



# Jackson Square

## Connecting Communities, Creating a New Neighborhood

In a city as old and historically built out as Boston, new neighborhoods do not often emerge. Yet over the past decade, community-based developers and residents in the Jackson Square section of Roxbury and Jamaica Plain have had the opportunity to shape the future of vacant and blighted land in the heart of their neighborhood. From the start of the redevelopment process, CEDAC's predevelopment loans have provided two local community development corporations (CDCs) with the resources they need to ensure that the new Jackson Square will reflect the vision of local residents, who sought quality affordable housing alongside market-rate housing, commercial space, and recreation facilities.

The story of Jackson Square goes back four decades, when the Commonwealth of Massachusetts proposed building a commuter highway – the “Inner Belt” – to run through the heart of Roxbury along Columbus Avenue. Residents of Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, and other adjoining neighborhoods organized against the proposal. They prevailed in halting the construction and instead saw the creation of the below-ground Orange Line, but not before public agencies had acquired acres of land and demolished the homes that once stood there. During the decades that followed, institutional stakeholders developed Roxbury Community College, Boston Police headquarters, and Southwest Corridor Park. But in Jackson Square, nine publicly owned parcels of land comprising more than five acres continued to lay empty.

In June 1999, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) appointed a Jackson Coordinating Group with representatives from more than 30 local organizations. A comprehensive planning process over the next five years, with 80 public meetings and two charrettes, culminated in developer designation by the BRA of the Jackson Square Partners (JSP). Led by two experienced local CDCs and longtime CEDAC borrowers, the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC) and Urban Edge, Inc., JSP's vision to redevelop the sites and give new life to Jackson Square will benefit all residents, especially those most at risk of displacement from gentrification.

Ultimately, the project calls for the creation of 430 residential units, 360 of which will be affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of Boston Area Median Income (AMI). Additionally, the redevelopment will include 85,500 square feet of retail and non-profit office use, including a multi-use sports and recreation facility with a skating rink.

In 2006, CEDAC joined a consortium of local lenders that provided the Jackson Square Partners \$1.5 million in early stage financing for Master Planning of the neighborhood. This loan provided both the initial capital to create a master plan for seven separate projects and the technical assistance the partners needed to create a robust neighborhood plan including high-quality affordable housing and other amenities. As described below, CEDAC has gone on to make additional

### JACKSON COMMONS *Urban Edge, Inc., Boston*

“With a vision to bring the community back to life, Urban Edge, Jamaica Plain NDC and Hyde Square Task Force have worked together for many years to redevelop Jackson Square. CEDAC has played an integral role in this initiative.”

**Karen Royston**, Board Chair



Map courtesy of Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation

### JACKSON SQUARE INITIATIVE

- 4 DEVELOPERS AND 7 PROJECTS
- 360 RESIDENTIAL UNITS
- 85,500 SQUARE FEET OF RETAIL AND NON-PROFIT OFFICE SPACE
- CEDAC TOTAL PREDEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION TO JACKSON SQUARE: \$1,364,050

“Whether lending funds for the master planning process, supporting individual projects or advocating for the larger Jackson Square Initiative, CEDAC has played an invaluable role in this ambitious plan to transform our community.”

**Richard Thal**

Executive Director, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation

predevelopment and permanent loans to multiple affordable housing developments that emerged from that master plan.

By 2010, with CEDAC’s help, Jackson Square saw the first of the affordable housing sub-projects built. Although not technically part of the Jackson Square master plan, JPNDC’s 270 Centre Street now acts as a gateway from Jamaica Plain to the new neighborhood. With a predevelopment loan from CEDAC as well as over \$965,000 in HIF and FCF Funds, JPNDC produced 30 new units of affordable housing for residents earning between 30 and 60 percent of AMI. The building includes nearly 8,000 square feet of street-level commercial space and among the businesses is a brand new laundromat.

Completed in 2015 is a second critical affordable housing project, Urban Edge’s Jackson Commons. Located at the intersection of Centre Street and Columbus Avenue, Jackson Commons includes 37 new units of affordable housing, with six units set aside for formerly homeless families, and 12,000 square feet of office space that will house Urban Edge’s headquarters in a newly renovated century-old building with a beautifully preserved facade. CEDAC provided Urban Edge with a \$222,500 predevelopment loan for this critical project. JPNDC’s next project at 75 Amory Avenue will break ground in summer 2015. CEDAC provided this 39-unit affordable housing development with nearly \$400,000 in predevelopment financing. The project also received \$600,000 in state CBH funding. These three deals

along with Mitchell Properties’ completed mixed-use, mixed-income 225 Centre Street project adjacent to the Jackson Square MBTA station now form a ring of redevelopment around the still-vacant central Jackson Square parcels.

The redevelopment of Jackson Square through this innovative, non-profit led approach has spurred additional development in the neighborhood. Bordering Jackson Square is the Bromley-Heath Public Housing development. In 1956, Nurtury, formerly Associated Early Care and Education – the region’s oldest early care and education agency – opened a child care center in the basement of Bromley Heath, a less than ideal location to provide high quality early childhood education. By 2007, it was clear that a new learning space was needed. Nurtury launched the financing process for creating an innovative, state-of-the-art child care facility by securing a \$250,000 loan and technical assistance from CEDAC’s affiliate Children’s Investment Fund (The Fund). After years of planning and fundraising, the new Nurtury Learning Lab opened in Jackson Square in May 2014. (Read more about Nurtury on page 26).

Under the leadership of JPNDC and Urban Edge, the Jackson Square Partners continue to rebuild and revitalize Jackson Square for the benefit of the economically diverse households who live and work there. CEDAC is proud to provide the ongoing financial and technical support that allows these vital organizations to strengthen the Jackson Square community.



**75 AMORY AVENUE**  
Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation, Boston

**270 CENTRE STREET**  
Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation, Boston



**NURTURY LEARNING LAB** Nurtury, Boston See full article on page 26