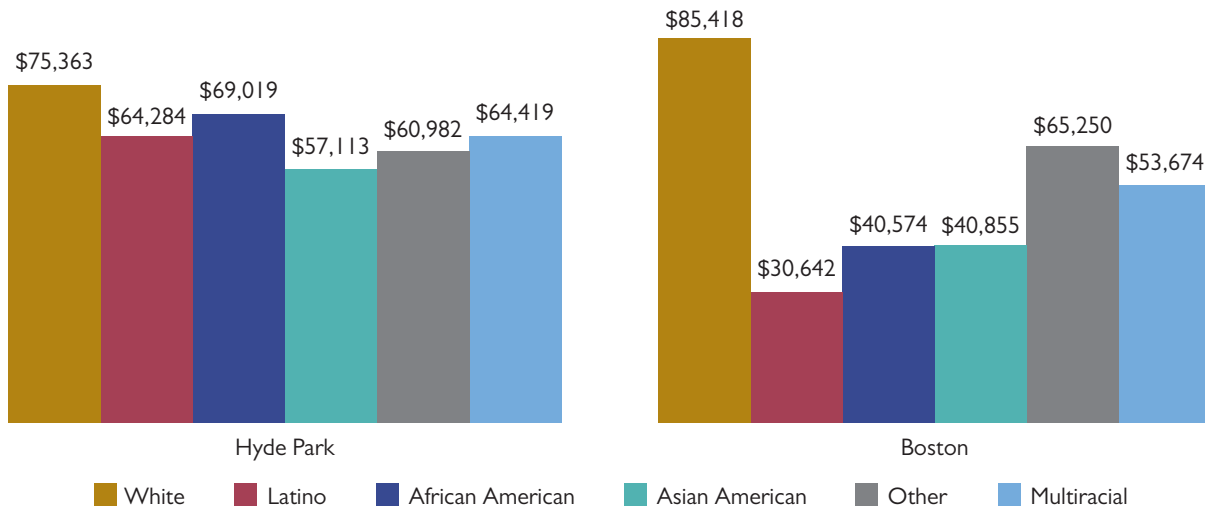
**INCOME INEQUALITY ACROSS RACE AND ETHNICITY**

Boston is a city with a great deal of economic inequality, where people of color often do not benefit from the booming economy as much as white residents do.<sup>iii</sup>

However, Hyde Park has much less of this inequality than the city overall. Part of this story is that median household income for all communities of color (except the Census category “Other Race”) is higher in Hyde Park than it is in Boston overall. For example, median household income for black households in Boston is \$39,746, but in Hyde Park it is \$69,019. Similarly, median household income for Latino households in Boston is \$31,167, while in Hyde Park it is \$64,284 (Figure 6.10). These enormous differences in income suggest that Hyde Park is a place for upwardly mobile and professional families of color, in many cases. Interestingly, median household incomes among the white population are about \$10,000 lower in Hyde Park than citywide.

While median incomes tend to be higher in Hyde Park than in Boston overall, poverty rates are lower for nearly all race groups in the neighborhood. Lower poverty rates may be in part related to the neighborhood’s provision of affordable housing, which advocates suggest is insufficient. Of all housing units in Hyde Park, 15 percent are income-restricted, representing just 3

**FIGURE 6.10**  
**Racial income disparities are substantially lower in Hyde Park than citywide.**  
 Median household income in 2017 inflation-adjusted dollars.



Source: 2012–2016 American Community Survey.

<sup>iii</sup> Luc Schuster and Peter Ciurczak, *Boston’s Booming... But for Whom?* Boston Indicators, October 2018. <https://www.tbf.org/-/media/tbf/reports-and-covers/2018/bostonisbooming20181010.pdf>



percent of affordable units throughout Boston. This places Hyde Park a bit below average for the provision of affordable housing relative to other neighborhoods in the city, and effectively limits the number of poor people that can afford to live in the neighborhood.

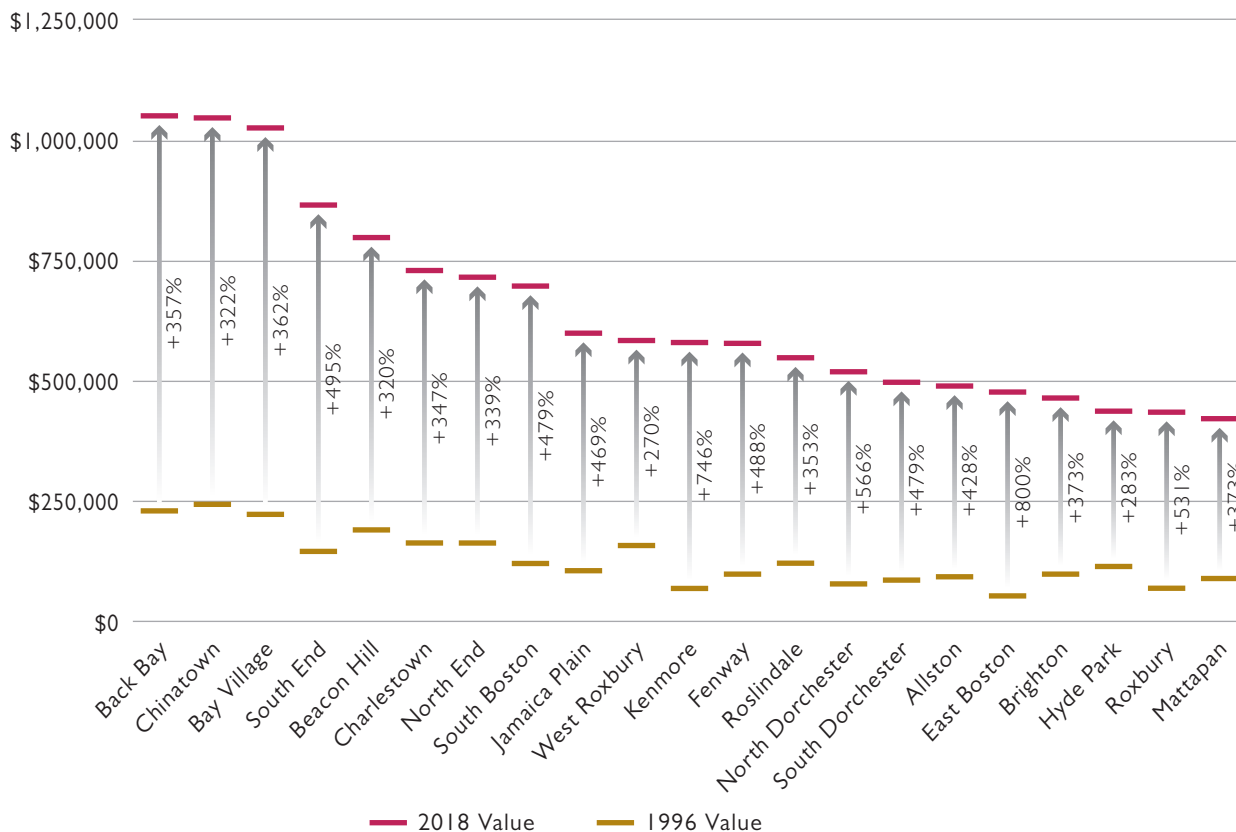
**THE COST OF HOUSING**

Between 1996 and 2018, home values in the city of Boston have increased in value by 391 percent. This is approaching four times the growth in home values nationwide, which only increased by 119 percent during the same time period. Hyde Park also experienced dramatic increases, but prices increased more slowly than in every other Boston neighborhood except for West Roxbury. While places like East Boston increased by 800 percent, and South Boston increased 479 percent, home values in Hyde Park increased by 283

percent (Figure 6.11). Of course, this is still a large increase that places significant financial strain on those who've sought a home in Hyde Park. But compared with other neighborhoods, Hyde Park remains arguably the most affordable place to live in Boston, when both growth in home values and the current median home value are considered.

Homeownership rates in Hyde Park are substantially higher than they are in Boston overall, largely resulting from relatively higher incomes and a much higher concentration of single family housing than in most other Boston neighborhoods. Hyde Park's higher homeownership rates overall, however, do not correspond with more equitable homeownership across race and ethnic groups. Homeownership is highest among white households in both places—75

**FIGURE 6.11**  
**Hyde Park is still one of Boston's most affordable neighborhoods.**  
 Median home values.



Source: Zillow Home Value Index.

percent in Hyde Park and 41 percent in Boston overall. Meanwhile, Latinos are at the lower end of the homeownership distribution in both places, with a homeownership rate of 47 percent in Hyde Park and a mere 16 percent citywide. Latinos have attained a higher degree of economic wellbeing in Hyde Park relative to the city, but still lag the prosperity of the longstanding white community there.

A good deal of recently constructed and planned development in Hyde Park follows the transit-oriented-development (TOD) model, particularly along the Fairmount Corridor commuter rail stations. New housing plans seek to provide more affordable units and accessibility to public transportation. However, there are concerns among longtime residents about the scale of development,<sup>iv</sup> and that not enough has been done to ensure the creation of an adequate stock of truly affordable units. With median home values and rents as high as they are, displacement continues to be a pressing issue for the most economically disadvantaged residents of Hyde Park, as it is throughout the city.

### CIVIC AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

As the population of Hyde Park has rapidly diversified, political representation appears to be changing to some degree as well, even if at a slower pace than civic organizations. Residents of Hyde Park are represented at the statehouse by State Representative Angelo Scaccia, a white male serving since 1980, and State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, a woman of color serving since 2009. For the U.S. Congress, Representative Michael Capuano, also a white male, served from 1998 until he lost reelection in 2018 to Ayanna Pressley, another woman of color. At the city level, Hyde Park is currently represented by District 5 City Councilor Timothy McCarthy, a white male elected in 2013, who recently decided not to seek reelection. A number of candidates of color have since emerged in the contest for District 5 City Councilor.

Hyde Park also has a relatively robust civic infrastructure, with many community groups dedicated to increasing well-being among all communities that call the neighborhood home. Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation is an example of a community-based organization working to support low income residents and advance racial equity in Hyde Park by creating and preserving affordable housing. Hyde Park Main Streets is another locally-based group that provides assistance for local businesses, delivering a variety of business services, such as matching grants for store improvements. There are also civic groups that exist to support the unique needs of particular ethnic groups, such as Youth and Family Enrichment Services Inc. (YoFES) and The Boston Haiti Health Support Team, which both work in the Haitian community.

Even as community leaders work to bring diverse groups and interests together, and empower the local business community, some residents feel that there is a long way to go.<sup>v</sup> Specifically, there is a desire for a more vibrant business district with a wider variety of amenities. Newer residents have entered a context where political and business power structures have traditionally been dominated by the more established white community. Older businesses in some cases have been less than welcoming to the growing share of customers who are people of color. Longstanding community events such as the Anderson tree lighting, or even the more recent 150th Anniversary of Hyde Park, have notably struggled to engage effectively with communities of color and the immigrant community. This has created some friction between various community based organizations and different segments of the community. Community leaders recognize these significant challenges and have made attempts to unite the community, with a common vision for a more vibrant and welcoming Hyde Park.

<sup>iv</sup> Tim Logan, "Plans to Add Housing Rile Readville." *The Boston Globe*, March 2019. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2019/03/10/readville/yBTvklhn8ziAngTxr6T3HL/story.html>

<sup>v</sup> Boston Indicators interviewed the Mayor's Liaison for Hyde Park, as well as representatives from Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation, and Hyde Park Main Streets to gain perspectives from local leaders.

## CLOSING THOUGHTS: NOT JUST DIVERSITY, BUT EQUITY AND INCLUSION

By Elena Stone, Program Development Specialist, Collaborative of Asian American, Native American, Latino, and African American Institutes, UMass Boston

**M**ore than two decades ago, the Boston Foundation and UMass Boston joined forces to document the changing realities of Boston's population in their report *A Dream Deferred: Changing Demographics, Challenges & New Opportunities for Boston*. While noting that "harsh, troubling and prolonged realities" of inequality stubbornly persisted for Boston's communities of color, *A Dream Deferred* concluded with a call:

to build a new community in Boston that learns from the past while harnessing the current forces of change. This new Boston would recognize that racial and ethnic diversity creates opportunities, rather than burdens, for all of the city's residents (*Watanabe et al., 1996*).

Our current report shows that, in many ways, this call is still an aspirational one, and one that must be heard region-wide, not just in Boston proper. Not only do adversities remain, but some have been exacerbated by a considerably more polarized political and economic climate on the national level. Even locally, challenges related to polarization highlight the need to go beyond merely tolerating differences, indeed to celebrate our region's racial diversity and to take action to make equity and inclusion on every level a reality.

This report attempts to capture some of these complexities. As we consider the three themes that our essays address, a picture unfolds not only of the challenges that come with changing regional demographics, but of the accompanying opportunities to consider new models and approaches for making Greater Boston a welcoming and thriving hub for everyone who calls it home.

### RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS AND HOUSING ISSUES

The growing scarcity of affordable housing is an important catalyst for the latest demographic shifts within Greater Boston. While much of the growing diversity in outlying cities and towns may be due to immigration from abroad, there is ample evidence that the limited availability of affordable housing in the urban core is also pushing all kinds of families away from neighborhoods where they otherwise may prefer to live. Among them are many who settled in Boston as migrants fleeing poverty, violence or repression who may once again feel pressure—this time from tightening economic screws—to leave a community they call home. It is important to think about how best to support the families making tough choices in order to stay afloat financially, the neighborhoods struggling to ensure that new development benefits existing communities, and the municipalities called to embrace increasing diversity as new populations arrive.

The experience of the Native American community of Aquinnah highlights a striking variation on this theme—displaced residents returning home when federal recognition for the Aquinnah Wampanoag tribe made it possible to offer affordable housing to low-income tribal members. Rather than seeing the Aquinnah story as an outlier, we might consider it as a model of the power of affordable housing to stabilize and enhance a community.

## **INCOME STRATIFICATION, POLARIZATION AND INEQUALITY**

While our report documents severe income disparities correlated with race and ethnicity throughout Boston and the region, it is interesting to note how the level of economic inequality varies among neighborhoods, cities and towns. Particularly striking is the story of Malden, where less substantial income inequality seems to coincide with a greater sense of inclusion and the ability to incorporate diverse groups into the social fabric. It is worth further exploring the relationship between these two factors in order to better understand how to promote both economic equity and social inclusion as communities become more diverse. Equally important to note are income variations within broad populations, reminding us how new immigrant subgroups can change the face of racial and ethnic communities over time, challenging expectations and bringing with them diverse experiences and needs.

These essays point to the question of how we can build on already proven pathways to economic success, such as immigrant entrepreneurship, to create new possibilities for economic growth for communities of color, while at the same time increasing access to opportunities in the tech sector and other areas of regional economic growth. For this, education is key. While this report did not identify education as one of its major themes, each community studied has pointed to educational disparities as a critical factor to overcome in order to achieve greater economic equity. Our region needs the perspectives, skills and wisdom of all its residents to create a future of growing and inclusive prosperity. As we educate and train an up-and-coming generation to take its place in a 21st century economy, we must help students of all backgrounds to become not just workers but leaders, who use their knowledge, creativity and voices to move all of us forward.

## **POLITICAL, BUSINESS AND CIVIC REPRESENTATION**

Since the *A Dream Deferred* report, Boston proper has seen a significant leap in political representation, with its elected officials better reflecting the racial and ethnic diversity of the city. In line with national trends, this shift has largely been driven by women of color. As of this writing, women of color now hold six out of 13 seats on the Boston City Council, including the Council presidency. The Massachusetts 7th District Congressional seat, which includes about three quarters of Boston as well as surrounding cities and towns, is now held by an African American woman, the first woman of color to serve in the state's delegation. Other cities and towns discussed in this report have experienced varying levels of progress when it comes to diversifying their political landscapes, with Quincy standing out as a city whose Asian American population has increased electoral participation and increased political representation at both local and state levels.

Both business and civic representation provide pathways to political leadership for immigrants and people of color, as well as being in and of themselves important avenues for improving communities and neighborhoods. In this report, we see, for example, the powerful role that Cape Verdean and Haitian businesses owners play in recycling dollars into black communities, and the transformative effect of Vietnamese and Colombian-owned businesses on Fields Corner and East Boston, respectively. A question worth raising is whether such business know-how and related cultural capital can be shared across ethnic and racial lines, as a way of building majority-minority economic representation while developing leadership on a cross-cultural basis.

In the nonprofit arena, we see how civic and community-based organizations—from Casa Guatemala in Waltham to VietAID in Fields Corner, from Roxbury’s Nubian Square Coalition to the North American Indian Center of Boston in Jamaica Plain—make it possible for populations of color to advocate for themselves, serve the needs of vulnerable members, and engage with the larger community. This is particularly important because often, as we see in a number of neighborhoods and towns cited in this report, community-based organizations are ahead of the political arena when it comes to representing underserved groups that are relatively new to a given area. But many of these groups are sorely under-resourced, relying on volunteer labor and donations, and even those that are more established operate on a shoestring in a difficult funding environment. It is critical that the funding and government sectors recognize the key role that such groups play in addressing unmet needs and leveling the playing field as populations become increasingly diverse. These organizations, including those emerging in diversifying areas outside of Boston proper, need robust and consistent support. Finally, we must consider how best to leverage the entrepreneurial and nonprofit sectors as incubators for civic and political leadership, creating more pathways for residents of color to move into elected and appointed positions that give their communities a voice in policy making.

Finally, our hope is that the end of this report is the beginning of many conversations within and across Greater Boston. There is much work to be done, and we hope that the stories told here help to spark dialogue, suggest opportunities and motivate those who care deeply about our evolving diversity to work together toward a future of full equity and inclusion and a dream no longer deferred.