

A Summary of the Upham's Corner Arts and Innovation District Planning and Community Process



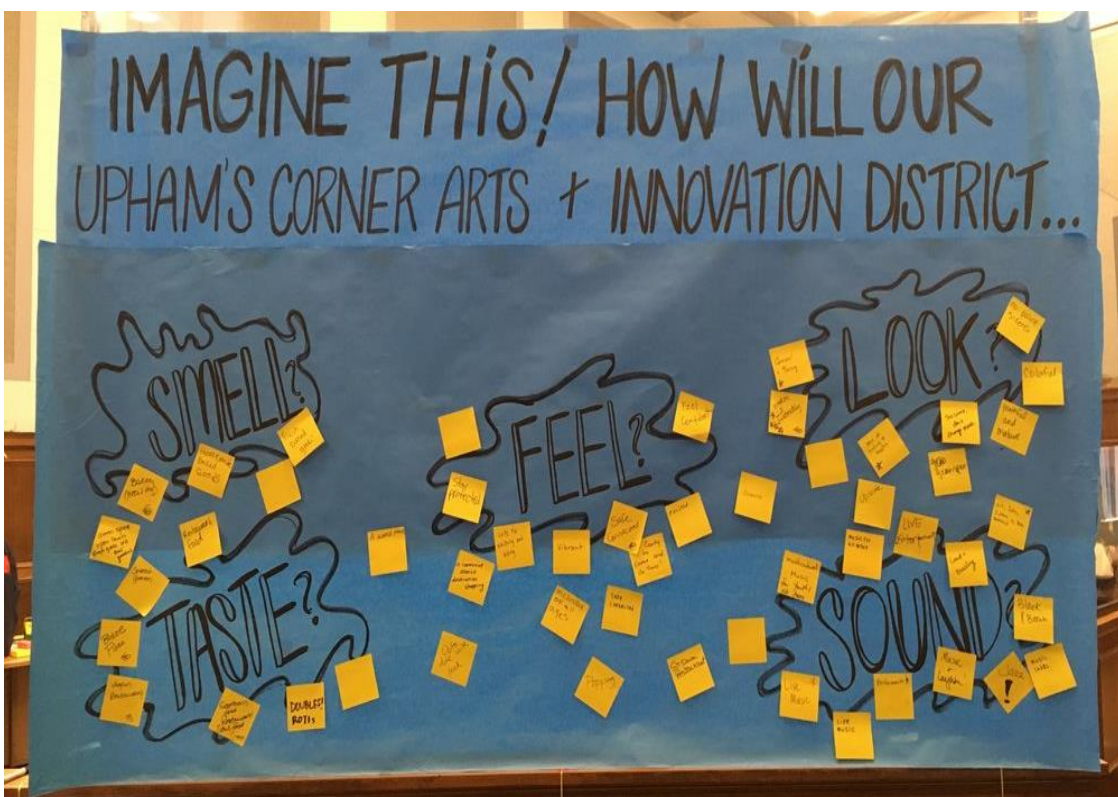
“The history of Upham’s Corner is the history of multiple waves of immigrant communities. It’s a rich, checkered, sometimes unhappy history, but that history can also become the source of its transformation. Creation of an Upham's Corner Arts Innovation District, with immigrant communities as the thematic center of the story, and an approach that views the neighborhood as a whole entity rather than as a number of unrelated pieces can spur the transformation of the neighborhood into a vibrant and exciting place to live, work and play. “

Benny Sato Ambush, Theatre Maker, Artistic Director

Regarding the collaboration between the City of Boston and DSNI

“...has been built on the tremendous work of residents and organizations over the past decade. This ground-breaking collaboration not only pushes development without displacement in Upham's Corner but is also a model of community-driven development for the rest of the city.”

Denise Barros Interim Executive Director 2018/19



Timeline

Dark Blue: City program, people, or organizations
Dark Orange: Community program, people, or organizations
Green: Funder

The Walsh Administration held a Transition Town Hall, where the idea of an "Innovation District" first emerged.

A committee was formed and brought together community members, thought-leaders, and public servants to study the idea of an innovation district and to make proposals. The committee divided its work among four subcommittees: Inclusion, Neighborhood Choice, Infrastructure and Encouraging Entrepreneurship.

2012 - 2014

The **Fairmount Cultural Corridor** (originally known as **Upham's Corner ArtPlace**), a collaborative placemaking initiative designed to advance a vision in the Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan neighborhoods located along the Fairmount commuter rail line that draws upon the local cultural assets and ethnic traditions of the Corridor's residents.

Supported by **the Boston Foundation** and **ArtPlace America**

PARTNERSHIP OF:

- City
- Community
 - Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI)
 - Design Studio for Social Intervention (ds4si)
- Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation (DBEDC)
 - Fairmount/Indigo CDC Collaborative
 - Four Corners Main Street
 - Greater Four Corners Action Coalition
 - Upham's Corner Main Street

Arts Organizations

- Art Morpheus
- Dorchester Arts Collaborative
- José Mateo Ballet Theatre

Education Institutions

- Berklee College of Music
- UMass Boston, William Monroe
- Trotter Institute for the Study of African American Culture and History

The Fairmount Cultural Corridor Initiative Activities have included:

- The Public Kitchen, StreetLab Uphams and MP3 Making Planning Process Public

Residents and creative practitioners in local leadership engagement activities as:

- The Arts and Culture Committee

Creative placemaking initiatives such as:

- Artists in Residence along the Fairmount Corridor in neighborhoods like: Uphams Corner, Four Corners, Dudley, and projected future residences in other neighborhoods
- Artist in Transit along Fairmount Line
- Expressing-Boston Public Art Fellows

Creative cultural events and activities that cover the gamut:

- The Multicultural Arts Festival, Jose Mateo Ballet Dorchester Ballet Classes, Dorchester Open Studios

Creative economy strategies:

- UP Market and the Fairmount Creative Industry Lab and Accelerator

2004

Mayor Thomas Menino convened the **Task Force on the Future of the Strand Theatre** to determine criteria for new management of the **Strand Theatre**, since the City's 25-year lease with the non-profit **M. Harriet McCormack Center for the Arts** to operate the **Strand Theatre** was coming to an end.

The **Task Force on the Future of the Strand Theatre** published a report outlining their recommendations.

The **Department of Neighborhood Development (DND)** released an RFP to lease and repair the **Strand Theatre**.

APRIL 2014

The **Uphams Corner Station Area Plan** is released, as part of the **Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative**, to establish a framework for future improvements and investment to enhance both the commercial center of Upham's Corner and the surrounding neighborhoods. The study included a year-long process with community workshops and public meetings under the guidance of a Working Advisory Group (WAG) comprised of local residents, business owners and stakeholders.

FALL 2014

The **Neighborhood Innovation District Committee** convened several times and offered recommendations to inform present and future designs for a proposed series of Neighborhood-based innovation districts.

The committee coalesced around the idea of the **Dudley Square-Uphams Corner Corridor** as the initial area to pilot the viability of a series of Neighborhood Innovation Districts. The Dudley-Uphams Corridor was selected with the clear goal that the pilot area will inform the creation of future Neighborhood Innovation Districts and for city-wide policy.

The **Fairmount/Indigo Line CDC Collaborative (FICC)** adopts a **Strategic Plan for 2015-2018**.

Mayor Martin J. Walsh launches **Boston Creates**, the first cultural planning process for the City of Boston.

Final version of **Imagine Boston 2030 (citywide plan)** is made public

- Mandated the creation of at least three **Arts Innovation Districts**
- **Acquisition Opportunity Program**
 - Department of Neighborhood Development (DND)
 - Loan helped to fund the acquisition of DNICB

The **Boston Performing Arts Facilities Assessment** was conducted by **TDC**, a nonprofit management consulting and research firm, in partnership with the **BPDA** and the **Mayor's Office**, to study artists' spaces.

Public workshops are convened, to gather community input about the **library** and the **Strand Theatre**, to be incorporated into the **Request for Proposals (RFP)** as part of the **Upham's Corner Implementation process**.

The **Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC)** publishes "Upham's Corner Cultural Planning Study: Phase Two"

Request for Interest (RFI) released to gather public information on private property owners interested in disposing their properties to be developed as part of the **Upham's Corner Implementation process**, as well as to solicit organizations interested in operating the **Strand Theatre**.

MAY 2015

SEPT 2015

JUNE 2016

FEB 2017

JULY 2017

OCT 2017

NOV 2017

MAY 2018

JUNE 2018

SUMMER 2018

JULY 2019

Mayor Walsh publicly released the economic development report by the **Neighborhood Innovation District Committee**, announcing the pilot "Innovation District" to focus on the corridor between Uphams Corner and Dudley Square.

572 Columbia Road (a commercial property) is acquired by the **community land trust, Dudley Neighbors, Inc.** **Interim name of the property: Dudley Neighbors, Inc. Community Building (DNICB)**

Upham's Corner Implementation launched with a public kick-off event.

- Product of **Imagine Boston 2030 + Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative**

CITY
 Convened by:
 • **BPDA**
 • **Mayor's Office of Economic Development**

COMMUNITY
 Convened by:
 • **DSNI**
 Represented by:
 • **Working Advisory Group (WAG) 2017-present**
 • Appointed by the **Mayor** will reconvene for **Article 80**

Upham's Corner Main Street publishes report "Uphams Corner Retail Priorities"

Tuft's University Partners with DSNI to support assessment of UCAID planning process



Goals



The Strand Theatre a cultural anchor to Upham's Corner

Vision Statement

Upham's Corner is a revitalized commercial, cultural and community center that is a celebration of diversity and an arts and cultural anchor of the Fairmount Indigo Corridor.

Working Advisory Group

This document builds on earlier community-oriented planning processes and is a reflection of; ideas and priorities expressed by the community members participating in a robust public outreach process, and is guided by a community-based advisory group.

The Working Advisory Group (WAG), is a City-appointed advisory group for this process and includes residents, business owners, advocates and other community leaders who have been meeting regularly throughout the process to help shape the content of public meetings and review community feedback.

Several members of the WAG participated in previous planning initiatives and offered continuity to the process, connecting planning with implementation.

DSNI was instrumental in identifying resident leaders for the WAG seats. DSNI continues to support planning, facilitation and convening of the WAG

Community Goals

The goals of the community vision are to:

- Minimize displacement of current residents and businesses to preserve diversity
- Protect existing community assets found in the current residents, businesses, and historic sites and buildings of Upham's Corner
- Strengthen businesses and activity to revitalize and support the commercial and cultural center
- Reinforce a walkable neighborhood orientation through public realm and open space improvements to enhance Station Area quality of life
- Provide new housing opportunities near the station and Main Streets District to support vitality
- Reinforce a direct connection between the center of activity and the rail station

The recommendations within each topic area have been prioritized by the community as part of a community open house and online review of the draft Station Area Plan.

Quality of Life

The Station Area is anchored by the unique cultural asset of the Strand Theatre and a vital collection of community and health centers, historic buildings and residences that provide strong anchors. The following approaches build upon existing amenities to improve quality of life:

PRIORITY

- A Art and Culture** - capitalize on the unique district opportunity to showcase public art, artists, and performance.
- B Public Safety** - address resident, business and visitor safety concerns through active and thriving ground floor uses, well-lit pedestrian-oriented streets and a renewed sense of pride.
- C Traffic and Parking** - reduce congestion on Dudley Street and Columbia Road with turn lane improvements, relocated bus stops, and parking management.
- D Community Amenities** - reinforce events and programs at community centers, health centers and training centers through a coordinated network information and displays to connect the community.
- E Sustainability** - become an exemplar of healthy neighborhoods socially, economically and environmentally.

The Salvation Army's Kroo Community Center



UPHAM'S CORNER STATION AREA PLAN

PLANNING



Revealed a deep and widespread need for **affordable cultural spaces** for people to gather, create, collaborate, and participate in the arts - **especially arts that reflect their culture in their own neighborhoods.**

For non-profit arts providers, **access to facilities** that are affordable and appropriate for performance and the visual arts disciplines emerged as a common theme, especially from small and mid-sized organizations.



Overview

The Vision: A Different Kind of Neighborhood Arts District

The Upham's Corner Arts and Innovation District (UCAID) is a co-created vision that includes multiple stakeholders, through an abundant amount of community engagements and community feedback. UCAID is based on our belief that sustainable opportunities for local residents and businesses can be created by drawing out and empowering the significant artistic and entrepreneurial talent that exists in the neighborhood. This vision is centered on the presence of the 100 year old Strand Theatre, a historic asset that has already catalyzed several decades of career development for performing artists and theatre technical professionals.

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) and the City of Boston are co-leading the planning process to define the UCAID and identify site developers. As a community based organization with deep roots and relationship in the community, DSNI's role has been key to the process to ensure that residents are leading and engaged in the planning, ideation and implementation of the UCAID. In addition, DSNI holds ownership over one of the future development sites, through its Community Land Trust (CLT), Dudley Neighbors Incorporated.

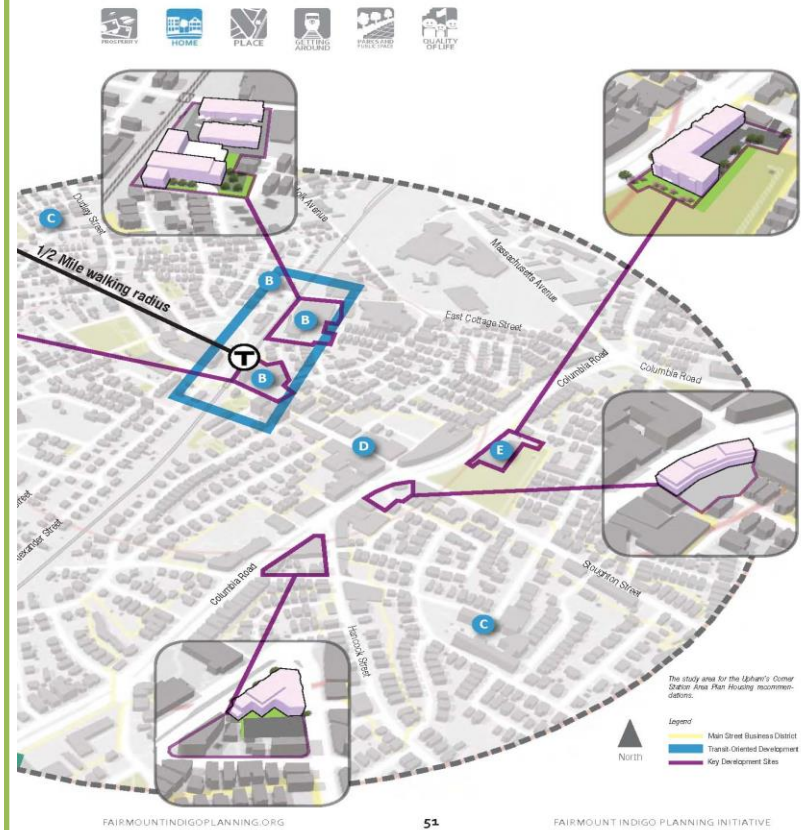
Development without Displacement

This unique partnership is fully committed to working closely with community partners to promote economic development without displacement. Strategic public investment in the creation of affordable housing and affordable commercial space along the Fairmount Indigo corridor is intended to preempt gentrification typified by private speculation attracted by public investment in transportation.

Our vision is for Upham's Corner to become a hub of creative activity with physical assets in close proximity to each other linked by programmatic partnerships. The district will include the Strand Theatre, the Upham's Corner Branch Library, smaller performance venues, sites for connected small businesses, and affordable housing with a significant portion set aside for visual and performing artists. Small business development will be supported by the City of Boston, DSNI and local agencies such as the Upham's Corner Main Street and Fairmount Innovation Lab.

Together, we envision an Arts and Innovation District where:

- Economic development is anchored by cultural uses that can occupy new or renovated spaces and are enhanced and expanded to provide local residents, entrepreneurs, small businesses, and artists with the housing, venues, public amenities, and resources needed to collaborate and thrive;
- Investments, both public and private, are being made in buildings and programs in strategic response to the robust planning efforts that have led to the designation of this District, and support the cultural, ethnic, and economic diversity of the community; and,
- Committed, collaborative partnerships with deep roots and proven effectiveness in planning retain a strong voice in this new phase of creative problem-solving for the future of their neighborhood. Recognizing that entrepreneurship and innovation come in many forms, the Upham's Corner Arts and Innovation District will be designed as a hub of creativity to bolster collaboration among local residents, entrepreneurs, and business-owners participating in the greater Boston economy.



Key Findings

Prosperity

- 1 Redevelop City-owned Maxwell Property to bring new investment
- 2 Address negative impact of Leon Building - short and long term
- 3 Reinforce Upham's Corner as an arts and cultural destination
- 4 Strengthen an active and walkable Main Street District

Home

- 5 Encourage a mixed-use Main Street with new residential uses
- 6 Increase housing choice with multi-family near rail station
- 7 Infill vacant lots with new housing opportunities
- 8 Minimize displacement of existing residents

Place

- 9 Reinforce Dudley St/Columbia Rd connection to station
- 10 Improve wayfinding to Upham's Corner
- 11 Strengthen gateways into Upham's Corner

Getting Around

- 12 Create a multi-modal hub connecting to rail station
- 13 Enhance safety with neighborhood street improvements
- 14 Link connections as per Greenway Concept Plan

Parks and Public Space

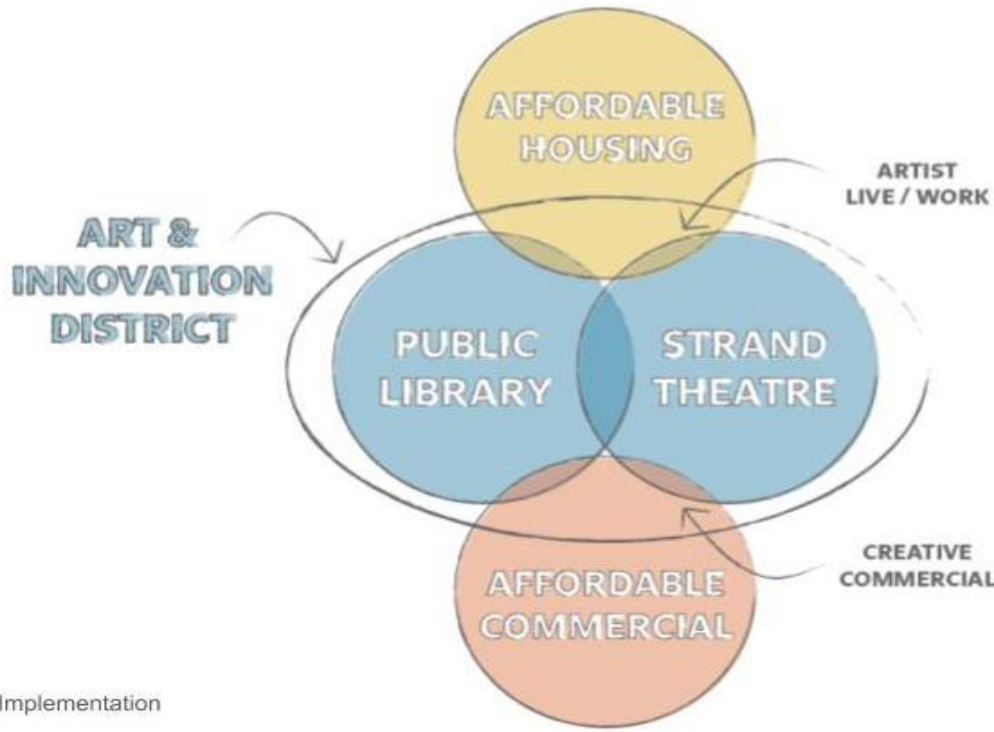
- 15 Establish new neighborhood open spaces/agriculture sites
- 16 Expand public space with rebalanced public realm improvements
- 17 Improve access to existing public space and community amenities

Quality of Life

- 18 Add a new station entrance and platform connection
- 19 Encourage shared/managed public and private parking
- 20 Promote public art as a consistent feature of the district



THE BIG PICTURE



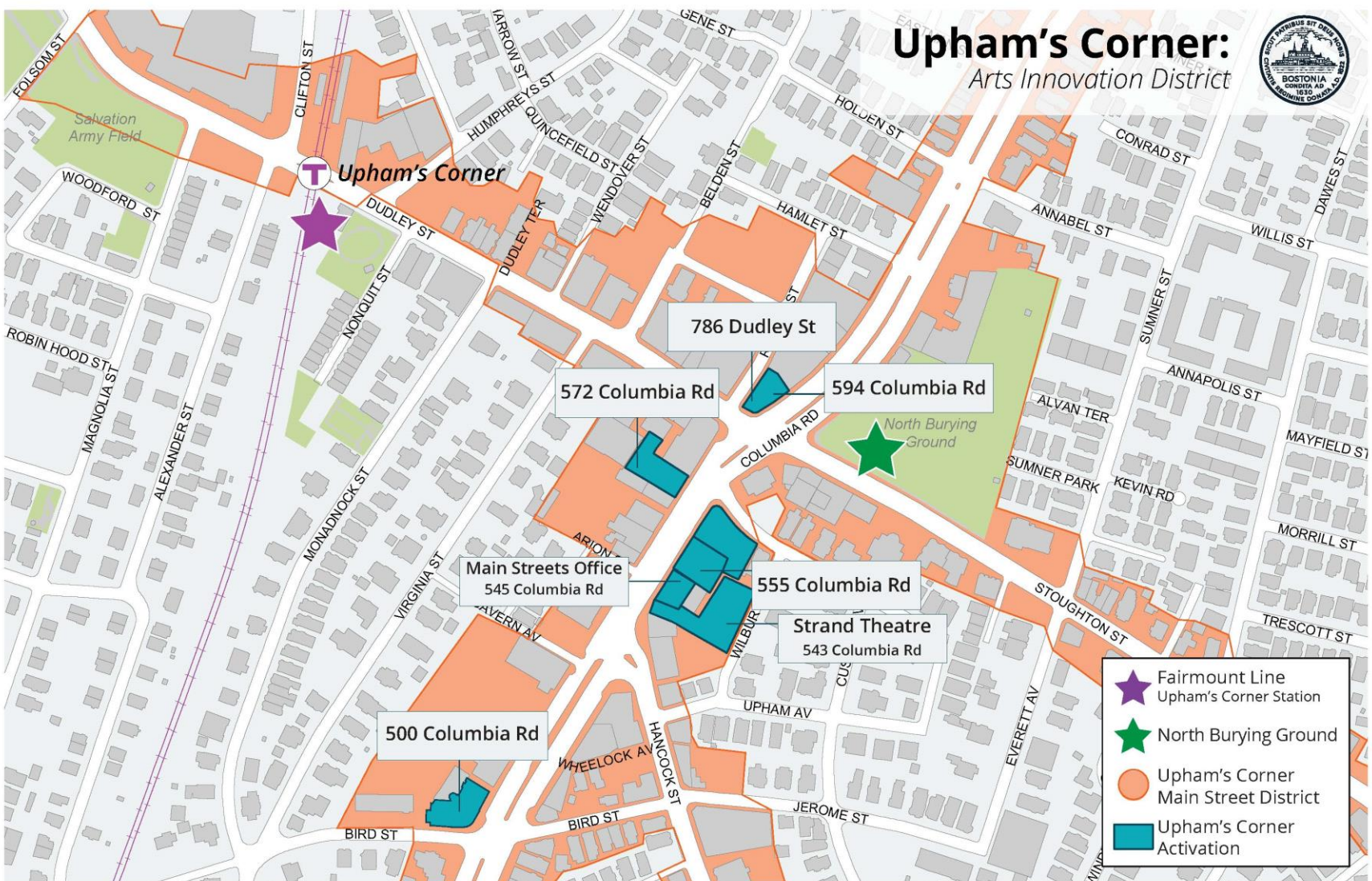
Upham's Corner Implementation

Combining Redevelopment Sites

The redevelopment of Upham's Corner into an Arts and Innovation District depends on the collaborative use of at least four separate sites/parcels; The Strand Theatre, Bank of America, The former Citizen's Bank Building, and the Municipal Lot. Each of these sites will serve a different function, but together are intended to achieve the whole vision of theUCAID. Rather than running completely separate development processes for each site, RFPs will be packaged together, giving developers the opportunity to bid on all or just select parcels.

The City owns the Strand Theater, the former Bank of America building, intended for a Library parcel and which may include housing above the library use, and a municipal parking lot. DSNI's land trust DNI owns the former Citizen's Bank building (DNICB), acquired in 2017 with a loan from the Department of Neighborhood Development. Now known as the DNICB, this site envisions mixed commercial and affordable housing uses. DSNI/DNI to retain control over their own decision-making process for this parcel, but the property is packaged with the other City-owned sites so that developers have the option to bid on multiple sites.

Written by Minnie McMahon, DSNI, Tufts Case Study



UCAID Map 2016/2017



Dudley Neighbors Inc. Community Building



One of the properties that will be developed is the DNICB (former Citizens Bank building at 572 Columbia Road in Upham's Corner) discussed on the previous page. With support from Mayor Walsh and the City of Boston, Dudley Neighbors Inc. (DNI) purchased the property and placed it on our community land trust.

The community will retain control of the land through the community land trust after development is complete. We have been coordinating with the City of Boston to ensure that DNICB development complements plans that have emerged through the larger Upham’s Corner implementation process.

The decision to release a joint RFP that includes the city-owned and DNI-owned properties reflects the neighborhood's priorities and lays the groundwork for synergy between the developments.

The parcel was acquired with a loan through the Neighborhood Development Fund. This revolving loan fund offers flexibility for DNI to drive the development process internally. The Commitment Letter leaves many details open, except for that it must be a **mixed-use, mixed- income development with 1/3 affordable, 1/3 middle income, and 1/3 market rate units.**

Community Vision: DSNI/DNI ran a process parallel to the community engagements for UCAID for the DNICB. The info graphic below captures the responses that were collected through numerous creative place-making, productive fiction and community pop-up efforts to collect feedback about the use of our building

Community Feedback on the DNICB (Dudley Neighbors Inc. Community Building)

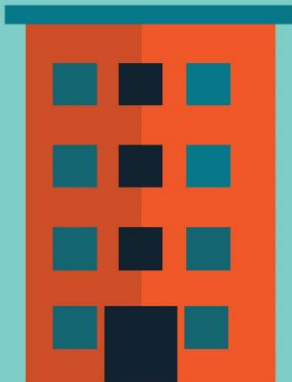


Most Popular Ideas for First Floor Commercial Uses*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Function Hall 2. Small Business Market/ Pop Ups 3. Activities for Young People 4. Job Training Programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Art Gallery 6. Homeless Shelter for Mothers and Children 7. Gym/Athletic Space 8. Community Bank/Credit Union |
|---|---|

*Based on feedback collected at DSNI Pop Ups, community meetings, and committee meetings

VOICES FROM NEIGHBORS



“People are getting pushed out of the neighborhood. Develop the neighborhood for the people who are already here.”

“Affordable for who?”

“Bring back rent control!”

HOUSING PREFERENCES

THOUGH DATA IS LIMITED, INITIAL FEEDBACK HAS SHOWN A PREFERENCE FOR:

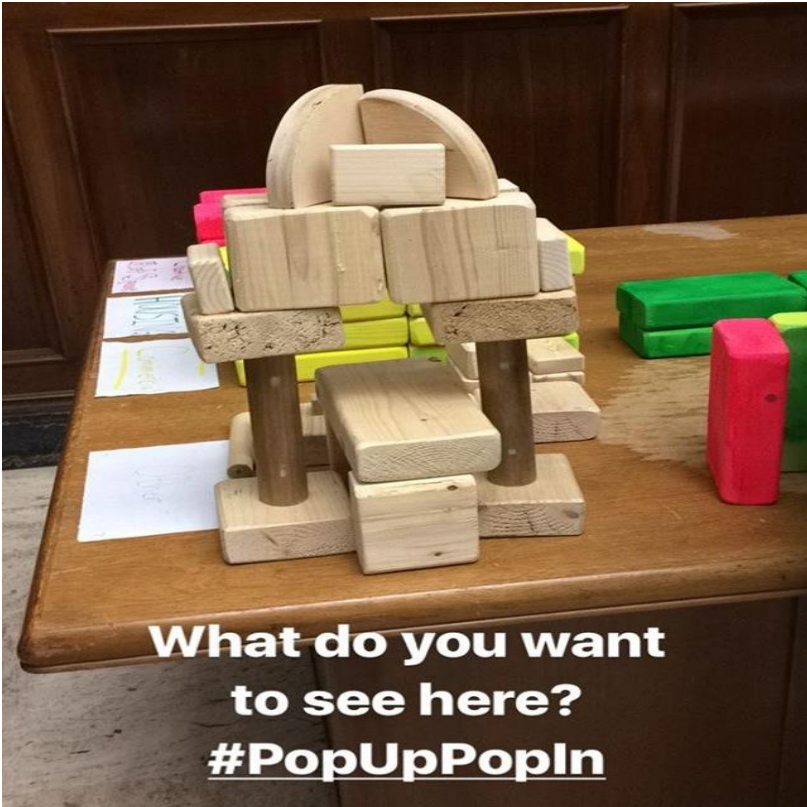
- 🏠
Opportunities for both rental and ownership
- 💰
Rental housing affordable to households making under 40K
- 👤
A mix of smaller 1-2 bedrooms for artists, seniors and singles AND 3-4 bedroom units for families

NOW WHAT?

We will continue to gather input, followed by feasibility testing to see which ideas can be successfully carried out in Uphams Corner. This process will continue until we feel like we can accurately represent community priorities in a RFP (Request for Proposals). This RFP will invite developers to apply to carry out the neighborhood’s marching orders in terms of building design, programming, workforce standards, and more. If you’re interested in being a part of this process or getting updates, please check out our website at dudleyneighbors.org or give us a call at [617-442-9670 ext #.](tel:617-442-9670)



Dudley Neighbors Inc. Community Building (DNICB) Community Process Outcomes



Process Overview:

Between February 2017 and August 2018, DSNI, DNI, and Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI) have engaged close to 700 people in creative place-making activities to determine the desired use of DNI Community Building at 572 Columbia Road. Though we were conducting our own process, we acknowledge that our development is happening within the larger context of the re-development of UCAID.

In addition to gathering input about our specific building, we have also asked questions and intend to share findings about what residents of the neighborhood would like to see in the Upham's Corner neighborhood as a whole. This has primarily occurred through a Pop Up Series (in the actual building and at various organization and neighborhood events) and has culminated with a targeted youth process.

Commercial: Though our data has not been fully analyzed, our preliminary top 10 preferred commercial uses are as follows:

1. Function Hall: events, wedding, bday, etc
2. Small Business Market/Pop Ups
3. Provide Activities for young people
4. Job Training Programs
5. Art Gallery
6. Homeless shelter for mothers and children
7. Gym/Athletic Space
8. Community Bank/Credit Union
9. Recording Studio
10. Dance Studios

Housing: Residents have shown a strong preference for:

- Opportunities for both rental and ownership
- Prioritizing DEEP AFFORDABILITY; Primarily for households making less than \$40,000 a year
- Maintaining a building under 6 stories to avoid steel construction and maximize affordability

Note: Equally strong support has been shown for having primarily 1 bedroom and studio apartments for singles, seniors, and artists AND for having primarily 3 and 4 bedroom units. Community consensus was not reached on this topic of unit mix.

Youth Voice: Dominant Themes



- *What, if anything, do you feel is missing in this neighborhood?:* Healthy and Casual Food Options; Teen-only space and programming; Sense of community
- *What would make you excited to hang out in Upham's Corner?:* Art or maker space for Black and Brown youth from the neighborhood; options of activities; sense of safety
- *Do you plan to stay in Upham's Corner?:* Yes- family, community and good location; No- violence and opportunities elsewhere
- *What would make you excited to stay in Upham's Corner?:* Safe space to hang out with friends; art or makerspace; affordable housing
- *What spaces in the neighborhood do you feel welcome in?:* Places with familiar people; casual eating spots; community centers
- *What spaces do you not feel welcome in?:* Places with adult supervision and judgement; unfamiliar places; expensive shops

Neighborhood Vision: There's plenty to add to this, but in general we have heard time and time again a desire for any development that happens in this neighborhood be designed to benefit the people who are already in this neighborhood. Residents are wary of increased displacement and want to see policies put in place (like rent control) that will prevent it.



Engaging youth in the process

Background

From early July through mid-August 2019, the DSNI hired 10 youth leaders and supported them to conduct their own community action research project related to the ongoing Upham's Corner Implementation planning process. Exploring how civic engagement can strengthen community capacity for control over land use and economic development in the neighborhood.

The Upham's Corner Implementation project began in mid-2017 and is co-facilitated by DSNI and the City of Boston. It builds on years of planning and visioning and hopes to develop several key sites to catalyze development of an arts and innovation district and create economic opportunities for existing residents while preventing displacement.

As of summer 2019, the City and DSNI had conducted a series of community meetings and engagement, guided by a multi-stakeholder advisory group, to inform the drafting of requests for proposals (RFP) for developers. While DSNI engaged ~100 youth in developing vision and perspectives around Upham's Corner redevelopment during 2018, there was acknowledgement at a March 2019 community meeting that "there was little youth input into this RFP and that is something the city and DNI would like to improve upon."



The second half of the summer was dedicated to supporting the youth to develop their collective vision for DNICB and then design and implement a workshop to share that vision. The youth discussed their overall goals for the building and decided that they wanted a welcoming, accessible, and inclusive space, for young people, that is supportive of them to live health lives and become innovators. They brainstormed a wide range of ideas for how the building could be used, including a roller rink, culinary arts programs to teach cooking and healthy eating, homeless shelter, corner store, and a rooftop vegetable garden. In small groups, they sketched out floor plans and built cardboard models of what the building could look like. These multiple ways to engage creativity helped all the youth to participate more meaningfully, especially the ones who were more quiet in group discussions.



Their summer culminated in a workshop that they designed to showcase their visions and activate the space. After the facilitation team showed the youth an example of activation -- turning the bank vault into a "dance club" with some lighting and music -- the youth team got to work figuring out how to bring the space to life and give people an experience of what the space could look and feel like. They turned the first floor of the building into three distinct spaces: a bowling alley and arcade, a zen garden with koi pond, and a movie theater/café.

On August 13, the youth welcomed community members, staff and stakeholders to their workshop. They started with lunch and introductions and then walked the participants through the spaces they created. Not only did they explain their vision, but they then invited folks to engage with the space. With duct tape, a kick ball, and soda bottles, a functioning bowling alley came to life. The youth built a koi pond out of a plastic baby pool, complete with cardboard fish and a fishing pole with a magnet hook. In the theater, the youth handed out popcorn and candy and invited the guests to sit down and enjoy a showing of the movie Moana.



UCAID Overall Community Engagement Summary

THIS AD



SUMMARY OF PUBLIC MEETINGS

October 2017-March 2019

Open House | October 04, 2017 | Upham's Corner Arts & Innovation District

- Working Advisory Group | September 07, 2017
- Working Advisory Group | October 26, 2017

Community Workshop | November 2, 2017 | A Library, A Theatre And More

- Working Advisory Group | November 15, 2017

Community Workshop | November 30, 2017 | Strand Theatre: Past, Present And Future

- Working Advisory Group | December 11, 2017

Community Engagement | January 2018 to February 2018 | Text Poll Campaign

- Working Advisory Group | January 02, 2018

Community Workshop | January 17, 2018 | What We Heard & What We Learned

Community Engagement | February 09, 2018 | DSNI Open House

- Working Advisory Group | February 28, 2018

Community Workshop | April 4, 2018 | DNI Affordable Housing & Affordable Commercial Space Block Activity, Tours of the building, collaboration with DS4SI Horizontal Development Engagement Instillation, Take a Seat arts activity

- Working Advisory Group | April 18, 2018

Community Engagement | April 26, 2018 | Pop Up 2 Group discussion regarding housing, Housing Spectrum Activity, Dot Activity

- Working Advisory Group | May 03, 2018

Community Workshop | May 16, 2018 | Development Scenarios

- Working Advisory Group | May 30, 2018
- Working Advisory Group | June 14, 2018

Community Workshop | June 28, 2018 | Draft Development Guidelines

Working Advisory Group | August 22, 2018 |

Strand Theatre Subcommittee Working Advisory Group | October 17, 2018

- Working Advisory Group | October 20, 2018
- Working Advisory Group | November 07, 2018

Community Workshop | November 28, 2018 | Draft RFP Language

- Working Advisory Group | December 05, 2018
- Working Advisory Group | January 23, 2019
- Working Advisory Group | January 30, 2019
- Working Advisory Group | February 27, 2019

Community Meeting | March 7, 2019 | RFP Release Celebration DSNI/DNI in collaboration with DS4SI led Community Engagements and Pop-ups for the Dudley Neighbors Inc. Community Building (DNICB formerly Citizen's Bank)





As part of this process, the WAG met with members of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the planning consultant team through a series of public meetings over the course of a year. Each of the fifteen WAG Meetings was open to the public and well attended. Each of the topic areas, strategies and recommendations were discussed in this series of meetings. The broader community of Upham's Corner was engaged during a community workshop held in February of 2013. The community workshop was attended by over 100 participants representing the diversity of Upham's Corner and included discussion of issues and opportunities and a shared vision. This community input is the foundation for the Station Area Plan. A community wide open house was held during January of 2014 to review the Station Area Plan. The process owes much to the dedicated effort and involvement of the WAG as they helped to craft the community vision for Upham's Corner and shape recommendations that are relevant to and representative of the voice of the community

