

2020 THE STORIES THAT SHAPED US

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The pandemic turned our lives upside down.

While many businesses closed and Boston Public Schools shifted to a primarily virtual model, local colleges all addressed the pandemic a bit differently. Some schools, like Northeastern and Boston University, allowed in-person classes with heightened testing requirements; others, like Emmanuel College, stayed completely remote.

To combat the onslaught of sickness and loss of income, in late March/early April, six neighborhood organizations agreed to form a “hyperlocal” mutual aid network and information clearinghouse in the Fenway—Fenway Cares. Within a week, Fenway Cares completed its first project, working with District 8 City Councilor Kenzie Bok to distribute more than 300 boxes of fresh produce to households across the neighborhood.

Fenway Cares addresses both the public health and economic impacts of the emergency on residents. Organized by the Fenway CDC, the Fenway Community Center, Operation PEACE, Fenway Civic, the Fenway Alliance, Grace City Church, and individual residents, the network serves as a resource for people needing help, looking for reliable information, or wanting to volunteer to help neighbors.

There were also federal, state and local eviction moratoriums, rental and mortgage relief funds, food banks, and free testing centers.

Especially during the early months indoors and isolated, Fenway residents tried looking on the bright side, diving into new or familiar art forms, designing window signs expressing solidarity, and participating in the “Silver Linings” contest to highlight pandemic-driven changes in policies and attitudes they hoped would become permanent. One intrepid family built the “Stick House,” an evolving structure of twigs and branches found by two young boys that grew to cover nearly 3,000 square feet on south bank of the Muddy River near the MFA.

Otherworldly quiet reined on Van Ness Street, normally jammed for ball games, in mid-April. For another photo, of Boylston Steet devoid of traffic, see page 3.



PHOTO: STEVE CHASE

Sign at 60 The Fenway in June.



PHOTO: STEVE WOLF

BLACK LIVES MATTER PROTESTS

Thousands marched peacefully from Nubian Square to the State House on May 31 to protest the death of George Floyd, a long national history of police-involved shootings, and systemic racism. Protests continued through the summer; here, health care workers gathered in Copley Square to decry police violence against communities of color as a public health issue.



PHOTO: STEVE WOLF

TRANSIT TOOK A HIT

Between scheduled repairs and route changes resulting from low ridership during the pandemic, MBTA service in the Fenway, Mission Hill, and Audubon Circle saw many changes this year.

In late July, the T began a month of repairs on the E branch of the Green Line. During construction, it offered shuttle buses between Heath Street and the Prudential Center. Later in the pandemic, the agency proposed ending all E Line trolley service at Brigham Circle, lopping off five stops between there and Heath Street. The T also announced service cuts on the 55 bus route between the West Fens and Park Street, no longer running it to Park during the day and potentially eliminating it entirely in 2021.

With poor community outreach, East Fens residents learned after the fact about the decision to relocate the bus shelter across from the Hynes Green Line stop to accommodate construction on Air Rights Parcel 12. The unappealing new shelter blocked a busy sidewalk and moved idling buses closer to residential buildings, leaving residents fuming over bus fumes.

OUR 2020 WRAP-UP CONTINUES ON PAGES 6 AND 7

Meeting Updates Noise Study, Urges Sox ‘Good Neighbor’ Pact

BY RUTH KHOWAIS

Last February, in a well-attended meeting at the Fenway Community Center, Dr. Erica Walker, founder and principal investigator of the Community Noise Lab at Boston University’s School of Public Health, presented findings from

a study of noise in the Fenway to the community.

In her study, Walker, who holds a doctorate in environmental health from Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health, conducted real-time sound monitoring at 14 sites throughout the Fenway from March through September 2019 during off hours, baseball games, and concerts at Fenway Park.

That study determined that sound levels during concerts were significantly higher than levels measured during either baseball games or times of no ballpark activity. All concerts produced levels higher than World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations, and distance from Fenway Park proved a significant predictor of sound levels. WHO recommends a limit of 53 decibels for daytime noise and 45 decibels at night; sound levels from concerts measured from 62 to 63.8 decibels, with the highest levels being on August 31 (Zak Brown Band) and July 5 and 6, (Phish).

In general, data collected showed

that the concerts exposed of Fenway residents to elevated levels of sound that earlier researchers has linked to health impacts ranging from mood and sleep disruption to cardiovascular disorders.

On Dec. 8 Walker gave an update on her findings in a remote meeting hosted by the Fenway Quality of Life Alliance and focused on how to approach the City to reduce noise emanating from Fenway Park. Commentors noted that the Red Sox owners have become the area’s biggest developer with a proposed five acres of new offices, apartment buildings, stores, and possibly a hotel. “We want to make sure it’s a livable neighborhood for the long term,” said Alliance member Steve Wolf.

Asked if she planned to test the noise levels of construction work in the Fenway, Walker said that she does plan to do more studying in the Fenway next year but is awaiting funding. She agreed that construction noise is an issue.

It was noted that nine concerts are already planned for 2021, six scheduled

on school nights. Mat Thall, an East Fens resident, suggested building a dome over Fenway Park to contain concert noise.

Kristen Mobilia, another Alliance member, pointed out that the Chicago Cubs have a “good neighbor” agreement with Wrigley Field abutters and how that might apply to the Fenway.

According to the 1060 Project web page for Wrigley Field, the Cubs have limited the number of concerts at the park, are measuring sound reaching residential areas during concerts, have hired a consultant to reduce sound, and have improved post-event clean-up. The Cubs have made parking and traffic improvements as well as improvements in public safety and security during concerts and games. Efforts include remote parking, free shuttles, promoting public transportation, and emptying public trash cans.

“The Red Sox are making some efforts,” said Mobilia, “but we really need to raise the bar. Someone should be accountable, and nobody is right

GOOD NEIGHBOR PACT on page 2 >

CIVIC AGENDA

The City of Boston has begun holding virtual office hours to answer questions about the new Community Choice Electricity program. CCE supplies affordable clean energy at consistent rates to every electric customer in the city. The electricity comes from local solar, wind, and hydroelectric sources. Office hours are 12–1pm, Tues. and Thurs., from Jan. 12 to Feb. 2. Visit boston.gov/departments/environment/community-choice-electricity for a link to join a meeting. No registration is needed.

PHOTO: STEVE WOLF



River-Dredging Work Moves to Victory Gardens

The contractors dredging the channel of the Muddy River for the Army Corps of Engineers began installing fencing and temporary roads south of the Victory Gardens this month. Just visible to the left of the leftmost truck is a gray cinder footpath that will remain open to provide access into the gardens. To the right of that same truck one branch of temporary planking laid to support heavy equipment one the notoriously uneven footpath runs alongside a temporary chain link fence. On the right of the righthand truck, a second row of planks marks another access route for equipment, with more fencing paralleling the river. Fencing has also been installed along the Park Drive sidewalk south to Agassiz Road.

Housing Advocates Hold Affordability Speak-Out

BY KELLY GARRITY

Since the eviction moratorium in Boston ended in October, evictions have been on the rise, reaching the highest levels the city has seen since February. In response to the ongoing housing crisis, organizations like the Coalition for a Truly Affordable Boston (CTAB) have been calling for changes in Boston’s development policies designed to increase the number of affordable housing units in the city.

On Dec. 9, CTAB, a coalition of residents and community development organizations, held a virtual speak-out to discuss its work to change Boston’s inclusionary development policy (IDP). The current policy requires developers building new housing units to ensure that 13 percent of units are affordable.

“We know that 13 percent is not enough,” said Jaya Aiyer, an organizer at Fenway Community Development Corporation (FCDC). Additionally, the affordable housing that is available, “is out of reach for most households without vouchers and [for] most black, indigenous, and communities of color or households of color.”

To define affordability, Boston uses area median income (AMI) as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). However, Boston’s AMI is based not only on the income of city residents, but also on households in surrounding communities, including Brookline, Newton, Wellesley, Weston, and even parts of New Hampshire.

“Right now, IDP calls for 70 percent AMI,” said Aiyer. “What many residents in Boston actually make is about 30 percent AMI.” This means that many units labeled as affordable are still out of reach for those living in Boston.

CTAB hopes to change this, focusing on two main demands. “One, we’d like to increase the inclusionary development policy from 13 percent, where it currently is, to 33 percent by the end of January 2021. We’ve been talking to folks at the city about this for two years, so this isn’t a new time line project request,” said Sam Montano from the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation. “And then also deepening the inclusionary development policy income levels so that on average they are around 40 percent area median income within a range of 30 percent to 70 percent which...would vary depending on how many people were in the family.” The coalition is also advocating for developers to create more AMI-restricted and permanently affordable units.

The pandemic has put an emphasis on the immediate importance of increasing affordability in Boston, noted Markeisha Moore, of Dorchester Not For Sale, during the event. “We know that this is not the time that we should be worrying about housing,” said Moore. “We were already worrying about it before the pandemic, so to have everything shut down, but developers are still able to push these things forward, it is not ok. The rents are going up, but...no one’s income is going up.”

In neighborhoods with large populations of college students like the Fenway, affordable housing can also help foster more consistency in the community, said Fenway resident and FCDC board member Sarah Jenness. “Affordable housing allows for our community to have more stability because families can remain here, including low-income families, and seniors who might not otherwise have affordable places to

live,” she said.

Karen Chen of the Chinese Progressive Association also joined the speak-out to talk about work being done at the state level to increase affordability, including HB. 4115, which would, according to Chen, give the city the ability to adjust linkage fees and create and fund income-restricted housing.

Mayor Marty Walsh signed the bill, a home-rule petition, in September 2019; it has been in reading in the state legislature since January 2020.

“We really need our state legislators, the Boston delegation in particular, to really move this bill,” said Chen. “This is a bill that does not cost any money [and] really gives the City of Boston the ability to really work with the residents to define solutions to the housing need that is so critical and that is so urgent.”

Kelly Garrity is a journalism student at Northeastern University.

> **GOOD NEIGHBOR PACT** from page 1 now. We have a very vulnerable population around this park and they’re greatly impacted.”

Meeting attendees proposed a good neighbor agreement with the Red Sox, which Mobilia said should include testing of noise levels, a ban on low-flying aircraft, and limiting light pollution by having “more controllable lighting.” She said that the neighborhood is in need of a comprehensive traffic-management plan.

Several attendees commented

on the proposed Good Neighbor agreement. Audubon Circle’s Dolores Boogdanian mentioned the negative impacts on health of increased noise levels and said that “controls” are needed.

State Representative Jay Livingston said, “Overall, it sounds like a good idea to engage the Red Sox and some other developers on an overall plan. I’d be happy to help facilitate that with others.”

The meeting also heard from Dave Friedman, senior vice president of legal and governmental affairs for the Red Sox. Friedman said he believes that the Red Sox have done more than the Cubs on efforts such as trash cleanup. He said that the Red Sox have tried to work with the community over the years and that he plans to meet with Dr. Walker. Friedman said, “We look forward to continuing to work with all of you.”

This would not be the final conversation on the topic of a Good Neighbor Agreement, said Wolf, and residents will have chances to provide suggestions and feedback.

Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.

TRASH & RECYCLING

PICK-UP SCHEDULE

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

COMMISSION MULLS 220 HUNTINGTON DESIGN

BY ALISON PULTINAS

At its monthly meeting on January 5, The Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC)—now enlarged to 13 members—referred National Development’s proposed 10-story residential development, which will replace the Midtown Hotel at 220 Huntington Ave., to the design subcommittee for further review.

As architect David Nagahiro explained, the design mediates among the different scales of the brownstones in the St. Botolph neighborhood, the adjacent five-story office building at 236 Huntington and the landmarked Christian Science Center Complex on the other side of Huntington Avenue.

BCDC chair Andrea Leers saw similarities to the Church Park Apartments on Massachusetts Avenue. Commissioner Bill Rawn said the significance of the Reflecting Pool and the Plaza creates an incredibly high bar for what gets built on the other side of the street and asked if the design meets the challenge. “I suggest we raise the bar,” he said. More Tuesday meetings will follow.

Ted Tye’s National Development submit-

ted a demolition application for 1 Cumberland Street in December. The 19th-century rowhouse sits directly behind the Midtown Hotel and was conveyed by the Christian Science Church, along with the hotel, to the new owner. The Boston Landmarks Commission has not yet announced a hearing date.

A last-minute petition asking the Landmarks Commission to modify the boundary of the St. Botolph Architectural Conservation District to include 1 Cumberland was withdrawn in December. The petition argued that 1 Cumberland had been excluded in error when the district was drawn up. Apparently, when the boundaries were first drafted, the building sat within the District, but the final version signed by Mayor Kevin White left 1 Cumberland out. Commission staff members found minutes from 1981 and 1982 that indicated the exclusion was intentional; as a result, said to BLC chair Lynn Smiledge, the petition was withdrawn.

Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.

A rendering shows the proposal for the Midtown Hotel site on Huntington Avenue.



RENDERING/PRESENTATION TO BCDC

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

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



King Boston—the multipart memorial to Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King—announced major gifts totaling \$2.75 million. Two grants of \$1 million each, from the Barr and Wagner foundations, will help fund

creation of an economic justice center in Nubian Square that focuses on policy solutions for income inequality. The group plans a Jan. 21 groundbreaking for its sculpture on the Common. 🗺️

And the weakest link in the Charles River watershed is...the Muddy River!

The Charles River Watershed Association released its annual report card on water quality that, for the first time, evaluated six different sections of the river system. The Muddy earned a D minus (no other part got less than a B) because of levels of *e coli* bacteria found in water samples taken monthly in 2019. We'll see what the current dredging and restoration might do to change that. 🗑️ The Villa Victoria cultural center, a 120-year-old former church in the South End, fell to the wrecking ball. Owner Iquilinos Boricas en Acción said that a report completed in 2017 showed damage so severe that it would cost twice as much to repair the structure as to replace it. 🗑️ Fenway Park could become a mass vaccination site, possibly by the end of this month. Claire Durant, director of business and government affairs for the Red Sox, wouldn't confirm specific details in an email to neighbors but

said the site might serve as many as 2,000 people daily using an online appointment system. 🐼 And speaking of the Red Sox, Fenway Park may host some... Bruins games?? The *Globe's* sports section reported that the Bs have kicked the tires on the idea with the Sox and public officials, but the plan remains conceptual. For now. 🐼 **The pandemic hasn't treated hotels too kindly. Beyond plummeting room rates—how else could Northeastern afford to lease entire floors of the Westin Copley for students?—it has also depressed sale prices. Case in point: the company that owns the Hotel Commonwealth in Kenmore Square sold it late last year for \$113 million, or \$23 million less than it paid in 2015 to buy it.** 🐼 In other pandemic news, Brigham & Women's plans to test a “promising approach” to preventing COVID-19 or making it less severe: Vitamin D supplements. The hospital hopes to enroll 1,500 newly diagnosed patients and a roughly equal number of people in their households to see if the treatment reduces illness severity or lowers transmission rates. 🐼 **Longtime Fenwickians (and rockers) know that WBCN-FM made its home on Boylston Street in the West Fens in the 1970s and 1980s, when it reigned supreme over Boston's radio market. Central to its dominance was “The Big Mattress,” a freewheeling morning show hosted by Charles Laquidara, before he decamped to WZLX. John Sferruzza, aka “Tank,” the show's sports commentator, died last month at age 68.** 🐼

Neighborhood Newsline

401 Park Changes Hands for a Cool \$1.5 billion

The 800-pound-gorilla of Kendall Square real estate, Alexandria Real Estate Equities, makes a splashy landing on this side of the Charles with this sale, roughly tripling what Samuels & Associates paid for the complex—anchored by a historic Sears warehouse—roughly a decade ago. California-based Alexandria is synonymous with life sciences, and most coverage of the sale interprets the purchase as another sign that the Boston market has chosen the Fenway as its next life-sciences hot spot. Remember that just a couple of blocks away, the air-rights portion of the Fenway Center will go into construction shortly; the City recently approved a modification of uses to include a big chunk of lab space. Beyond its location close to the LMA, transit, and Olmsted Park, and urban amenities, the site includes 201 Brookline, the 510,000-square-foot lab/office building under construction at Brookline and Kilmarnock Street. As well, Samuels has already secured preliminary approval for another building on the parking lot in front of Bed, Bath & Beyond. The *Globe* reports that Samuels will continue as a partner, managing the complex and overseeing new construction.

Sociedad Latina Director to Lead School Comm.

The mayoral-appointed Boston School Committee (BSC) unanimously chose Alex Oliver-Dávila, director of Mission Hill-based Sociedad Latina, as its 2021 chair. Oliver-Dávila had served as acting chair since October after the dramatic departure of Michael Loconto, who resigned because of his mocking of the names of public speakers. over a hot mic In her acceptance speech, Oliver-Dávila announced that B.U. Professor Ibram Kendi would work with the committee to review current policies from an antiracist perspective. In the fall, Kendi had testified before the committee in support of suspending the use of standardized tests for exam school admissions. He also led a professional development session for the BSC in December. In other Sociedad news, this month the nonprofit received \$30,000 from the City's Office of Health and Human Services's Youth Violence Prevention initiative as well as \$10,000 from the Boston Resiliency Fund, the second it has received. The

Resiliency Fund staff has announced that the next funding round, with a January 25 deadline, will likely be its last.

If Walsh Reaches DC, Janey Becomes Mayor

On Jan. 8, President-elect Joe Biden announced that he has selected Boston Mayor Marty Walsh to serve as his Secretary of Labor. Assuming Walsh wins Senate confirmation, City Council President Kim Janey will become acting mayor. Janey currently represents District 7, which includes Roxbury, parts of the South End and Dorchester, as well as Ward 4, Precincts 5, 8, and 9 in the Fenway. While the city charter calls for a special election if Walsh leaves office before March 5, both city and state officials have announced their intention to change this requirement. Either way, there will be a regularly scheduled municipal elections in September and November. If Janey takes office more than 180 days before the regularly scheduled election, there may also be a special election for the District 7 City Council seat.

Kush Grove Applies for Dispensary License

The proprietors of Kush Groove, Mission Hill’s “head” shop on Tremont Street, have reached an early phase of the multi-step process for opening a retail cannabis store. The store wouldn’t open in Mission Hill, but close by—approximately a half mile from the future site of Raices on the Hill, a dispensary proposed for the Diablo Glass building at 123 Terrace. Kush Groove, also known as The KG Collective LLC, would open its facility in a former storefront church at 1589 Columbus Ave., owned by a development group active in Mission Hill, led by Deborah Bitran of Brookline. Marcus Johnson-Smith and Michael Pires opened Kush Groove six years ago, advertising “stoner street wear and cannabis accessories.” Recently, the Mission Hill Main Streets (MHMS) board awarded Pires its Golden Broom Award for 2020. Director Ellen Walker says MHMS awards the Golden Broom annually for the cleanest and most welcoming shop in the neighborhood. “He is a really inspiring business owner, and enjoys being part of the community, and has great pride in his staff and work,” she said.



*Serving the Fenway, Kenmore Square,
Audubon Circle, upper Back Bay, lower
Roxbury, Prudential, Mission Hill, and
Longwood since 1974*

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The Fenway News,
PO Box 230277, Astor Station
Boston, MA 02123
fenwaynews@gmail.com
www.fenwaynews.org

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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.

> NEXT ISSUE <

The Fenway News remains online-only for the duration of the pandemic. Our next issue will appear on **January 28**.

> DEADLINE <

The deadline for letters, news items, and ads for our next issue is **January 21.**

Thanks to our supporters!

As you may know, we've launched a GoFundMe campaign (www.gofundme.com/f/save-the-fenway-news) to help pay off our debt to our printer and expand our online presence. **If you've already donated, thank you!** If you haven't, we hope you'll consider supporting us and news created by and for residents of Mission Hill, Audubon Circle, and the Fenway.

We plan to return to print as soon as the pandemic ebbs and more distribution points reopen. In the meantime, we continue to publish online the first Friday of every month. Don't forget to:

> Visit us at www.FenwayNews.org

> Follow us on Facebook

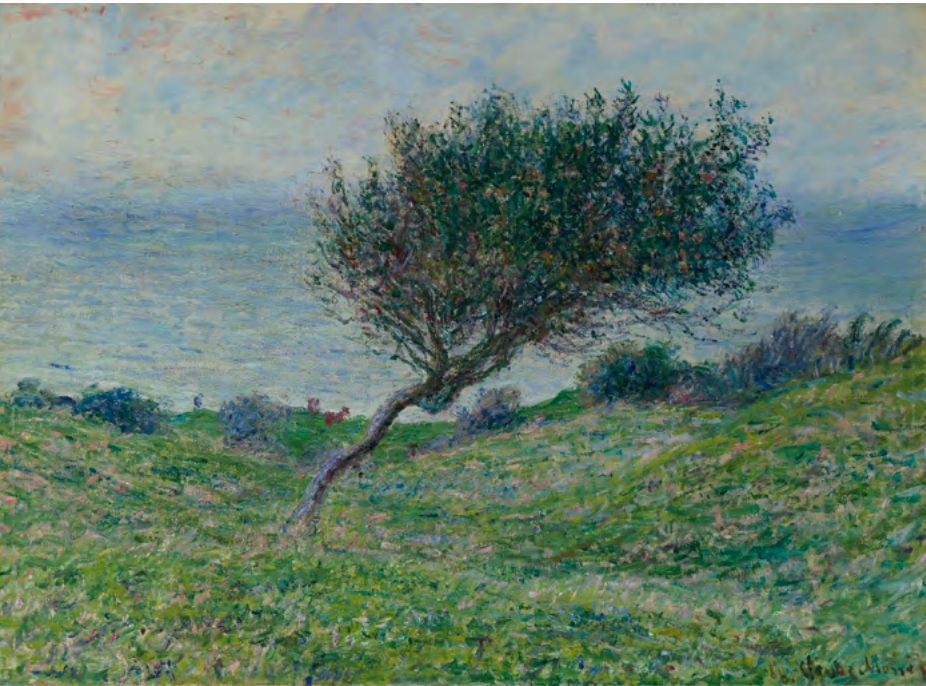
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TheArts

Monets on Display: MFA Showed Grand Group Briefly in December

EDITOR’S NOTE: The MFA is currently closed, and this exhibit is slated to end Feb. 28. However, given the excitement surrounding the exhibit and the MFA’s ownership of the majority of the paintings on display, this end date may change. All images here are © the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Seacoast at Trouville, 1881 (The John Pickering Lyman Collection—Gift of Miss Theodora Lyman)

BY RUTH KHOWAIS

As you enter *Monet and Boston: Lasting Impression* at the Museum of Fine Arts, you encounter a dramatic film of 74-year-old Claude Monet, dressed all in white, roaming his gardens at Giverny. The film sets the stage for an exhibit like no other—the MFA’s entire collection of Monet paintings, plus a few extras. Thanks mostly to Boston collectors, the MFA owns 35 Monets, one of the largest collections outside of France.

Boston has been a center for collecting and appreciating Monet’s paintings since the late 19th century. In honor of its 150th anniversary, the MFA celebrates its collection with a once-in-a-generation chance to see all 35 of them. Many were brought to Boston during Monet’s lifetime, and, although a gallery was dedicated to a rotating display of the artist’s works in 2016, it has been 25 years since the entire collection was shown together.

Quotes from Monet and other artists enhance the exhibit. Near the beginning—the exhibit is arranged in chronological order—Monet says, “I owe everything to Eugene Louis Boudin and I attribute my success to him.” Boudin was a marine painter and two of his harbor scenes appear in the exhibit. He is one of the first French landscape painters to paint outdoors and encouraged Monet to do the same. “A work painted directly on the spot,” Boudin told Monet, “has always a strength, a power, a vividness of touch that one doesn’t find again in the studio.” Painting outdoors became Boudin’s hallmark.

Monet’s earliest work in the MFA’s collection is “Rue de la Bavole, Honfleur” from 1864. The quaint street scene of the sleepy Norman fishing town evokes the influence of Boudin.

Gustave Courbet, Eugène Boudin, and Johan Jongkind, joined to form the école de Honfleur (Honfleur School), a precursor of the Impressionist movement.

After moving to Argenteuil in 1871, Monet became interested in gardening and began to integrate it and painting.

In Argenteuil, Monet produced lush landscapes such as “Meadows with Poplars,” which features a field of flowers with bright contrasting colors that seem to bring the foreground closer, a hazy background with a hint of grain stacks, and a dramatic sky. One of first Monets to be shown at the MFA was the 1874 “Snows of Argenteuil,” capturing snowfall over the town at midnight. In 1875, he painted his wife, Camille, and a child in his garden.

In the early 1860s, Japan, isolated from the outside world for almost 200 years, opened to trade with the West. By the 1870s, *Japonisme* became

a prominent trend and had a strong influence on Impressionist artists including Monet and Van Gogh.

Monet was influenced by Japanese artist Hiroshige, who created a series of prints, “One Hundred Views of Edo” [The city of Edo was later renamed Tokyo] and was known for focusing on nature and the seasons; birds, flowers, mist, rain, snow and moonlight were key elements in his woodblocks and paintings. Monet owned several of Hiroshige’s paintings. In the 1890s Monet

constructed a Japanese-style water garden at his home. The Japanese influence can be seen in Monet’s water lily paintings with a Japanese-style curved wooden bridge that give off a sense of serenity and calm characteristic of Japanese prints. “Seacoast at Trouville,” painted in 1881, has a wind-swept bent tree that is similar to Japanese depictions of trees. The large-scale painting “La Japonaise,” from 1876, depicts Camille Monet in a red Japanese kimono costume and has long been a feature of the impressionist gallery at the MFA.

In 1890, Monet bought a home in Giverny where he produced some of his most famous paintings. According to liner notes at the MFA exhibit, he relished working at home and found splendor in the mundane—poplars, fields of poppies, stacks of grain, making everyday scenes appear dazzling. John Singer Sargent, a frequent visitor, painted Monet in Giverny at work on “Meadows with Haystacks near Giverny.”

Monet is also known for creating



La Japonaise [Camille Monet in Japanese Costume], 1876 (1951 Purchase Fund)

multiple paintings of the same subject. From 1887 to 1889, he painted a series of the valley of the Petite Creuse, focusing on the Petite Creuse river, its high banks and gorges, and rapids with layers of color, and soft brushwork.

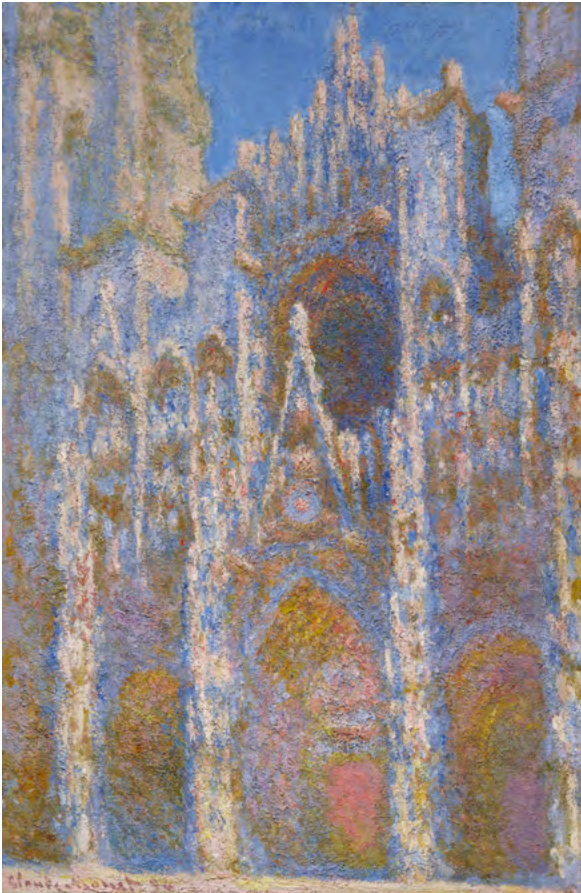
By the 1890s Monet had turned his view downward to the surface of the lily pond at Giverny. These paintings have no landscape or horizon; his intense focus is on the lily pads and flowers on the surface along with reflections of the sky on the water. “The water flowers are far from being the whole scene; really they are just the accompaniment. The essence of the motif is the mirror of water whose appearance alters at every moment thanks to the patches of sky that are reflected in it and that which gives it is light and movement,” said Monet. Examples of water lilies from 1905 and 1907 are featured in the show.

Near the end of the summer of 1890, stacks of hay in the fields near his home were a favored topic painted at various times of day to catch the changes in light. The series is famous for the way in which Monet repeated the same subject to show the differing light and atmosphere at different times of day, across the seasons and in many types of weather. Two of the series of 25 paintings appear in the exhibit.

Monet also painted the cathedral of Rouen at least 20 times. Exhibit curator Katie Hanson says the Rouen series captured the glorious Gothic cathedral at different seasons and times of day, exploring how light and weather changed it.

With this persistently varied repetition, Hanson thinks Monet forces us to “slow down, look and feel more carefully, and focus in a sustained way on what we see, and how we see it.” She said, “I see the world differently for having spent so much time looking at his paintings.”

Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.



Left: Rouen Cathedral, Façade, 1894 (Juliana Cheney Edwards Collection); Right: Rouen Cathedral Façade and Tour d’Albane (Morning Effect), 1894 (Tompkins Collection—Arthur Gordon Tompkins Fund)



January

CALENDAR

Mon, 1/18

The Museum of Fine Arts hosts its 2021 **MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY** community celebration virtually, with performances and talks that commemorate the life and work of Dr. King. The free event will be held in partnership with Citizens Bank, which has sponsored the community celebration for 19 consecutive years. The online event will stream on the Museum's Facebook, YouTube and on mfa.org. 5pm.

Tue, 1/19

HIGH BROW, LOW BROW: PHRENOLOGY, FASHION, AND FEMALE ACTIVISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY BY THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY. Between the 1830s and 1860s, Americans began fighting over a curious topic: female foreheads. While feminists and phrenologists saw "high brows" as an alluring sign of intelligence in women, gender conservatives viewed them as a troubling assault on patriarchal hierarchies. These were not just political conflicts but also scientific debates about the capacities of the female brain. The History of Women, Gender, & Sexuality Seminar invites you

to join this conversation virtually, register at <https://18308a.blackbaudhosting.com/18308a/High-Brow-Low-Brow-Phrenology-Fashion-and-Female-Activism-in-the-Nineteenth-Century>. 5:15pm.

Thu, 1/21

- **LIFEBOAT FOOD PANTRY.** 4–6pm. Free, fresh food available to Boston residents with food insecurity; sign up at bit.ly/lifeboatbostonregistration. Boston Temple Seventh-Day Adventist Church at 105 Jersey Street.
- Author Talks with the Boston Public Library. Join the BPL for a virtual talk with **ALEX ZAMALIN, AUTHOR OF AGAINST CIVILITY: THE HIDDEN RACISM IN OUR OBSESSION WITH CIVILITY.** Register at https://boston-public-library.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ukqNiApER4uPbfG_xH_HA. 6pm.
- **REVOLUTIONARY WEDDINGS: MARRIAGE IN THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY BY MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.** This virtual seminar discusses the Panthers' view of Black romantic love as an act and a tool of revolution. They believed that if African Americans embraced love and

marriage they could reclaim, re-imagine, and build strong Black families and communities, destabilize white supremacy, and realize Black liberation. Register at <https://18308a.blackbaudhosting.com/18308a/Revolutionary-Weddings-Marriage-in-the-Black-Panther-Party>. 5:15pm.

Fri, 1/22–Sun, 2/21

HATCHED: BREAKING THROUGH THE SILENCE will bring laser illuminations and wireless music broadcasts to the Hatch Shell every 20 minutes from 5 to 9pm for four weeks. It runs in all weather, thanks to weatherproof projectors, and the lawn will be opened for distanced viewing. Find out more at <https://esplanade.org/hatched>.

Tue, 1/26

The Museum of Fine Arts hosts its fourth annual **ART IN TUNE CELEBRATION** on mfa.org, Facebook, and YouTube. 7pm. This free, digital version of the event presents

five special exhibitions at the MFA to local musical artists, and asks them to express their experience of the visual art through music. Many of the performances use instruments from the MFA's historic collection, from an 18th-century violin to the first commercial electric piano.

Thu, 1/28

- **LIFEBOAT FOOD PANTRY.** 4–6pm. Free, fresh food available to Boston residents with food insecurity; sign up at bit.ly/lifeboatbostonregistration. Boston Temple Seventh-Day Adventist Church at 105 Jersey Street.
- Join the BPL for a virtual talk with Dr. Maya Rockey Moore Cummings and James Dale, as they discuss **AGAINST CIVILITY: THE HIDDEN RACISM IN OUR OBSESSION WITH CIVILITY**, primarily authored by the late Elijah Cummings. Register at https://wgbh.zoom.us/webinar/register/9016099535591/WN_r3TFJybGTIKHjsQUNJwqNA. 6pm.

COMMUNITY meetings

WED, JAN 27

During this final design meeting for the **MISSION HILL PLAYGROUND** redesign, the design team will share the final schematic plan. Visit the event page at boston.gov/calendar/mission-hill-playground-community-meeting-3 for the virtual meeting link. 6pm. Contact Abigail Chatfield at abigail.chatfield@boston.gov or (617) 504-7709 for more information.

THU, JAN 28

TASK FORCE MEETING ON NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY'S CAMPUS PLANNING

AND DEVELOPMENT. This appointed group will discuss the proposed project at 840 Columbus Ave. and associated economic development programming. This meeting will be hosted on Zoom at 6pm. Register in advance at www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_9fdoSOWKSCikpsk5OrHww. You may also call (833) 568-8864 and enter meeting ID 161 364 5130. Contact Gerald Autler at Gerald.Autler@Boston.gov or (617) 918-4438 for more information.

@ THE CENTER

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the Fenway Community Center continues to host virtual activities. Find links for all activities at fenwaycommunitycenter.org.

- **Mondays at 11am: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS.** Practice your speaking and listening skills in this free American English class.
- **Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11am: PRESCHOOL PREP.** For children under age 5, this twice-weekly class teaches numbers and letters and prepares kids for preschool or kindergarten in the fall.
- **Tuesdays at 6pm: NAVIGATORS USA.** Progressive, gender-neutral scouting for ages 5 and up.
- **Wednesdays and Thursdays at 8pm:**

GAME NIGHT. Play Drawful and other online games suitable for all ages.

- **Thursdays at 6pm: ARTS & CRAFTS.** Have fun making a variety of easy crafts in a supportive group. Craft materials are available free while supplies last to those who register in advance.
- **Fridays at 11am: SENIOR TRIVIA NIGHT.** Test your knowledge of old-school pop culture. Use Zoom or a plain old phone to join. Each week's highest scorer wins a \$20 grocery store gift card.
- **Fridays at 6pm: VIRTUAL 5K.** Take little steps to improve your wellness with support of a Capstone senior from Northeastern's Health Science Program.

Host an AmeriCorps Mass Promise Fellow





THE MASSACHUSETTS PROMISE FELLOWSHIP IS ACCEPTING PROPOSALS FOR 2021-2022

WE ARE LOOKING FOR:

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- A focus on on-time graduation through academic enrichment and college and career exploration programming

Proposals due January 29th at 5pm

Contact Lauren Currie at l.currie@northeastern.edu with questions

For more info visit masspromisefellows.org/how-to-host



2020

THE STORIES THAT SHAPED US

PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS

FIREWORKS BECAME THE SOUNDTRACK OF OUR SUMMER



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. In the first week of June, the Boston police told the Boston Herald, complaints about fireworks were up 2,300 percent citywide over 2019.

DEVELOPMENT PAUSED, RESUMED

Although there was a construction pause in the early days of the pandemic, construction resumed in June, and development projects remained a hot topic in the Fenway and Kenmore Square.

During the summer, Samuels & Associates 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 Mass 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.

In September, Damian Chaviano of Mark Development withdrew the developer's proposed high-rise Kenmore Hotel from further Public Improvement Commission review to, in his words, "fine-tune the overall design." That halted the controversial plan to redesign traffic patterns for Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue in the square for the time being. Meanwhile, construction continued on Related Beal's redevelopment of the north side of the square. The developer got the City to approve a change in use that will see about half of the 250,000 square feet used for lab space. The renovation of 401 Park (previously the Landmark Center) will add a 14-story building with more lab space and offices, also under the Samuels flag.

Also in September, Developer SCAPE proposed another project at 819 Beacon St., this one with roughly 280,000 square feet of mixed uses. It will include approximately 450 housing units, 53 patient-family housing units operated in partnership with Boston Children's Hospital, and 209 parking spaces. Scape began deconstructing 1252-1270 Boylston in November—once home to two famed gay bars and the Baseball Tavern—as it prepared the site for construction of 477 apartments and a small theater.

CONCERT NOISE STUDY

Is the Fenway being adversely affected by noise pollution? The resounding answer is yes. Local researchers have been studying the health effects of noise in the neighborhood, and the results sounded alarming. In a study released in February, Erica Walker, who holds a doctorate in environmental health from Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, reported the results of real-time sound monitoring at 14 sites throughout the Fenway from March through September of 2019 during off hours, baseball games, and concerts at Fenway Park. Conclusions were dramatic. Sound levels during concerts proved higher (with statistical significance) than sound levels measured during both baseball games and times of no activity at the stadium. All concerts registered sound levels higher than World Health Organization recommendations for urban conditions. Nearly 100 people turned out for Walker's presentation, the last large in-person public meeting held in the Fenway before the shutdown.

RIVER DREDGING BEGAN

In late June, the Charter Company installed fencing along both sides of Agassiz Road ahead of its work with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) on Phase 2 of the Muddy River restoration project. Over three years the company will dredge 1-8 feet of sediment from twelve areas along the river to improve water flow, remove some (but not all) phragmites, and restore and replant the riverbank with native species. In the fall, the company rebuilt the intersection of Agassiz and the Fenway to allow trucks to haul sludge from upstream sites near Simmons University and Leverett Pond in Brookline to the processing facility set up in front of the Duck House. We ran this photo of some of the first pieces of equipment deployed along Agassiz Road.

PHOTO: ALISON PULTINAS



PHOTO: STEVE CHASE



2020 ELECTION

On the first two days of early voting in Massachusetts—Saturday, Oct. 17, and Sunday, Oct. 18—hundreds of Boston residents took advantage of a chance to cast their ballots at Fenway Park. Lines formed early, snaking back from Gate A on Jersey Street and onto Van Ness. As both days wore on, however, lines and wait times shrank. The pandemic reached elections, too, with two East Fens polling stations moved to Matthews Arena to reduce the risk to residents of the elderly housing buildings that normally host them.

DOROTHY'S CLOSED

Long a local fixture, Dorothy's Boutique on Mass. Ave. shut its doors June 30, an early retail victim of the pandemic. Owner Jon Diamond's parents first opened in the Fenway in 1960, moving to 190 Mass. Ave. in the '70s. Diamond told contributor Alison Barnet that he hoped to continue selling online.

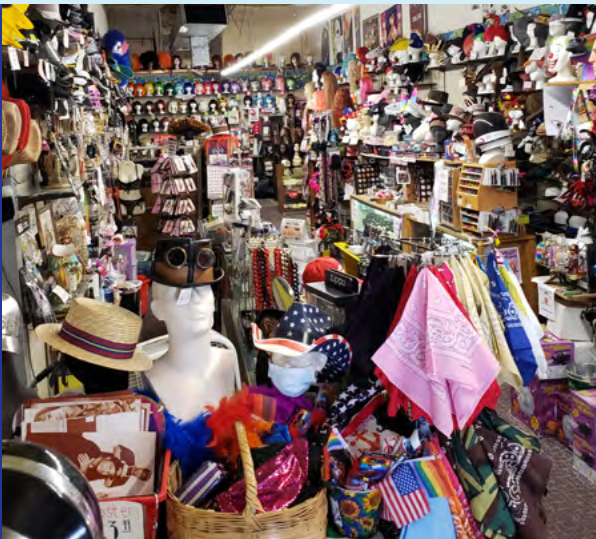


PHOTO: JON DIAMOND

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2020

THE STORIES THAT SHAPED US

ART IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS



On Sunday, March 22, a guerilla artist placed a face mask on one of the sculptures that flank the Fenway doors of the MFA. (The sculptures by Antonio Lopez, are known as “Day” and “Night.”) The Boston Globe later tracked down the artist, Peter Agoos, who recruited his nephew to help him install the mask, made of cling wrap. Although the museum had closed the previous week, its administrators didn’t take kindly to the installation and had it removed the next day—a disappointing choice at a time when humor offered some relief from the unrelenting grimness of the first wave of the pandemic.

DEATH TOOK NO HOLIDAY

The year took away some memorable local lights, including activist **Lisa Soli**, known for her years managing and upgrading many of the buildings (and their financing) owed by the Fenway CDC; grassroots leader **David Scondras**, who served as the first city councilor from District 8 between 1983 and 1993 (see pages 4-5) and wrote the city’s first human rights ordinance; retired urban planner and FCDC board member **Romin Koebel**; Whole Foods employee **Derrick A. Johnson**, well known for his kindness and beautiful singing voice; and musician and educator **Florence Dunn**, who’d lived in the East Fens for more than 60 years.



Clockwise from top left: Lisa Soli, Florence Dunn, Derrick A. Johnson, and Romin Koebel

MUSEUMS STRUGGLED

All museums—including Mass Historical Society, the Gardner, and the just-renovated galleries at MassArt—closed for many months. But our biggest museum took the biggest hit: The Museum of Fine Arts canceled all public programs through the summer and laid off more than 100 staff members in the spring. In September, labor organizers working with employees at the museum filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board to hold a new union election, potentially to join UAW Local 2110. The move could affect hundreds of administrative, technical, and curatorial employees.

After a summer of uncertainty the MFA reopened on Sept. 26—sort of. In light of state and city guidelines, it only allowed visitors into certain galleries, dramatically reduced hours, and required reserve-ahead, timed tickets. (The Gardner had reopened in mid-summer, also with strict capacity and time limits). The six-month closure wreaked havoc with plans to celebrate the MFA’s 150th anniversary. On Dec. 16, in the face of a new surge of coronavirus cases, the City of Boston ordered museums to close yet again.

DELIA ALVAREZ BEAT COVID-19

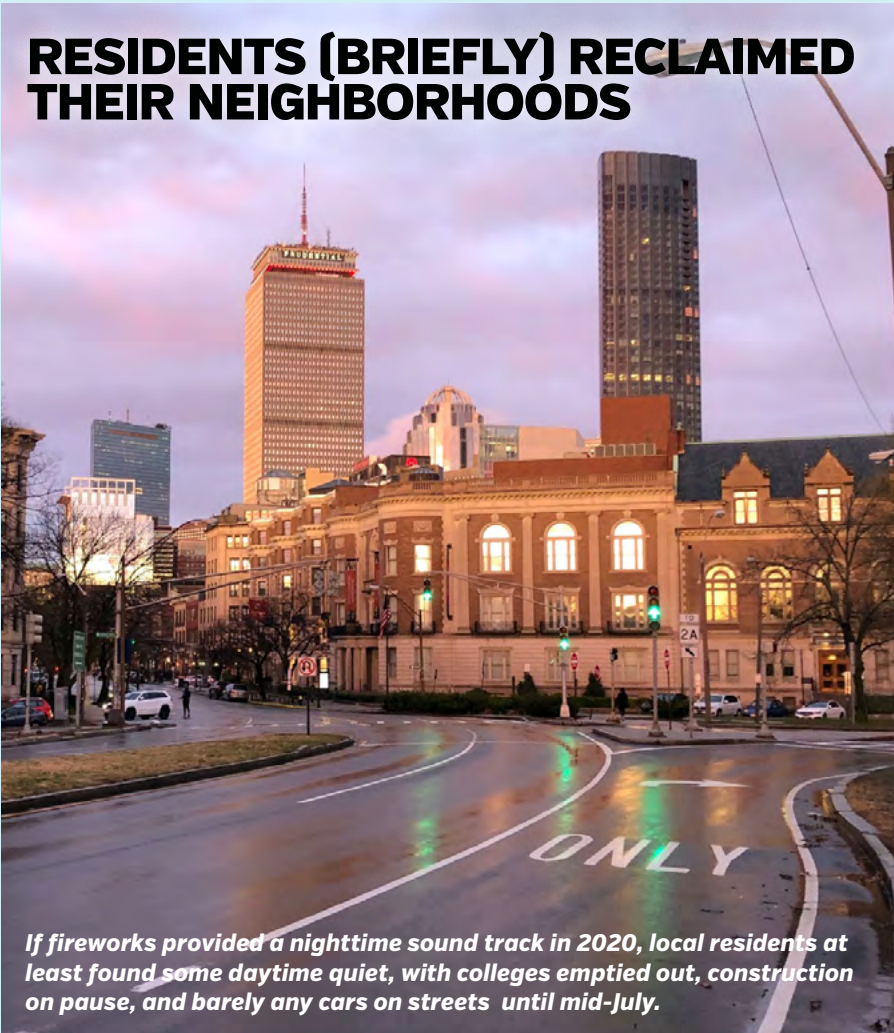


Neighbors cheered the return of 96-year-old Delia Alvarez after she survived a serious bout with COVID-19. Following a month in rehab, she returned to her West Fens home in the summer, assisted by her niece Sandra. Shown in a 2019 photo, Delia appears with Gloria Platt and Rachel Huot.

FIRST FENWAY CO-OP TURNED 40

The First Fenway Co-op, located at 143-149 Mass. Ave., celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2020. Back in the 1970s, when tenants in the building learned that the owner was planning on selling, they banded together to purchase the building through a limited-equity cooperative that owns the entire building and keeps housing costs low. This led to numerous other housing affordability victories over the years. The 12 six-room apartments on Mass. Ave. have remained a successful resident-owned cooperative since 1980.

RESIDENTS (BRIEFLY) RECLAIMED THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS



If fireworks provided a nighttime sound track in 2020, local residents at least found some daytime quiet, with colleges emptied out, construction on pause, and barely any cars on streets until mid-July.