

## With Playgrounds Scarce, Where Do Children Play?

BY ALISON PULTINAS

When the Boston Parks department first released its parcel-priority survey in the spring, one Fenway resident said there is no vacant land in this neighborhood, this survey doesn't apply to us. But what about playgrounds, are there enough?

Back in 1991, the *Urban Village Plan for the West Fenway: Recommendations for Strengthening our Neighborhood*,

prepared by residents working as the Kenmore Audubon Fenway Neighborhood Initiative focused on housing and economic development. However, its goals included "create more places for children of all ages to play."

Today, increased development is pressuring the city in multiple ways. In the Fenway hundreds of apartments recently constructed or in the pipeline mean more residents, crowded sidewalks, and more families.

As Karen Mauney-Brodek stated in the just-released 2019 *Emerald Necklace Conservancy Annual Report*, "since March, the importance of parks has never been clearer."

After closing in March during the pandemic shutdown, playgrounds reopened in mid-June, but Fenway families have zero access to water play. The fountain at the Christian Science Church Plaza is closed for renovation, the water spray apparatus at the Egerly Road Playground hasn't worked for some time, and even the Frog Pond on the Common is closed.

Boston Parks and Recreation commissioner Ryan Woods and environment cabinet chief Chris Cook proudly state that every Bostonian lives 10 minutes from a public park. This 10-minute (or quarter-mile) walk rule was historically supposed to apply to playgrounds as well. The 1948 City Planning Board study *Children's Playgrounds in Boston: An Evaluation of Space & Location* used the same measure for assessing access to playgrounds for children ages 6 to 11. For ages 12 to 15, the walk increased to one-third of a mile, mostly to athletic fields. But for younger ones, ages 2 to 5, the study recommended a tot lot on every block!

In 2019, two proposals for new Fenway playgrounds went public. Landing Studio, the landscape architects working with the Charlesgate Alliance, shared a design for a playground situated between Commonwealth Ave. and Beacon Street, not far from the shadow of the Bowker Overpass. In an under-the-radar proposal, the Museum of Fine Arts applied for Community Preservation Act funds to "commission an internationally renowned artist to design and build an interactive, outdoor play structure on their grounds that would be free and open to the public."



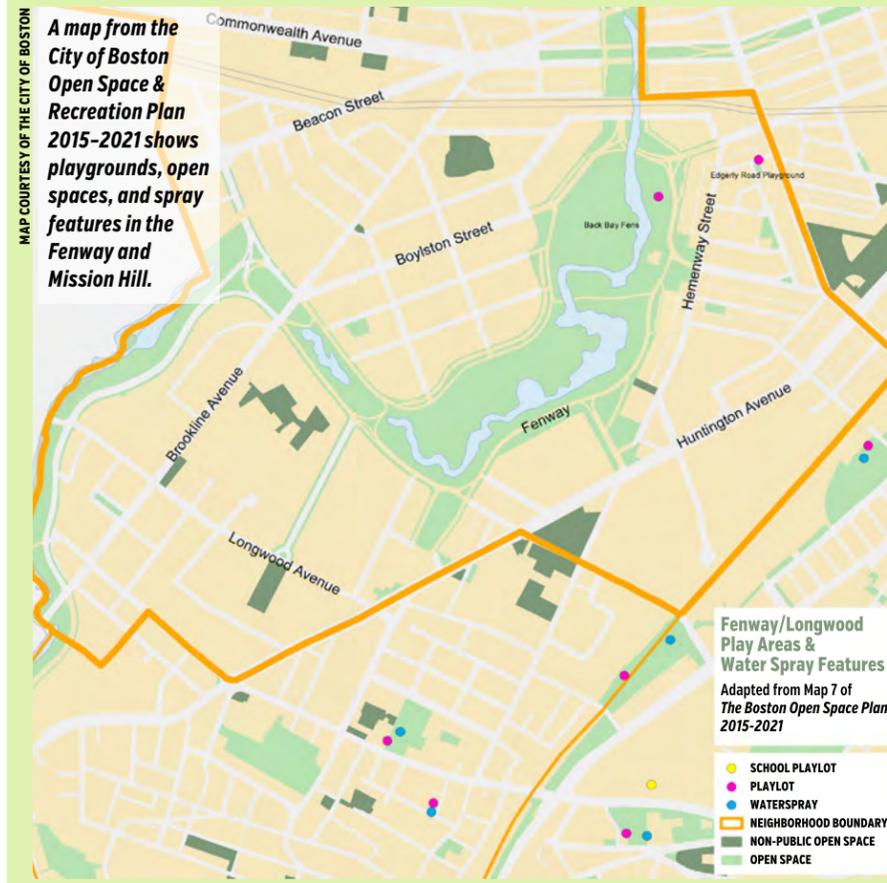
PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS

The water spray at the Egerly Road playground no longer works.

The project did not receive funding, however, and MFA spokesperson Karen Frasca stated recently that it is unlikely to move forward.

In 1948, Fenway children had access to several school yards—only the Joseph Lee playground in the Fens was owned by the Parks Department. Fens parkland at Park Drive, beginning near Jersey Street, was dedicated as the Joseph Lee Playground on July 29, 1938. Joseph Lee, Sr., was a social-minded, 19th-century Brahmin, and his personal mission was creation of playgrounds. In 1887, he petitioned the city government to open up schoolyards for summer play and built the first public playground in the country on Columbus Avenue, which featured all kinds of wild apparatuses for climbing, sliding, and digging. He wrote manifestos

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MAP COURTESY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

A map from the City of Boston Open Space & Recreation Plan 2015-2021 shows playgrounds, open spaces, and spray features in the Fenway and Mission Hill.

Fenway/Longwood Play Areas & Water Spray Features Adapted from Map 7 of The Boston Open Space Plan 2015-2021

## Back To Campus? Colleges Say They've Got a Plan For That

BY KELLY GARRITY

As colleges and universities in Boston prepare for the fall semester, many plans for student housing are still up in the air.

In the Fenway, all five of the Colleges of the Fenway (COF) consortium plan to welcome at least some students back to campus at the end of the summer.

Emmanuel College, Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (MCPHS), Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt), and Wentworth Institute of Technology all plan to follow a hybrid model. Students will be able to choose whether to attend classes both in person and online, or attend solely online.

As Simmons University president Lynn Perry Wooten announced in a letter to students and staff on July 14, Simmons plans to conduct the vast majority of its teaching and activities online this fall, "with very few exceptions," explained Laura Wareck, director of media and government relations. Exceptions include "a small number of students in clinical and field placements, practicums, research projects and those whose personal circumstances warrant specific consideration." According to Wareck, the only courses taking place on Simmons' campus will be two classes in the university's physical therapy doctorate program.

Amy Martin, a junior in the nutrition and dietetics program at Simmons, thought her school made the right call, but wished for more information about how the university

determined who can return to campus. "I think the decision overall was made with students' health in mind," said Martin, "but I think the criteria in which they decided who should come back should have been explained."

At Simmons, all students allowed to live on campus will receive information about their housing placements in early August. All students will be housed in single rooms, and no guests will be allowed in any residence halls. According to their reopening websites, the four other colleges in the COF consortium also plan to implement rules banning guests in residence halls. Emmanuel, MassArt, MCPHS, and Wentworth will offer single and double units. This has significantly limited the number of units available at some schools. MassArt, for example, can normally house 825 students. Maureen Keefe, vice president of student development at MassArt, said these new safety protocols have lowered capacity to 576, which poses a potential issue, as over 600 students have requested on-campus housing for the fall.

To increase housing capacity while maintaining health and safety guidelines, some schools have leased additional off-campus buildings to house students. Earlier this month, the City of Boston launched a pilot program allowing colleges and universities to submit requests for additional housing outside of their institutional master plans.

Some colleges and universities have capitalized on these eased restrictions, and

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PHOTO: STEVE WOLF

Long the site of gun-control messages, the Lansdowne Garage last month raised a Black Lives Matter banner. Meanwhile, local residents held two standouts near the ballpark on July 18 and July 24, opening day. The Nelson Mandela Legacy Committee organized them in conjunction with similar protests across the US in the wake of the death of George Floyd, a Black man killed by Minneapolis police in May. The viral video of his 8-minute suffocation sparked a nationwide backlash. The newly formed committee plans to hold more vigils and welcomes anyone who wishes to join or contribute to other BLM events. Email organizer Margaret Witham at pegaleg45@gmail.com for more information.

## VARIANCES MOVE SCAPE PLAN A STEP CLOSER

BY ALISON PULTINAS

The Zoning Board of Appeal resumed public hearings at the end of June, but technical problems and blurry screen sharing have frustrated meeting participants; it is difficult to even tell which board members are online.

On July 21, zoning board chair Christine Araujo made a plea for listeners to call their city councilor to get alternate members approved for the board. Without these new appointees, the board has only five members, meaning votes need to be unanimous to grant requested variances, as five is the legal quorum.

The 15-story Scape residential tower at 1260 Boylston St.—proposed to replace the block of businesses between the Sunoco gas station and The Viridian—had no difficulty getting the requisite five votes.

The developer's application for multiple variances, including excess height and insufficient open space, received 16 support letters. Speakers in favor included Pam Beale from Cornwall's, Richard Giordano from the Fenway CDC, and Harold Steward, co-director of Theater Offensive,

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BY ALISON PULTINAS

If all goes well with the C line improvements on Beacon Street in Brookline, on August 2, the MBTA's 24/7 Green Line reconstruction work will shift to E line improvements on Huntington Avenue.

The multi-staged Green Line Transformation process has previously sent work crews to the D and C lines to replace tracks, add rubberized surfacing at some intersections, and complete other upgrades. During these projects, passengers are offered free shuttles boarding close to the existing stations. The promised result is improved transit service, with slightly faster speeds on the above-ground stretches that are currently slow zones due to poor trackbed conditions.

At the behest of Mission Hill activist Richard Giordano and City Councilor Kenzie Bok, a virtual meeting was held on July 23 to review details of the August work and answer questions from E line riders and residents. Head of the transformation project Angel Peña claimed the meeting had been in the works since February. However, the announcement has only appeared on

## MBTA SHIFTS FOCUS OF GREEN LINE REPAIRS TO HUNTINGTON AVENUE



the T's website the day of the meeting, July 23.

The software used for the meeting did not allow the public to view other participants or to see how many people were listening. Comments and questions could be submitted by virtual chat or phone. Peña said he personally dropped off thousands of flyers to large residential buildings on Giordano's and Bok's lists the day before the meeting, July 22. However, it is unclear how many local residents participated in the meeting.

Facilitator Nancy Farrell, of the public relations firm Regina Villa Associates, said the 90-minute meeting would be recorded and available on the MBTA website. Many T staff and consultants presented the details of the project and attempted to answer questions—Peña, Benjamin Frison, Gwen Dunlevy, Tameika Thibodeaux, Desiree Patrice, Kimberley Woodland, Regan Checchio, and Mark Shamon.

Riding in either direction between Heath Street and the Prudential Center, either on the Route 39 bus or the Yankee shuttle buses will be free during the month-long construction period. The project will be disruptive for riders and especially for nearby residents enduring overnight noise, obstructed crosswalks, and extremely reduced street parking. In Brookline, MassDOT has set up an electronic signboard on Route 9 eastbound warning drivers of the impending Green Line construction.

The track work will take place in the center of Huntington and South Huntington, shifting travel lanes to existing parking lanes and requiring police details. The Yankee Bus shuttles offer comfortable seats and second-story views, but the Yankee bus aisles are extremely narrow and not designed for strollers or shopping carts. There are no rear exits and no buttons to push for your stop.

Giordano and Patricia Flaherty asked for a point person to be assigned for construction-related concerns, but no one was specified during the meeting. Peña offered the general email contact, GLT@mbta.com, for the Green Line Transformation project. Bus-related questions were not answered, specifically, recent route 39 changes that have eliminated inbound stops on Dalton and Boylston streets, and the route 14 service to Nubian Square that will be affected by the work at the Heath Street turnaround.

A significant goal for the project is enhanced accessibility. However, the rails will not be moved, but simply replaced. Nothing will change for the four surface stops on the route where passengers board and alight in traffic—Fenwood, Mission Park, Riverway, and Back of the Hill. Peña said public safety improvements and ADA accessibility are 5 to 15 years away. "You need to be patient while we work for the future," he said.

There is also a 24/7 hot line, 508-676-3517, set up for noise complaints in addition to the GLT@mbta.com contact.

*Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.*

> **BACK ON CAMPUS** from page 1 are planning to rent out apartments and hotel rooms to accommodate demand and safety guidelines. At a City Council hearing on July 9, Northeastern University unveiled plans to lease all rooms in the Midtown Hotel and some floors of the Westin Copley Place to help house students. In addition, Northeastern is leasing 147 neighborhood apartments in buildings where it already has master lease programs in place.

*The Daily Free Press*, Boston University's student newspaper, reported that BU signed a housing agreement in July

with 1047 Commonwealth, an off-campus apartment building.

Keefe, the vice president of student development, said MassArt does not have definitive plans to expand its housing to nearby buildings, but is coordinating with colleges in the COF consortium to "look at sites that may work as an alternative to off-campus housing."

Aside from potential expansion into nearby properties, the members of the COF consortium are adding new guidelines to decrease the risk of spread of COVID-19. All five schools will require face masks on campus, including in residence hall stairwells,

elevators, and hallways.

Many schools also have plans to require testing or quarantining for those returning to campus. Emmanuel will test all students upon their arrival on campus, the results of which will be available within 12 to 24 hours of testing. Wentworth Institute of Technology is asking students to conduct daily symptom monitoring and limit exposure for both the 14 days prior to arrival on campus and the 14 days after arrival. MCPHS will test all students, faculty and staff who return to campus in the fall.

However, all plans for the fall are

subject to change, as case numbers continue to rise in states across the country. Governor Charlie Baker announced that beginning Aug. 1, travelers from 41 states must either quarantine for 14 days or provide a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of arrival in Massachusetts, or risk being fined up to \$500 a day. Students from these 41 states will be subject to these restrictions when they arrive at school. The impact this will have on the number of students returning to campuses in the Fenway is unclear.

*Kelly Garrity is a journalism student at Northeastern University.*

# Northeastern University Support for Nonprofits and Small Businesses During COVID-19 Pandemic

In response to the challenges our Boston communities face, Northeastern University is offering a variety of resources to help small businesses and nonprofits in our neighborhoods of Mission Hill, Fenway, the South End, and Roxbury respond to real-time needs and build resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you would like to be connected with a Northeastern staff or faculty member with expertise relevant to your organization please complete the form at [tinyurl.com/communitysupportform](https://tinyurl.com/communitysupportform).

Please send any questions to [communityengagement@northeastern.edu](mailto:communityengagement@northeastern.edu).

## Fireworks Cleanup in Mission Hill

PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS



After Fourth of July celebrations, a Parker Hill Ave. resident named Josh took a broom to the basketball courts at McLaughlin Playground to clean up widespread firework debris. Maintenance workers from the Parks Department arrived later that morning. Throughout June and into July, excessive fireworks use was a problem not just in the Fenway and Mission Hill, but across the city and the country. BPD told *The Boston Herald* that, compared to the first week of June 2019, complaints about fireworks rose 2,300% citywide during the first week of June this year.

> SCAPE from page 1

which will manage the 158-seat facility with a focus on LGBTQ+ programming—the proponent's promised community benefit. The Baseball Tavern will be offered space in the building, likely on the first floor, but nothing is certain yet about the location.

Concerns remain that the new tower will be a home for many off-campus students. Audubon Circle's Dolores Boogdian said in her statement that commitments from Andrew Flynn, CEO of Scape North America, weren't ironclad and left open the possibility that, given the current economy, college student rentals could be a future scenario. In January, when the BPDA board approved the project, the memo from BPDA project manager Tim Czerwinski, stated "the Proponent commits in good faith (1) to seek to lease its apartments to non-undergraduates at initial lease-up—to the greatest degree possible consistent with achieving full occupancy—and (2) to actively work to avoid a substantial concentration (>25%) of undergraduates in the building. These commitments shall not encumber the Proponent in the case of economic necessity nor constitute binding guarantees but do reflect the Proponent's desire to help enable a broad array of families and individuals to live in the Fenway neighborhood."

In other Scape news, on July 23 the City posted an announcement on its website for demolition applications received for 1252-1268 Boylston and a separate application for 1270 Boylston, the former location for the famed 1270 nightclub and, more recently, the Baseball Tavern. The buildings, built on wood pilings on filled land, date from the 1920s. The two parcels make up the site for the Scape project.

Boston Landmarks Commission staff have 10 days from receiving an application to make a determination about historical, architectural, cultural, or urban design significance. The announcement stated: "if you have input about the significance of this property, please send your feedback to blc@boston.gov before 5 p.m. on August 2, 2020."

Staff will then decide whether to hold a public hearing to delay demolition under Article 85 of the zoning code or to sign off, allowing the applicant to go forward with the permitting process at Inspectional Services. Article 85 allows a 90-day window to delay demolitions, potentially giving the public an opportunity to work with a developer if there's interest in preserving all or part of a property.

*Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.*

## What Would Viviana Think?

BY ALISON BARNET

**EDITORS NOTE:** Although this article focuses on the South End, continued redevelopment raises many of the same issues in the Fenway.

LIVE LUXURIOUSLY, INFINITE POSSIBILITIES, LUXURY GEM, ORNATE VICTORIAN MOLDINGS, GLEAMING HARDWOOD FLOORS, MARBLE MANTELS, GRANITE-STAINLESS KITCHEN, CRYSTAL AND PORCELAIN CHANDELIERS, OUTSTANDING PENTHOUSE, PRIVATE GARDEN WITH ROSES. A VIBRANT, EMERGING NEIGHBORHOOD. SOLD IN ONE DAY!

In the early 1980s, when Viviana Muñoz-Mendoza fought condominium conversion on Dartmouth Street, we didn't describe condos that way. In fact, there were very few condos in the South End; it was a new concept being sold to us as a European idea, a way to use space more efficiently. The words "market rate" and "unit" weren't yet part of our vocabulary; we tended to say condominium, not condo; and it was unthinkable that churches could "go condo."

The handwriting, however, was on the wall.

Or at least on the window. If you passed the corner of Dartmouth and Montgomery streets, you would notice that the upstairs windows were plastered with handmade signs: BUYER BEWARE, WE ARE AGAINST CONDOMINIUM CONVERSION, WE WILL OPPOSE IT WITH EVERY LAWFUL MEANS POSSIBLE/ WE WILL NOT MOVE/ and LA LUCHA SIGUE [THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES]. Sometimes a woman in a striped poncho was out on the stairs holding a press conference.

Viviana had been living in an apartment there for about a year—a duplex for \$550 a month, heated—when the building was sold in September 1979—twice in one day. The new owners planned to convert the building into condominiums, offering Viviana her apartment for \$82,000. "I never would have bought," she said. "I didn't have the money but, in any case, I don't think condominiums are a way of getting money. I don't believe in profit based on a need like housing." Eviction proceedings began.

Viviana quickly became a cause célèbre among radical groups, with a large number of supporters, including Fenway activists and me, demonstrating outside the courthouse.

In April 1980, after numerous Housing Court battles, the landlords put the building back on the market, and the new owner, issuing an eviction notice, told Viviana he planned to move into her apartment. "In my experience," he said, "the landlord gives a notice and the tenant moves. After all, I had bought the house, it was mine." He claimed that Viviana had displaced someone when she moved in there. She took him to Housing Court, and after losing in January, she handled her own appeal, becoming so well-known at printing store Copy Cop that the staff

all tried her recipe for Puerto Rican eggnog.

She had asked the Appeals Court to find a prima facie case of discrimination against herself as a minority woman, a woman with children. She was fond of saying, "We are the only Puerto Rican family with minor children on Dartmouth Street from the South End to the river." She was the divorced mother of five. Her three oldest were out on their own and the younger ones were often away at private school. Some people thought she was rich (she wasn't), as though having money would invalidate her principles. "She could have bought the entire house!" said one.

The landlord moved in downstairs and soon got a restraining order against the signs. She took him to court, winning in February 1982 what she called her "First Amendment case"—tenants have a right to post signs in windows.

Altogether, the legal process against both landlords lasted three and half years. When she lost her final appeal, she called herself a victim of "no fault" eviction, eviction that had nothing to do with non-payment of rent or other landlord-tenant issues. She could have moved at any point, and supporters and detractors alike recommended it. On her last day, we held a candlelight vigil on the sidewalk outside the house.

Viviana was the first person I interviewed when *The South End News* was first published in 1980. Along one wall were books and records from floor to ceiling in Spanish and English. On a white brick wall leading upstairs were posters, paintings, drawings, and photographs, among them Viviana's father with John F. Kennedy and Pablo Casals. Her father, Luis Muñoz-Marin, the first elected governor of Puerto Rico, used to say power is not something you acquire but something you have within you. And you shouldn't let anyone take it away from you.

I learned straight off not to use the word "Hispanic." "Hispanic means from Spain," she said. "I am from Puerto Rico; therefore I am a Puerto Rican." And she always insisted on the use of her full name in the Puerto Rican tradition—Muñoz was her father's name, Mendoza her mother's.

We sat at a round oak table in the window. Viviana, 40, was intelligent, blunt, vehement, and unpredictable, and we hit it off immediately. I liked the way she peppered her conversation with passionate Puerto Rican sayings: "Who is your brother? Your nearest neighbor is your brother." Never one to mince words, she didn't say gentrification; she said blockbusting.

She raised questions about neighborhood

stability. "Is a neighborhood defined by the people who live in it or by property values? When people of color can no longer find a place in the South End, the quality of life for everyone is adversely affected."

THIS IS A HOME, NOT AN INVESTMENT

Viviana made a lot of people angry. "She made a big deal about something that wasn't a big deal; she's an actress," said a Montgomery Street neighbor. "In short, she's a phony." But many of the people who complained also expressed negative feelings about condos and their potential impact on the South End. "I'm not overly enthusiastic about condo conversion," said the same man. "I feel condo buyers think like renters, that they don't have the feeling they are South End residents. Yes, I think they are transient." A Dartmouth Street neighbor commented, "The tele-

scoping of economic change in this neighborhood is quite severe. We bought our house in 1966 for \$14,000. The new assessment is \$166,000. This is more change than one generation of people can stand." Another long-time neighbor said he couldn't understand condominiums. "They cut up a floor and sell it for ten times what the building cost a couple of years ago."

Some people thought she was crazy, but she wasn't so crazy that she couldn't foresee what condos would do to the neighborhood. Viviana understood that dividing up buildings and selling off floors as condos was an investor-driven strategy, a way to make certain people and companies a fortune while getting rid of residents, particularly people of color. Divide and conquer.

When in December 1982 she lost her final appeal and moved, she first stayed on a friend's couch, her 17-year-old son on the floor. After a while, she moved into an apartment in my house.

She died in Puerto Rico in 1992 at age 52. I think about her a lot and about what she would say about the South End today—the proliferation and acceptance of "luxury" condos, the sadly decreased diversity. What would she think about Ink Block, The Quinn, The Lucas, and The Cosmopolitan, to name a few of the new "luxury" condo projects. What would she have thought of the plan to tear down the Harriet Tubman House and put up condos? How much we could use her spirit, her anger, her intelligence, and her energy today when it seems that no one is fighting the sale and overhaul of the South End. She would be furious that we let it happen.

But then, as Mel King, our state representative at the time, said, "The question we're dealing with has little to do with the South End; it's at the core of the culture, our society, the economic system and our values."

*Alison Barnet lives in the South End.*



*Viviana Muñoz-Mendoza*

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALISON BARNET

# FENSVIEWS

## Teetering on The Edge: Have We Already Reopened Too Much?

BY WILL BROWNSBERGER

In order to safely reopen our schools, we may need to hit the brakes on our phased reopening of the economy in Massachusetts. The latest numbers are telling us that we may need to reclose some businesses or find other ways to reduce infection.

As we manage the reopening of the economy, we need to think more clearly about the trade-offs we're making and the consequences we're willing to accept. The decision to open optional services like casinos, movie theaters, and health clubs may make it unsafe for us to reopen our schools.

There is some guesswork in estimating how each specific business closure or infection control measure will affect the average COVID-19 transmission rate. That transmission rate is referred to by

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the letter R. It's not possible to reliably estimate the R that will result from particular economic opening plans.

But there is no guesswork in the consequences of different R values. If R is greater than one, then the epidemic will expand. If it is less than one, the epidemic will wane. When COVID-19 was initially expanding, R was between two and three and the positive test count was doubling every few days. By late April, the shutdown had spread people out and reduced transmission opportunities, driving R below one. As a consequence, the daily new case count began to drop and is now a tenth of what it was at the peak.

Yet, about a month ago, as a result of additional social transmission from reopening, R rose back to roughly 1. Each infected person is now infecting roughly one other person. We know this because the daily new case count has stopped dropping. Over the last month, it has been fluctuating in the low hundreds (well above the levels in early March when alarms first went off). Most recently, the new case count appears to be drifting up, even though the volume of testing has remained steady.

The fact that case counts are not dropping suggests that what we are doing now is just barely keeping a lid on the epidemic

and that if we open up much more, R will rise above one and the epidemic will start growing again. For all the imprecision about particular measures, the leveling off of the case count is sending a clear message: We open further at our peril.

Yet we plan to open further. We plan to receive thousands of college students back into the state, with many right here in the Fenway. And we hope to at least partially reopen our elementary and secondary schools. While safety precautions will help control transmission, it seems a stretch to imagine that transmission among students and from students into the community will not push our infection rate up substantially.

Ideally, as we prepare for the fall and the added transmission that school opening (and generally, as the weather changes, increased contact indoors) will bring, we would still be seeing falling case rates suggesting that our R value was below one. That would tell us that we might have the capacity to add some additional social contacts without pushing our R above one.

But that's not where we are. Currently we are embarking on the third phase of the Governor's four-phase reopening plan, and R is already creeping above one. We may be setting ourselves up for trouble in the fall when we increase R by opening schools. We could be on the cusp of making the same mistake that other states have made.

Our elementary and secondary schools should be our top priority—for children and for working parents. We should back off on other opening decisions and demonstrate that we can get the schools functioning without driving our total transmission rate above one. Only then we should open less essential businesses and bring students back to universities.

We need to make choices about what businesses and institutions should stay open in a way that reflects community priorities and acknowledges that there are trade-offs—we can only reopen so much of the economy without risking catastrophic resurgence of the disease.

I've posted links to underlying data at [willbrownsberger.com](http://willbrownsberger.com) and appreciate hearing from people at 617-771-8274 or [william.brownsberger@masenate.gov](mailto:william.brownsberger@masenate.gov).

*Will Brownsberger is the state senator from Back Bay, Fenway, Allston, Brighton, Watertown and Belmont.*

## You Won't Have to Choose Between Your Health and Your Vote

BY JAY LIVINGSTONE

We are all trying to figure out how to safely navigate this pandemic, and one of the pressing issues we face is access to voting. Voting should be easy, safe, and secure. I have worked on reducing barriers to this essential right. Now reducing barriers has taken on greater importance. No one should have to choose between their health and their right to vote.

I actively supported and voted for H.4820, which became law in June and greatly expanded voting access and options. While

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including the state primary on Sept. 1 and final election on Nov. 3, I hope these changes become permanent.

All registered voters now have the option to vote early by mail. You may have already received a "vote by mail application" from the secretary of state's office. The law requires the office to send all registered voters an application to vote early by mail for both the primary election (that mailing was just completed), and the general election (those will be mailed by Sept. 14). The official application has prepaid postage.

If you have not yet received your application, you can download the form from the Secretary of State's elections web page and, hopefully, can soon apply directly through the website, as the new law requires. My office (617-722-2013) can help you secure an application if you are unable to access the website.

Once a voter has applied to vote early by mail, each city or town clerk will mail a ballot and an envelope with prepaid postage. Each voter will have the option of returning their ballot in the mail, at a secure drop box, or in person.

The law also greatly expands absentee-ballot voting. The Massachusetts Constitution sets the permissible excuses for voting by absentee ballot. The new law classifies COVID as a valid excuse for voting absentee. There are not noticeable differences

between "early voting" by mail or absentee voting. The biggest distinction is the deadline. You can apply for an absentee ballot until noon the day prior to the election and to vote early by mail six days prior to the election.

I am proud of these options because they reduce barriers to voting. You don't need internet access to obtain a vote-by-mail ballot and you don't need to pay for the postage. You don't need leave your house to cast your ballot.

For those who prefer to vote in person, this law implemented public health safeguards and requires the Secretary of State and Department of Public Health to issue regulations setting out the precautions needed for in-person voting. At a minimum, these safeguards include social distancing of voters and election officers, face coverings and personal protective equipment, frequent use of sanitizers and sanitary use of marking pens. These safeguards ensure that our essential poll workers and our voters remain safe and reduce the potential of spread.

The law also requires cities and towns to offer more days to vote in person to decrease the chance of large crowds forming. Early in-person voting will be available for 7 days for the primary election (Aug. 22 to Aug. 28) and for 14 days for the general election (Oct. 17 to Oct. 30).

Finally, this legislation requires municipalities to report any disparate adverse impacts on polling place accessibility on the basis of race, national origin, disability, income, or age. This provision is critical. This type of voter suppression is unacceptable.

This legislation will ensure all citizens can vote safely and successfully. If you are not registered to vote, please register now through Boston Elections or the Secretary of State. I want to make sure that everyone gets a chance to cast their vote. Now that you know the options, please make your plan to vote!

*Jay Livingstone is the state representative for the 8th Suffolk District, which includes parts of the Fenway, Beacon Hill, Back Bay, the West End, and some areas of Cambridge.*

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**"Comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable."**  
 The founders of The Fenway News adopted this motto to express their mission of exposing and opposing the dangers the neighborhood faced in the early 1970s—rampant arson, predatory landlords, and a destructive urban renewal plan. If the original motto no longer fits today's Fenway, we remain committed to its spirit of identifying problems and making our neighborhood a better and safer place to live.

► **FREQUENCY** ◀  
 The Fenway News reaches distribution sites on the Friday closest to the first of each month. Our next issue will appear on **Friday, August 28.**

► **DEADLINE** ◀  
 The deadline for letters, news items, and ads for our next issue is **Friday, August 21.**

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**Demo Drama on Brookline Ave.**  
 If the pandemic has left you pining for destruction-filled tentpole movies this summer, try this satisfying substitute: watching demolition of the garage on the east side of the 401 Park Development (the former Landmark Center) on Fullerton Street, facing Harvard Vanguard. Work recommenced in late June, and Samuels & Associates expects the project to wind up in mid-2022. A 14-story building with 1.2 million square feet of office and lab space will rise on the site.

PHOTO: STEVE WOLF



## EV Chargers Come to W. Fens

New charging stations for electric cars should open in early August on the west side of the Star Market parking lot in the West Fens. San Francisco-based Volta operates more than 1,200 of these stations across the US; it has 46 in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, including the one on Exeter Street outside the Lenox Hotel. Car owners can charge up at no charge—Volta makes its money from ads on large digital screens, which it sells to “customer-centric businesses that deliver exceptional experiences,” in the inimitable language of its website. A Volta representative said the company only needs Eversource to connect meters for the stations to open for business.

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

A LOT HAPPENED IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS SINCE THE LAST ISSUE, INCLUDING...

In an article in the *Globe's* “Ideas” section, Harvard School of Public Health epidemiologist Ashish Jha and two other researchers proposed a new way to predict COVID-19 hot spots up to two weeks ahead of cases. His plan:

Monitor sewage. Jha—who’s become something of a media star in coverage of the pandemic—and his colleagues said that such testing has proven reliable. Focusing the 542 biggest US wastewater systems would cover half the US population and give public health experts a dramatic new monitoring tool at a fraction of the cost of individual testing for that many people. ➔ **Two area restaurants continued supporting workers and restaurants hit hard by the pandemic.**

**Audubon Circle’s Mei Mei set up a GoFundMe page to support small and immigrant-owned restaurants, including Cafe Juice Up in Mattapan, El Oriental de Cuba in JP, and Tasty Momo in Somerville (but you can support any restaurant you like by adding a note with your donation). The campaign has raised more than \$12,000 to date. Find it at [www.gofundme.com/f/unsungrestaurants](http://www.gofundme.com/f/unsungrestaurants). Elsewhere on GoFundMe, Tiffani Faison’s Big Heart Hospitality group (the restaurants from Orfano to Tiger Mamam in the West Fens) has raised more than \$23,000 for furloughed hourly workers at [www.gofundme.com/f/hospitalityneverstops](http://www.gofundme.com/f/hospitalityneverstops).**

➔ BU announced that it would cut about 250 positions through layoffs and furloughs as it wrestles with a budget shortfall that may reach \$100 million. It will also cut some salaries and stop contributing to employee retirement accounts, among other moves. Find out more about how area colleges plan to get students (and their tuition) back on campus in our story on page 1. ➔ **A group of Boston artists of color, led by two muralists, painted a 500-foot-long mural on the pavement of Washington Street in Nubian Square. It combines the slogan “Black Lives Matter” and a pan-African flag.**

➔ West Fens resident Lauren Dewey Platt joined the national dialogue about removal of statues glorifying white supremacists in a letter published in the *Globe*. She argued for a more nuanced understanding of Thomas Jefferson’s legacy. ➔ **The state lifted its ban on reusable bags at retailers, allowing 100-plus local bans on plastic bags to resume. The state imposed the restrictions at the start of the pandemic out of fear that reusable bags could spread the virus, but researchers now say that they don’t.**

➔ In other BU news, the university set up a committee to look into ending use of the informal nickname “Rhett” to describe the school’s bulldog mascot because it appears connected to the character Rhett Butler in *Gone With The Wind*. ➔ **Photos of several gardeners from the Victory Gardens, including West Fens resident Tim Ney, appeared in two separate *Globe* stories about community gardens.**

➔ Responding to the pandemic, the City rolled out a pilot program to spread food trucks more widely across the city by letting them operate 12-7pm on municipal sites like schools and community centers. In the Fenway, two sites will bracket the MFA: Zaaki sets up on Museum Road on Fridays and on Forsyth Way on Sundays; Rolling Gyros takes over the Forsyth Way spot on Saturdays. In Mission Hill, Suфра parks at the Hennigan School on Tuesdays, the same day that Rolling Gyros visits Madison Park High. Find details and a map at [www.boston.gov](http://www.boston.gov) [search for “food trucks.”] ➔ **An urban drive-in took over the Wentworth lot at Parker and Halleck streets on the 29th, with a double feature of *Trolls* and *Harriet Tubman*. Some folks sat in beach chairs and heard the sound track over bluetooth speakers, but most stayed in their cars and listened on the radio. Flashback: the same lot hosted Summerthing concerts and theater performances in the 1960s and early ’70s.**

## Farmers Markets

It’s a great time of year for berries, with plentiful raspberries, strawberries, and blueberries. Also look for peaches, cucumbers, eggplant, and leeks.

<b>ROXBURY CROSSING T STATION (ORANGE LINE)</b>	
Tuesday & Friday	11:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.
<b>COPLEY SQUARE</b>	
Tuesday & Friday	11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.
<b>BRIGHAM CIRCLE</b>	
Thursday	11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

## Neighborhood Newslines

### Zoning Board Gives Children’s Five-Year Extension for Parking

On July 21, the City’s zoning board heard a request from Boston Children’s Hospital off-site parking provider, Priority Parking, to extend the permit for its 240-surface lot at 809-821 Beacon St. for another five years. The extension was approved, but zoning board chair Christine Araujo asked the BPDA to conduct a design review in order to improve the existing minimal screening from the sidewalk and add greenery.

### COVID Small-Business Relief Fund Makes 101 Local Grants

The City of Boston has established a Small Business Financial Relief Fund to help businesses most affected by COVID-19. Locally, 86 businesses in the Fenway/Kenmore and 15 in Mission Hill received grants, which ranged in size from \$2,500 to \$10,000, depending on the size of the business.

### Works Starts on Parcel 12

Samuels & Associates has begun preliminary site work for its Parcel 12 project at Boylston Street and Mass. Ave. The \$700 million office and hotel complex will rise above the Pike across from the entrance to the T’s Hynes Station. An office building on Boylston and a hotel on Newbury will frame a half-acre public plaza with retail space, improved sidewalks, and a new under-the-street entrance to Hynes Station.

### Alliance Cancels This Year’s Opening Our Doors

Due to the pandemic, Opening Our Doors will skip its 2020 festival and resume in October 2021. The Fenway Alliance conceived of and founded the festival in 2001 with the central mission to “open the doors” of Boston’s institutions for a free day of music, art, creativity, performances, and cultural experiences.

### Fenway Health Opens COVID Tests to Broader Group

The Fenway Community Health Center opened the first dedicated testing site in Fenway in late June. For over a month, only registered patients had access to the site, located in the parking lot at McKinley High School, behind Fenway Health’s building on Boylston Street. Now, anyone who has coronavirus symptoms, has been exposed to someone with confirmed coronavirus, or who lives in a group setting (such as a nursing home or shelter) where there have been confirmed cases, can get tested at the site.

### Agencies Approve Herbicide Use in Muddy River Phase II

Information about herbicide use in the Muddy River Phase 2 project was shared with the state Department of Environmental Protection and the Boston Conservation Commission, but not presented in a public presentations with the Muddy River Maintenance and Management Committee or in original project specifications filed with government agencies. When recently asked, Nicolas Moreno, acting Conservation Commission secretary, stated “that after discussing this issue with the Commission and with DEP, it was determined that this is allowable as a minor change.”

### BPDA Names New Fenway, Mission Hill Planners

The Boston Planning & Development Agency has assigned planners for the Fenway and Mission Hill, Rosa Herrero de Andrés and Ocean Luo, respectively—although the agency currently has no planning initiatives underway in either neighborhood. BPDA project manager Tim Czerwinski, known in both communities for his managerial skills with impact advisory groups, has left his position for parts unknown. His replacement is also unknown.

## STREET CLEANING & TRASH PICK-UP

### TRASH & RECYCLING PICK-UP

- **BACK BAY:** Monday and Thursday
- **FENWAY:** Tuesday and Friday
- **MISSION HILL:** Tuesday and Friday

### STREET CLEANING

The **CITY OF BOSTON** will resume ticketing of cars parked in designated street-cleaning zones on August 10, although it will not tow [yet]. Check the City website for pandemic restrictions at <https://bit.ly/2KJ3TXV>.

The **DCR** cleans state-owned streets along the Back Bay Fens on this schedule:

- **SECOND THURSDAY**  
8:00am–12:00pm: The Riverway

### • SECOND FRIDAY

- > 8:00am–noon: The Fenway from Ave. Louis Pasteur to Westland (includes inside lane) + Forsyth Way
- > 12:00–3:00pm: 8 to 54 The Fenway (includes inside lane) + Boylston + Charlesgate East + Charlesgate Extension

### • THIRD TUESDAY

- > 8:00am–noon: Park Drive from Boylston St. to Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral (includes inside lane) + upper Boylston Street
- > 12:00–3:00pm: Park Drive from Holy Trinity to The Pierce, then from D Line overpass to Beacon Street

Visit <https://www.mass.gov/doc/fenway/download>

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# Silver Linings

**IDEAS FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD. HELP CHOOSE THE WINNERS.**

## FREE WIFI FOR EVERYONE

**1** Install more free City of Boston Wicked Wifi locations, especially in the Fenway (there currently are none in Fenway) and especially next to Section 8 public housing. The cost is relatively negligible for the city compared to how much burden it is for those who are unbanked, who do not have solid credit, and who have inconsistent/insufficient income. It is something relatively small that would make a disproportionately big difference for those who cannot afford it. Not everyone is able to afford Internet access and that is a barrier to information dissemination and potential job opportunities and applications. Many of those unmet needs have been previously stop-gap met by in-person access at local senior centers, community centers and public libraries that are no longer open.

## PROTECT OUR PARKS

**2** I've spent a lot of time walking the Fens since everything shut down in March—it was the only way to get exercise for months. On those walks I began to understand how lucky we are to have this window on nature, refuge for wildlife, and vast natural HVAC unit right at our doorstep. My walks made me incredibly grateful for our historic park.

But they also made the park's heavy use and disrepair way more obvious: Worn-down paths. Widespread trash. Untended trees. Invasive plants. Effing Canada geese and their foul droppings.

I know others share my renewed appreciation for the park. Let's build on that by recognizing the park's value to our neighborhood and mobilizing more resources to improve it. First step: Convene a task force of residents, businesses, institutions, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, and City officials charged with creating a plan just for fixing the problems in the Fens.

## PEOPLE-FIRST STREETS

**3** During the shutdown, didn't you love being able to cross Boylston without fearing for your life? Walking in the street when you needed more distance from others on the sidewalk? How tranquil the neighborhood felt with almost no traffic?

Why give that up? From here on, design and operate Boston's streets to serve people first, cars second. Give priority to infrastructure for biking, walking, and transit (because we will go back to riding eventually). Watch that benefits everyone—fewer deaths/injuries, less noise, cleaner air, reduced carbon emissions.

First steps:

- Have the City formally adopt the principle.
- Accelerate build-out of Boston's existing plan for a fully connected bike-lane network and commit to full physical protection of lanes on major streets.
- Make permanent restaurants' ability to use parking spaces for outdoor seating.
- Create an advisory board to make sure that new infrastructure fully benefits communities of color.

## LETTER TO MY DAUGHTER

**4** Dear baby girl, I sit here, quietly mindful of you. My heart is filled with joy and pain in meeting you. It is the fall of 2021. Your dad is in the kitchen cooking as the cheers of Red Sox Nation erupt on TV. A pandemic brought us together to create the beauty and best of us, you.

I saw a steady diet of protests, potential and possibility. As a leader, I added color to my board and created meaningful dialogue in my circles of influence. I gave women of color a voice through my podcast. You might ponder, why?

I did it for you. Instead of choosing the world as it was, I chose something new. I chose action, innovation, kindness and power so my beauty and best could not only survive but thrive. I hope I made you proud. For you baby girl. See you soon.

Love, Mom

## ART MEMBERSHIPS FOR FENWAY RESIDENTS

**5** It is shocking, but not surprising, that many Fenway residents have never been to any of the art institutions in the Fenway. This was brought home when a young Paris tourist stopped me in the Fenway and asked me where the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum is. I have been there, but many have not. Too often we seek vacations away from the Fenway, but the world comes to the Fenway. Why not establish an art membership for Fenway residents, rather than their seeking memberships for each institution? Perhaps the Fenway CDC and the Fenway Alliance could set it up, establishing income-based fees, or by donation only.

## LEVERAGING ONLINE GATHERINGS EVEN AFTER THE PANDEMIC

**6** Many of us have been participating in online gatherings, from Supreme Court hearings to virtual happy hours. Even after we can resume meeting in person, we should leverage online technology to advance social equity by expanding community participation in public meetings and hearings at the state and city levels. We can be more inclusive by empowering residents to engage remotely, especially for parents/caretakers, people who are less mobile, and others who face barriers to participation in person. Key aspects include: incorporating best practices for a seamless experience; advertising meetings widely to reach diverse, vulnerable, and non-English-speaking populations; ensuring access across multiple platforms, with real-time translation and closed caption; and sharing a recording and responses to questions not addressed during the meeting. We already have great examples of successful online gatherings. Our next step is to implement a robust way to gather public input ahead of and during a meeting.

## FOSTER NATURE APPRECIATION & CLIMATE CHANGE KNOWLEDGE IN THE YOUNG

**7** Many of us have been spending more time in parks and wilderness for solace and recreation. With climate change happening now and a huge need for climate solutions in the coming decade, we have an opportunity to foster a deeper and more widespread appreciation for nature starting in early childhood, as a foundation for educating our next generations to take action on climate change and environmental

justice issues. A recent poll showed that more than 80% of parents support climate change education, yet many teachers either do not teach it or spend just a few hours a year on it. Climate-focused curricula already exist in some schools and incorporate climate across subject areas, including math and social studies. In addition, local conservation groups often have education programs. Therefore, a first step for parents and kids is to ask their schools and teachers to teach about climate change.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION CAN BE EQUITABLE FOR ALL

**8** **Federal / State:** Fund through a state/federal pool, with more money going towards districts with higher need. Remove police and metal detectors. End exams and special applications for all public schools. Offer a student-centered approach for autistic students:

- better sensory supports
- alternatives to ABA
- early screening for hyperlexia
- teach social skills as if they were a second language

Hire more disabled teachers and/or diverse teaching staff. Offer school curriculums that are anti-racist, and are respectful to disabled students. Fund schools to be ADA compliant

### In-district:

End tracking. Offer advanced work to all students. Have a foundation budget for all schools, with additional funds added for individual student needs. Provide equal access to schools with high test scores for all neighborhoods. Cap fund raising for schools at \$10,000 per school; any amount over that goes into a larger fund to benefit all schools.

## ARTISTIC ORIGINS OF THE FENWAY

**9** It would be a good idea for the Massachusetts Historical Society to publish a history of the Fenway using stories in *The Fenway News*, Bernie Kramer Fenway archives and interviews from longtime residents. The book could emphasize the artistic origin of the Fenway. There was no land left over in Boston so the art, educational and medical institutions landed in the swamp of the Fenway. This book could be used as a guidebook for tourists, residents, and scholars alike. The main focus would be the artists who lived in the Fenway, such as the Starn twins, Del Fuegos, Aimee Mann, Leonard Bernstein. The MHS could also add plaques where these artists lived. Just as there are bird walks in the Fenway, there could be art walks in the Fenway.

## SUSTAIN INCREASED INGENUITY & CREATIVITY WHEN THE PANDEMIC ENDS

**10** I am one of the lucky ones. I have a job that I can do at home, so still earn an income. But without meetings, commute, and dressing professionally, I have more free time. I've been using my time to watch art instruction videos and take art classes on Zoom. As a result, I'm doing more painting, exploring new methods in acrylic and watercolor, and feeling more creative.

And I'm not alone. People all over the world are exhibiting ingenuity and creativity. Case in point, the family that spent days constructing an elaborate Rube Goldberg device that sent a ball shooting down and upstairs and around their house. What a great lesson for their kids!

Or the professor at Mass. College of Art who assigned his at-home students to do a sculpture of a chicken. Most of them did not have access to sculpting clay or art supplies, so they used whatever they could find in their backyards or homes. Or the teenager who transformed a Little Library stand into a food pantry. Or the little boy who turned his lemonade stand into a daily joke stand. Or my own nephew, who is using his time at home to learn how to build a computer from scratch.

Will we sustain ingenuity and creativity when the used-to-be-normal returns? Will I? I hope so.

## PLANTER BOXES

**11** Planter boxes could be lined up on both sides of the Boylston Street starting from CVS to the Landmark Center. These planter boxes could be possibly seen as a landmark much like the Bridge of Flowers in Shelburne Falls. The Fenway Victory Garden members could help put up these boxes with funding coming from the Fenway Civic Association and the Fenway Victory Garden.

## DECREASE VEHICLE TRAFFIC, REDESIGN TRAVEL PATTERNS, INCREASE PEDESTRIAN USE

**12** While we are still not a peak traffic and hunkering down somewhat, take advantage of this downtime to do some street re-design—create more pedestrian space, reduce non-resident parking, narrow or block off certain roads (like Agassiz) near parks that carry an outsized portion of commuter traffic, and Hemenway Street from Westland to Boylston in the Fenway that has large numbers of pedestrians but also large numbers of commuting autos, buses and large trucks, parts of Newbury Street, as examples.

## CREATE SUPPLY LINES CLOSER TO HOME

**13** Create a regional team to work with a range of industries to create closer-to-home supply lines, which would be expensive in the beginning but would bring some light manufacturing jobs and makes sure future global crises don't cut off all supplies. Would that make some goods more expensive? Perhaps, but depending on profit margin, perhaps that could be lowered somewhat to assure the other benefits. This could lower our carbon footprint and promote the local economies.

## LOOK REGIONALLY AT SUPPLYING LOCALLY SOURCED FOOD

**14** Create a regional team largely composed of New England farms and others connect to produce and create a mechanism for increasing CSA's for households, but also cooperative supply chains for restaurants and grocery stores so that sourcing high quality local produce and other products become easier and less expensive. This could lower our carbon footprint and promote the local economies.

## ELECTRIFY PUBLIC TRANSIT

**15** Take advantage of reduced commuting to find ways to electrify a portion of our bus fleets, trains, and improve Boston's subway lines.

## Choose and Vote by August 30.

Read the finalists, then email your choices to [fensfund@gmail.com](mailto:fensfund@gmail.com) by August 30 with the subject "Silver Linings." List your votes, in order, by their numbers (for example, "10/6/13" ranks Idea 10 first, Idea 6 second, and Idea 13 third).

**\$250 1ST PRIZE • \$150 2ND PRIZE • \$100 3RD PRIZE**

> **PLAYGROUNDS** from page 1 about the value of play and is considered the father of American playgrounds. Nationally, July 29 is still proclaimed Joseph Lee Day.

In the 1920s, landscape architect Arthur Shurcliff's innovations added a "children's corner" and the Fens stadium to the Back Bay Fens. Shurcliff's added features benefitted the nearby schools, including Boston Latin and the complex of public schools at Huntington and Tetlow. Although physically it sat some distance away, the Joseph Lee playground was, in a sense, also a schoolyard.

According to the 1948 analysis, the city as a whole had one acre of playground space for every 1,300 people. The Fenway had only one acre of playground space for every 6,500 people. Yet, due to a low ratio of children, the district was not perceived as having a serious playground problem. Decades later, nearly every Boston Parks Dept.-issued five-year open space plan has regularly repeated this rationale.

Fenway-area elementary school buildings—the Ira Allen on Parker Street, the William McKinley on St. Mary's and the Martin Milmore on Peterborough—haven't disappeared. However, they no longer serve as neighborhood schools (the Ira Allen is now a Wentworth Institute facility), and whatever playgrounds existed in the past are gone.

The McKinley network of special education facilities moved its vocational high school program to the Milmore site in the 1980s. Their two schools in the Fenway, the middle school on St. Mary's and the prep high school on Peterborough, have a bare minimum outdoor facilities—just picnic tables and basketball hoops.

When local elementary schools started to disappear in the 1970s,

residents became advocates for new playgrounds. East Fens resident Matt Thall shared a history of the Edgerly Road site:

IMAGE COURTESY OF LANDING STUDIO



This map from a March presentation on proposed Charlesgate Park Improvements shows the location of area playgrounds.

"David Scondras negotiated an agreement with the BRA that, as part of the Fenway Urban Renewal Plan, the Edgerly Road Playground would be developed on the site of a building that had been demolished or collapsed at the corner of Edgerly Road and Haviland Street." As the Fenway CDC executive director in the early 1980s, Thall and others advocated for the Parks Department to take ownership.

The small Peterborough Street playground on the corner of Kilmarnock, which sits on the McKinley/Martin Milmore Boston Public School property, was built in the 1990s with involvement from the Fenway CDC and help from neighborhood families. The playground is well used, but maintenance is a concern.

David Patel of Park Drive frequents the playground with his four-year-old child, but resorts to dialing 311

consistently to get the single trash barrel emptied. When Boston playgrounds officially reopened on June 15, the tot lot stayed chained shut until he persisted with calls to city councilors. Patel mentioned that the Peterborough lot is used often by children from families who are visiting Boston for short stays in the community because of siblings who are being treated at Boston Children's Hospital.

Responsibility for management of the space falls on Boston Public School facilities staff and the City's property management office, not Boston Parks. Operation P.E.A.C.E. director Mallory Rohrig recalled the effort several years ago to get the playground posted closed at dusk for safety reasons, not a typical Parks department policy.

Edgerly Road and Mother's Rest in the Fens were redesigned with new equipment in 2016 and include structures

for younger and older children.

The Parks Department parcel-priority survey asks residents to identify locations for new parkland. It could involve land transfers from a city agency. For example, in Mission Hill, Back of the Hill residents have petitioned for more than 15 years to have two steep BPDA-owned parcels on Fisher Avenue added to the contiguous McLaughlin Playground because of their environmental value. Harvard's Shattuck Garden on Park Drive has even been mentioned by some residents. Used more as a gathering spot and barbecue area for residents of the Shattuck International House then as a play area, would it be more useful as a public facility?

Environment cabinet chief Chris Cook has stated the Parcel Priority Plan is part of a larger effort to increase open space and climate resilience. Cook explained that there are funds, both private and public, available for purchasing privately owned land. But the land doesn't have to be vacant, explained Liz Sullivan, external affairs and marketing director at the Parks Department. "Even if you don't have a specific parcel in mind, it still is helpful to communicate input on open space priorities. To give ample time for public feedback, we are waiting to post a close date for the survey until the virtual open house goes live. Definitely the survey stays open for the month of August," she said.

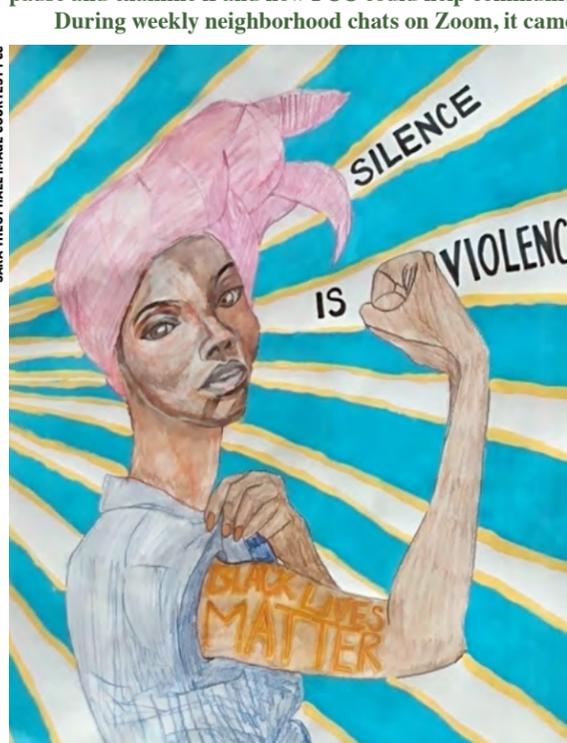
According to Sullivan, the survey results will be "layered" with interdepartmental priorities and scored parcel maps developed by consultants at the Horsley Witten Group. The maps will use four core topics that emerged from the 2015 Open Space and Recreation Plan process: equity, access, climate, and environment. And planning for the 2022-2027 Open Space and Recreation Plan is underway, assessing each neighborhood for future needs. Designating new open space could be part of the process.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.

## With 'Voice & Justice' FCC Aims to Create Forum for Reflecting on Race

BY MARY ANN BROGAN

After the death of George Floyd and under the weight of deaths of so many more, residents of the Fenway felt the need to find a way to move forward. The Fenway Community Center (FCC) staff—executive director Robert Kordenbrock and program director Laura Jean Miller—decided to take a pause and examine if and how FCC could help community members during this crisis.



Created in response to the FCC's Voice & Justice series, this poster by Sara Theophall hangs in the FCC window.

During weekly neighborhood chats on Zoom, it came to light that many members of the community felt it was "really hard to be black in a white neighborhood." In this historic moment, how could FCC help the community move in a positive direction that would lead to deeper understanding of racial rifts while nurturing healing?

The first step was to provide a forum where people could express themselves in a safe environment. All "Voice and Justice" meetings have been held virtually. That first, "Open Reflection," took place on June 5. Community members were invited to discuss their feelings or share through art, poetry, and music, and also to listen to information about recent episodes of policy brutality.

The second session on June 12, "Staying Centered Amid Racism and Violence" included a lecture by Dr. Nathaniel Currie (aka Dr. Nate), assistant professor of social work and social policy at Clark Atlanta University and focused on Critical Race Theory.

The third session, on June 19, "Hip Hop as Protest," featured Corey DePina, a rapper, emcee, educator and youth development leader.

Kordenbrock and Miller facilitated the fourth meeting on June 25. In this session they asked community members what they want to see in the future. Miller invited participants to bring artwork to display in the windows of FCC.

The Mission Hill Fenway Neighborhood Trust funded the initial series, and Tufts University has granted FCC funding for future programs.

"Voice and Justice" programs are scheduled for the first Monday of each month at 7pm. The next program will take place August 3. Dr. Nate will return to lead this discussion.

To participate, go to the FenwayCommunityCenter.org, find the events section, and click "Voice and Justice" event, then open Zoom. FCC plans to provide phone numbers in the future for those with limited visual capacity.

Mary Ann Brogan lives in the East Fens.

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# The Arts

## Area Museums *Can* Reopen, But Most Stay Online For Now

BY RUTH KHOWAIS

During Phase 3 of the state's reopening plan, museums are allowed to reopen, but only a few in the Fenway have done so.

### MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

The MFA says that it will take the time to get reopening right and plans to reopen in early fall. In the meantime, starting in August, the museum will host a range of outdoor events, including concerts and films with the Roxbury International Film Festival. The museum is also hosting a number of online events, including artist interviews, exhibition tours, and digital learning for families and educators. The digital learning includes studio art class tutorials, with instruction from professional artists, as well as art activities for children of all ages. Workshops for teachers help educators enliven their curriculum by using Museum objects as teaching tools. For the exhibition tours, you can visit *Ancient Nubia Now* or see *Gender Bending Fashion*.

Two exhibitions have been rescheduled to start in the fall. *Monet and Boston: Lasting Impression* will bring together all 35 of the museum's oil paintings by Monet, and *Writing the Future: Basquiat and the Hip-Hop Generation* features the painting, sculpture, drawings, and videos of Jean-Michel Basquiat, a leader in the post-graffiti movement of the 1980s. Both exhibitions were originally scheduled to end in August.

For more information, visit [www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org).

### ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

First out of the gate locally, the Gardner reopened on July 15. Although some rooms, such as the education studio and greenhouse, remain closed, the outdoor garden spaces and most galleries are open. Visitor capacity is limited and entry is timed. All staff and visitors are required to wear a mask. Wipes and hand sanitizers are available throughout the museum, and visitors must observe six feet of physical distance. All groups and tours are suspended. The coat check is closed, and bags larger than 12 by 12 inches aren't permitted.

The Café G, however, is open, with restrictions. It will not accept reservations and requires museum admission to visit the café. Guests order and pay for meals at a reception table just outside the café. Once seated, meals and drinks are delivered to the table, after which guests can enjoy lunch without further person-to-person contact.

The gift shop is also open, though capacity has been reduced to eight people at one time, including shop staff. All shoppers must check in with a staff member at the door before entering.

*Boston's Apollo*, which opened a few weeks before the museum shut down, has been extended until October 12. In 1916, John Singer Sargent met Thomas Eugene McKeller, a young Black elevator attendant at the Hotel Vendome. McKeller became Sargent's model, posing for most of the figures, both male and female, in Sargent's murals in the Museum of Fine Arts.

Exhibition of *The Strange Taxi, Stretched*, an adaptation of an autobiographical photomontage Lorraine O'Grady made in 1991, has been extended through November 24. In both the original and the stretched versions, female members of O'Grady's family emerge through the roof of a New England mansion to show black women escaping from the limitations placed on them in post-World War I Boston.

Hours are 11am-5pm, with extended hours (to 9pm) on Thursdays. For more information about exhibits, various discounts, or to buy tickets, visit [gardnermuseum.org](http://gardnermuseum.org).

### THE MASSART ART MUSEUM

The Massart Art Museum (MAAM) at 621 Huntington Ave. opened in February, just in time to have to close for the pandemic. MassArt had closed its gallery space for 18 months to transform it into a new, free contemporary museum. All physical events on campus have been cancelled while MassArt figures out how to have classes for students in the fall, so the museum continues virtually. Featured are the works of graduating seniors.

*Graduating Senior Exhibition 2020, Part I, The Room and Everything in It*, continues until November 1. It is an intriguing series of photographs depicting aspects of domestic life, i.e., a woman taking a bubble bath, a man opening a refrigerator, a homemade haircut in the bathroom.

*Graduating Senior Exhibition 2020, Part II* features lithographs, paintings in watercolor, oil, and acrylic, weavings and fiber art in silk, leather, and cotton, digital designs, and terra cotta art.

Mass Art will also present webinars such as *Still Life Drawing and Drawing Together with Noodle & Doodle*.

For information, visit [massart.edu/galleries](http://massart.edu/galleries).

### THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Mass. Historical Society at 1154 Boylston St. remains closed but offers a number of online services. Its former Brown Bag events are now offered virtually. On August 27 at 12pm, the lecture is *Running Toward Abolition: Fugitive Slaves, Legal Rights, and the Coming of the Civil War*. This free virtual talk by Evan Turiano of the City University of New York tells the story of the long political fight over the legal rights of accused fugitive slaves in the United States and the flaws in the Constitution's ability to keep peace in a half-slave, half-free nation. Other upcoming workshop topics include environmental book history and Reconstruction.

In addition to ongoing seminars and lectures, Mass. Historical offers its collections online for viewing. Notable are the personal papers of John Adams, John Quincy Adams, and Thomas Jefferson. The MHS also has a wide range of historical objects, including a pocket watch that belonged to Cotton Mather, a British drum captured at the Battle of Bunker Hill, a recruitment poster for the 54th regiment, and portraits of Abigail Adams, John Adams, and Elizabeth Freeman, an enslaved woman who in 1781 became the first person to sue for and win her freedom under the new state constitution.

Visit [masshist.org](http://masshist.org) for more information.

Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.

## NO PORCHFEST? HOW ABOUT A VIDEO INSTEAD?

Fenway Porchfest, a collaboration among Fenway Civic Association, the Fenway Alliance, and the Fenway Community Development Corporation, usually takes the form of an afternoon of free music performed in public spaces across the neighborhood. COVID restrictions led to postponing this year's event, but the committee gathered musical collaborators for a Fenway Porchfest music video, available at [www.facebook.com/events/1787971171340819](http://www.facebook.com/events/1787971171340819). The video features artists Lanky & the Fens, Jillian Ann, Eva Sita, Bill Dwyer Band, JP Honk Band, and Red Shaydez.

## Inching Back into Eating Out

BY RUTH KHOWAIS

Now that we can eat outdoors, several restaurants in the West Fens have reopened. Here are a few of my favorites.

One of the first to open for outdoor dining was **Thornton's** on Peterborough Street. Thornton's has always been a reliable neighborhood spot, and that hasn't changed a bit. They've moved the outdoor tables around so there is a lot of space between them, and the patio is separated from the sidewalk by a wrought-iron fence.

The food is never a disappointment. In two recent visits, I tried some of the light menu items. The veggie melt is a filling combination of fresh veggies sautéed in a teriyaki sauce and served with swiss cheese in a pita. The baked brie is an amazing combination of warm cheese, French bread and loads of fresh pineapple, apple, and grapes. Salads at Thornton's are always large and fresh. I like the grilled ahi salad, which plunks a medium rare ahi tuna on top of mixed greens, cucumber, avocado, and feta. For heavier choices, the burgers are great, as are the grilled chicken sandwiches. The potato skin appetizer is crisp and tasty and can be topped with either broccoli or bacon. Chicken fingers are meaty and not greasy. One of the many reasons I like Thornton's is that they're so accommodating. You don't want your chicken fingers to be spicy buffalo? No problem; they can change that.

Open for lunch and dinner. Prices range from \$6.95 to \$18.95.

**Citizen Public House** on 1310 Boylston St. at Jersey has also reopened its doors. The outdoor patio is fenced off and very pleasant. Thanks to new rules for outdoor dining, Citizens has taken over some curbside parking spaces on the street, but these spaces put diners closer to cars and exhaust. Better to grab a seat on their original patio. The menu is a little limited, but well prepared and delicious. In two visits, I had the hanger steak frites and the slow braised lamb shoulder with mint risotto, both very flavorful and prepared perfectly. They also offer lobster rolls, a smoked pastrami Rubeen, and pan-roasted lemon chicken. There is a raw bar and a snack menu consisting of dishes such as a mini scallop roll and meatball parm slider. The starter salads are fresh and delicious. The last time I was there, they had only one dessert, but it was to die for: a warm bread pudding made from



The patio at Citizen Public House

brioche with chocolate and caramel.

Open for dinner and brunch on Sundays. Prices range from \$8-\$32.

One of my favorite local restaurants in the Fenway is **Basho** at 1338 Boylston St. They now have outdoor tables placed on the sidewalk with a few planters and poles as markers. I prefer a bordered-off or fenced-off patio area, but Basho is still worth a visit. Basho features both cold and hot Japanese items. Among the hot, the tempura, using an assortment of vegetables and shrimp, is very crunchy and not greasy. The teriyaki entrée features grilled chicken, salmon, or beef perfectly cooked and served on brown rice. The Bento box offers a wide range of foods, such as chicken, rice, salad, sushi, vegetables, and dumplings. Among appetizers, the crispy rice spicy tuna appetizer always gets good reviews. Or try the torched salmon salad with crabmeat, shitake mushroom, and mayo.

Lovers of sushi and sashimi will find many choices. There are big boats of sushi to share and a mix of Asian sushi and some more American-style for the less adventurous. Popular rolls are the Fenway, a mix of asparagus, cucumber, avocado wrapped with seared tuna, and wasabi tobiko, and the Phoenix roll, a crab stick with spicy mayo wrapped with tuna, salmon, white fish, and avocado. And, finally, there are a lot of sake options.

Open for lunch and dinner. Prices range \$7.00-\$31.

These local restaurants are worth a visit.

Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.

## Berklee Chooses Winning Songs for Social Change

Ninety original songs flowed into Berklee's 2020 Songs for Social Change Contest, submitted by Berklee students from around the world, including Australia, England, Hong Kong, India, Macedonia, Norway, Qatar, Singapore, and Spain. The contest encourages entrants to write songs expressing their convictions about social issues and promoting positive social change. Gayathri Karunakar Menon won first place for "Privilege to Dream," about growing up in Qatar as an immigrant from India. Second place went to Australian Alexandra Riordan for a song about her experience with sexual assault.

## The EATS Beat

- > Just as the paper went to press (well, to pixels), we learned that **Neighborhoods Cafe** has been sold to the owners of Cafe Phinista, a Vietnamese-coffee delivery and pop-up operation. According to the "Boston Eater" website, Neighborhoods will re-open as **Cafe Phinista**. The new owners were scheduled to take possession on August 1.
- > Despite months of restaurant and museum closures, *Boston Magazine* maintained its tradition of publishing its annual Best of Boston issue. In the Fenway, Tiffani Faison's new Italian restaurant **Orfano** was awarded "best dessert," Eventide received the very timely "best takeout food," and the Museum of Fine Arts won the new

(but also very timely) "best virtual museum experience." Pictured here, Orfano's royal chocolate cake for two, a chocolate olive oil cake with truffle filling and ganache.



- > Right down the street, **Time Out Market** has reopened with new air systems, sanitation stations, and Plexiglas partitions. Ten vendors will be open (one of the drop-outs is Craigie Burger); the market will be closed Monday and Tuesday, open for dinner Wednesday through Friday, and have full operational hours on Saturday and Sunday.

- > There's also a new pop-up restaurant called **Under the Green Monster**, located on Lansdowne Street between Game On! and Bleacher Bar. This Fenway Park patio features a vintage Airstream serving cocktails, beer, and seltzer. ES Provisions (a subset of Eastern Standard) provides the food. The pop-up's hours are 11:30am-10pm on game days and weekends.
- > Tidbits: Tiffani Faison's tiny **Fool's Errand** on Boylston Street now hosts a pop-up wine shop every Wednesday from 4 to 8pm. Making hay while the COVID outdoor-dining sun shines, **Eataly** in the Prudential Center has expanded its patio capacity to 130.

## DCR Finishes Tree Planting



Early last month the state Department of Conservation and Recreation finished the second stage of tree planting along the Back Bay Fens. It collaborated with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy on the project (we documented the new trees along Park Drive in June), adding 16 trees along The Fenway between the John Boyle O'Reilly statue and the fire alarm center near the Johnson Gates.

## Yep—Real Men Wear Masks



As the shortened baseball season began July 24, without fans, the statues of Ted Williams, Johnny Pesky, Bobby Doerr and Dom DiMaggio outside Gate B at Fenway Park donned masks.

## August CALENDAR

### Mon, Aug 3

**VOICE & JUSTICE PROGRAM.** The Fenway Community Center seeks to open communication about issues of social and racial justice. Join them to discuss ideas and actions involving racial justice on the first Monday of each month at 7pm. Find the link at [fenwaycommunitycenter.org](http://fenwaycommunitycenter.org).

### Thu, Aug 6

**FENWAY CDC ORGANIZING COMMITTEE.** 7pm, Learn more about the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program, the urgency of PILOT reform, and why we need to hold our local institutions accountable. RSVP to Jaya Aiyer at [jaiyer@fenwaycdc.org](mailto:jaiyer@fenwaycdc.org) or go to [bit.ly/BOSPAG](http://bit.ly/BOSPAG)

### Tue, Aug 4, 11, 18 & 25

- **LIFEBOAT BOSTON FOOD PANTRY.** Seniors or residents in need get a free bag of fresh fruits/vegetables. 3–6pm, Boston Temple, 105 Jersey Street. Questions? Email [lifboatboston@gmail.com](mailto:lifboatboston@gmail.com). Register at [bit.ly/lifboatbostonregistration](http://bit.ly/lifboatbostonregistration)
- **NEIGHBORHOOD CHAT.** Join the Fenway Community Center for a weekly neighborhood chat, 12pm. Find the link at [fenwaycommunitycenter.org](http://fenwaycommunitycenter.org).

### Wed, Aug 5, 12, 19 & 26

- **GUIDED MEDITATION & KIRTAN.** 6pm to 7pm. Interested in reducing stress or practicing self compassion? Join the Fenway Community Center for a free guided meditation class led by licensed instructors Pallavi and Vaibhav. Find the link at [fenwaycommunitycenter.org](http://fenwaycommunitycenter.org)
- **VIRTUAL TRIVIA NIGHT.** 8pm. All ages welcome. Categories include music, Harry Potter, movies, and more. Casual and noncompetitive. Find the link at [fenwaycommunitycenter.org](http://fenwaycommunitycenter.org).

### Wed, Aug 12 & 26

**FENWAY FAIR FOODS.** 3:30–5pm, Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral on Kilmarnock Street. Residents in need are welcome to get a free bag of fresh fruits and vegetables. For inquiries, contact Jasmine Vargas at [jvargas@fenwaycdc.org](mailto:jvargas@fenwaycdc.org).

### Thu, Aug 6 & 13

**VINYASA YOGA.** The Emerald Necklace Conservancy offers virtual vinyasa yoga at 5:30pm. Register at [www.emeraldnecklace.org/event](http://www.emeraldnecklace.org/event).

### Thu, Aug 6, 13, 20 & 27

- **LIFEBOAT BOSTON FOOD PANTRY.** Seniors or residents in need get a free bag of fresh fruits/vegetables. 3–6pm, Boston Temple, 105 Jersey Street. Questions? Email [lifboatboston@gmail.com](mailto:lifboatboston@gmail.com). Register at [bit.ly/lifboatbostonregistration](http://bit.ly/lifboatbostonregistration)
- **FENWAY COMMUNITY CENTER GAME NIGHT.** All ages welcome, casual and noncompetitive. Find the link at [fenwaycommunitycenter.org](http://fenwaycommunitycenter.org).

### Fri, Aug 7, 14, 21 & 28

**AMANDA'S HOME MOVIES.** Join the Fenway Community Center for a virtual movie club, 9pm. For more information, email [fccfirstfridayfilms@gmail.com](mailto:fccfirstfridayfilms@gmail.com).

### Tue, Aug 18

**BOSTON WARD 4 DEMS AUGUST MEETING.** 6pm. Join fellow Democrats from Back Bay, the Fenway, and the South End for a discussion with City Councilors Michelle Wu, Kim Janey, and Ed Flynn. For Zoom info, email [ward4dems@gmail.com](mailto:ward4dems@gmail.com).

### Wed, Aug 26

**DEATH CAFE.** Join the Fenway Community Center for a virtual conversation about death. 7pm. Find the link at [fenwaycommunitycenter.org](http://fenwaycommunitycenter.org).

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Download applications at [www.fensgatecooperativehousing.com](http://www.fensgatecooperativehousing.com). Return completed applications to Bradley Mackin c/o The Mackin Group / 7 Harvard Street / Brookline, MA 02445

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