



THE

# Fenway News

HYPERLOCAL NEWS FOR THE FENWAY, AUDUBON CIRCLE, KENMORE SQUARE, UPPER BACK BAY, PRUDENTIAL, LONGWOOD, AND MISSION HILL SINCE 1974 • VOLUME 51 NUMBER 5 • MAY 2 - MAY 30, 2025

## Council Asks State to Skip District 7 Special Election; Candidate List Swells

BY CAROL LASKY

The Boston City Council District 7 Election is gaining clarity. “Given the abbreviated timeline and advocacy from community groups like Reclaim Roxbury and MassVote,” City Council President Ruthzee Louijeune said in a statement, “the Boston City Council passed a home-rule petition signed by the Mayor stating that in the event of a vacancy prior to May 8, there will be no special election for District 7 and candidates would run under the normal regular election time line. The petition also specifies that the candidate that wins the race for D7 should be seated immediately following the election in November.” (The “normal regular election time line” Louijeune refers to is September 9 for the preliminary election and November 4 for the general election.)

The City Council action resulted from a federal plea agreement by D7 City Councilor Tania Fernandes Anderson to vacate her seat.

“The next step in passing the home rule petition will be presenting it to our colleagues at the State House for consideration and passage,” said Louijeune. “However, if the home rule has not yet been considered or voted on at the State House by May 8 and there is still no official vacancy in the District 7 seat, the issue will be moot, as there will no longer be a requirement for a special election.

The roster of candidates seeking the District 7 seat is expanding and currently includes 17 people: Said Abdikaram, Mavrick Afonso, Said Ahmed, Wawa Bell, Tchad Cort, Reverend Miniard Culpepper, Joao Gomes Depina, James E. Grant, Kamar Winston Hewitt, Samuel Hurtado, Jerome King, Shawn Dwayne Nelson, Reverend Roy Owens, Sam Shroff, Robert E. Stanley, Natalie Juba-Sutherland, and Steven Alan Wise.

District 7 includes Roxbury, Dorchester, and parts of the Fenway and South End.

*Carol Lasky lives in the East Fens.*

## Kaji Aso Waves Runners Over The Finish Line



Monita Rajbanshi, left, and Kate Finnegan of Kaji Aso Studio in the East Fens handed out congratulatory certificates to runners crossing the Boston Marathon finish line in the evening on April 21.

## CIVIC AGENDA

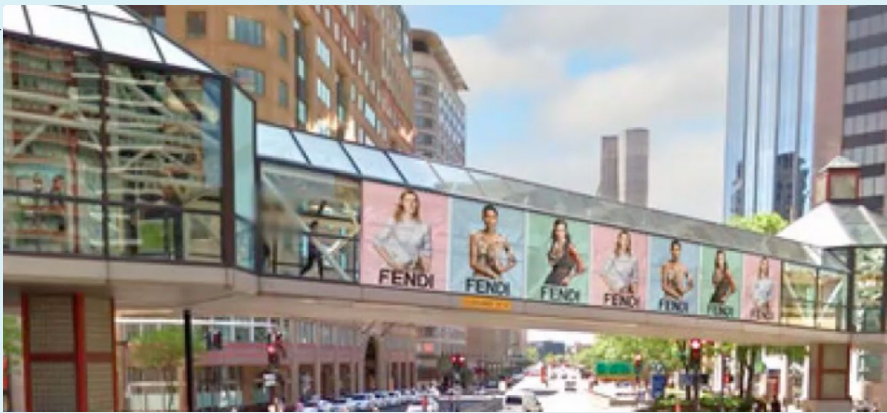
**Fri, 5/9**  
**Comment Deadline for Northeastern’s IMP**  
Public comments are due on Northeastern’s 10-year master plan for growth through 2034. (See guest opinion on p2.) Submit comments at [tinyurl.com/6x5352rv](https://tinyurl.com/6x5352rv).

**Thu, 5/15**  
**Mayoral Candidate Forum**  
Eleven Democratic ward committees cosponsor a forum with four announced candidates for Boston Mayor: Kerry Augustin, Domingo DaRosa, Josh Kraft, and Michelle Wu. GBH News political reporter Saraya Wintersmith moderates. Remote event, 6:15–8pm. Register at [tinyurl.com/3v42f2wb](https://tinyurl.com/3v42f2wb).

**Tue, 5/20**  
**Community Meeting: Let’s Talk About the Future of the Duck House**  
Bring your ideas—and see photos of the interior—for a preliminary discussion of possibly revitalizing the historic Duck House on Agassiz Road as a community asset. Fenway Community Center, 1284 Boylston (enter from Jersey Street), 5:30pm.

**Thu, 5/22**  
**City Council Candidate Forums for District 7 and At-Large Seats**  
Twelve community groups—including the Ward 4 Democratic Committee and Fenway CDC—sponsor a pair of forums for the fall’s City Council races. GBH’s Saraya Wintersmith returns to moderate with Yawu Miller. At-large forum follows. District 7 forum 6–7:30pm; At-Large forum, 7:30–9pm Dewitt Center, 122 Dewitt Dr. Register at [bit.ly/BostonCCForum](https://bit.ly/BostonCCForum).

## PROPOSAL WOULD ADD ADS TO SKY BRIDGE



Boston’s Planning Department’s Siggi Jonson hosted an unusual meeting on April 9 to present a plan for large advertising decals on each side of the sky bridge above Huntington Avenue between the Prudential Center (at right in the rendering, looking outbound on Huntington) and Copley Place. In an email, Johnson noted that “Outdoor advertising is a forbidden use in most zoning districts and requires zoning relief,” which would come from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Attorney Jeff Drago said a ZBA hearing date hadn’t yet been set. The Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay’s Licensing and Building Use committee is scheduled to review the proposal on May 5.

## A Block of Fisher Avenue’s Hilltop History of Estates, Reservoir, and Trails

BY ALISON PULTINAS

There is a multi-layered history to a block of Mission Hill’s curving Fisher Avenue, originally called Prospect Street. In the early 19th century, uphill from John Parker’s farm, lay two estates owned by Roxbury men who made fortunes trading raw goods produced by enslaved people.

Warren Fisher (1796-1875) and Whiting Hewins (1790-1855) were business partners dealing in “West India Goods” who owned adjacent sprawling properties with large houses of similar design. These “West India Goods” could have been many things—tobacco, cotton, or molasses—but connection to the transatlantic slave trade seems certain.

Olive E. Hewins married Isaac Hayden, a prominent cotton manufacturer, in 1857, and later took possession of the Hewins family estate—mansion, barn, and gardens. The street, renamed Fisher Avenue in 1868, did not extend west of the property until years later. The house at the top of Short Street (now called Hayden) was gone by 1900, its acreage divided into lots for two- and three-family houses. Olive’s step-grandson Judge Albert Hayden and attorney Andreas Blume served as executors for her will in 1898.

The Fisher mansion survived to

become Resthaven in 1927, the first iteration of the Benjamin Healthcare Center (“Historic MH Retirement Facility Faces Uncertain Future,” *Fenway News* May 2024). Today, the Care Center at 120 Fisher Ave. is back in the news and the courts. There are the constant threat of closure; questions about attorney Joe Feaster’s role as receiver; former State Sen. Dianne Wilkerson’s involvement and six-figure consultant’s salary; a lien placed by the state to recover costs associated with receivership; and a lawsuit to recover funds from the former director. A series of articles by *Bay State Banner* reporter Avery Bleichfeld has

documented the drama.

Possible sale of the facility or the potential for a large vacant property raise concerns for neighbors and the Back of the Hill Community Development Corporation. The media have paid little attention to Roxbury Preparatory School’s plan to leave the Benjamin building this summer and the loss of that rental income.

The charter school has shared the facility with the nursing home since 1999, but with a new building in Newmarket opening in September, it will leave Mission Hill. Roxbury Prep uses 11-acre McLaughlin Playground across the street

for recess and athletics.

Adjoining the park and playground when it opened in 1931 was the Robert Brigham Hospital for Incurables at the summit of Parker Hill on the site of the former Boston Water Board’s 1874 high-service reservoir. Pipes were laid downhill to Fisher, then on to Parker Street to serve the growing neighborhood. After other larger and higher-elevation reservoirs were planned in Brookline, the Parker Hill location seemed more useful as a park even before the reservoir was filled in in 1915.

Stairs built from Fisher Avenue after the reservoir’s closure still exist but weren’t identified as an official park entrance until recently. They form an integral connection in Miles Howard’s 27-mile Walking City Trail ([bostontrails.org](https://bostontrails.org), section 3).

On Earth Day, Boston Trails announced that McLaughlin Playground is now a crossroads where a new 31-mile City on the Hills Trail meets the Walking City Trail. And there is related news: City Councilor Sharon Durkan has advocated to include in the City’s capital budget funds for adding railings to those old steps.

*Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.*

## CONCERT ALERT

AT FENWAY PARK

**MAY 29**  
**SHAKIRA**  
7:30–10:30PM

**MAY 30**  
**JASON ALDEAN WITH BROOKS & DUNN**  
5:30–10:30PM

### REPORT NOISE OR BAD BEHAVIOR

Help document noise or other problems by calling ALL THREE of these:  
CITY LICENSING BOARD ☎ 617-635-4170 | SOX COMPLAINT LINE ☎ 617-226-6424  
CITY PROBLEM LINE ☎ 311



# FENSVIEWS

## Ask Northeastern to Be a Good Neighbor With Its New IMP

BY JOELLA OROZCO

For the past four months, I've engaged firsthand in the world of affordable housing development and community building. Prior to beginning my role as housing development and community building co-op at the Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC), I was naively unaware of the connection between Northeastern's expansion and the Fenway's housing market. What's more, my co-op is part of the Northeastern

### GUEST OPINION

Co-op in Service to our Neighbors (CSN) program, which places six students in different neighborhood-based nonprofits to provide additional capacity.

Despite CSN's being a valuable community contribution by Northeastern, my conversations with longtime residents and community leaders at Fenway CDC highlight how deeply the issue of Northeastern's growth impacts the neighborhoods that surround the university. Most striking is the university's growing enrollment and failure to build enough on-campus housing, choices that are reshaping the Fenway, and not for the better.

Residents of the Fenway have raised the issue of Northeastern's off-campus student population for years, fearing that it would change the place they call home. It is undeniable that as Northeastern has increased its enrollment tremendously, it has also expanded its off-campus footprint. Every 10 years, institutions must develop an institutional master plan (IMP), a blueprint for the next decade of growth analyzed by the City's Planning Department and the public. The IMP outlines where and how the university plans to build, including new dorms, academic buildings, and other facilities. Northeastern recently filed its 2025-2035 IMP, and while it boasts increased room for academic and research facilities, it does not go far enough to solve the fundamental issue of creating sufficient on-campus housing.

Since its last IMP (2013-2023), Northeastern's undergraduate enrollment has increased by 24 percent. Yet, according to its current IMP, Northeastern plans to increase the percentage of students in on-campus housing by a measly 4 percent, from 56 to 60 percent, over the next 10 years. This is a far cry from its 2013-2023 IMP, which claimed that NU would house 67 percent of its undergraduate population. Meanwhile, the graduate student population has increased 145.7 percent in 10 years. Northeastern plans to double its graduate population in the next 10 years, and yet not a single graduate bed exists on campus.

The City is well aware of the issues posed by a high off-campus student population. A 2023 analysis by the Mayor's Office of Housing found that average rents in neighborhoods with high student

density—like the Fenway, Mission Hill, Allston, and Brighton—were \$200 higher per month than in other neighborhoods.

Students feel the impact of Northeastern's lack of on-campus housing options. Only first- and second-year students are guaranteed on-campus housing, so upperclassmen are pushed off campus. Nevertheless, many students can afford to compete in Boston's high-cost rental market, with a 2023 study finding that over half of Northeastern's students population come from families among the top 10 percent of household incomes in the country. For residents, the stakes are high: long-term community members are displaced as landlords prioritize short-term student leases, often with inflated prices and reduced care for the unit. This phenomenon is part of a larger pattern of gentrification, where longtime residents—often working-class folk, immigrants, or people of color—are priced out of their neighborhoods as wealthier, transient populations move in. What's lost is not just housing, it's neighborhood identity.

Residents of Roxbury, Mission Hill, and the Fenway deserve to live in their homes and the neighborhood they love, and institutional partners like Northeastern must remain committed to and fight for the communities that house its campus. Northeastern has the resources to address the issue, but it must do more than what its current IMP proposes. Housing more students on campus relieves pressure on the private rental market, helps preserve the vibrancy and character of the Fenway and surrounding neighborhoods, and reflects a long-term commitment to the health of the communities that Northeastern occupies. Increasing on-campus housing is the most urgent and necessary solution for the issues that Northeastern has contributed to.

After a series of listening sessions with Fenway CDC's resident leaders, the issue of institutional accountability emerged as a high priority. We hope that through the IMP process, more neighbors will get involved to ask Northeastern to be a good neighbor by:

1. Signing Fenway CDC's petition ([tinyurl.com/fcdcpetition](https://www.tinyurl.com/fcdcpetition)).
2. Participating in a Boston Planning Department community meeting on May 1 (Register at [bosplans.org/NUPublicMeeting525](https://www.bosplans.org/NUPublicMeeting525)).
3. Submitting a comment to the Planning Department by May 9 ([tinyurl.com/NUcomment](https://www.tinyurl.com/NUcomment)).

Northeastern, the City of Boston, and the public are planning the future of Northeastern's campus right now. Let's ensure the next 10 years reflect responsibility and respect for the communities that make Boston home for all of us. To learn more, visit: [fenwaycdc.org/institutional-accountability](https://www.fenwaycdc.org/institutional-accountability)

*Joella Orozco is the housing development and community building co-op at Fenway CDC.*

### LETTERS

#### Fighting Trump will require more than just demonstrating

Dolores Boogdanian's guest opinion on Democrats fighting back against Trump was acceptable as far as it went. Still, as a journalist who's covered mass protests since the 1960s, I'm not convinced they bring about much change. The two nationwide protests this month may have let a lot of people let off steam, but Trump, playing golf at Mar-A-Lago (at a \$10 million cost to the taxpayers each time), couldn't care less. If anything, he's flattered by the attention.

The key to understanding Donald Trump is that he lives to get away with it—getting away with *anything*, from sticking a date for the tab at a cash-only restaurant (see [tinyurl.com/55jmd5zd](https://www.tinyurl.com/55jmd5zd)) to shanghaiing Venezuelans to an El Salvador hellhole prison without due process. Only the federal courts and Congress stand in his way, and the Republican majority in Congress crawls to Trump out of fear of not being reelected—a member's number-one priority. Demonstrations and town halls must concentrate on the threat of denying reelection to spineless Republicans. That's the only thing they fear.

But that's not enough. The Democrats won't be able to counter Trump effectively without a charismatic white male (not PC, but pragmatic) candidate who embodies virtues as compelling and appealing as Trump's vices. Where will he come from? He hasn't shown up yet.

Yes, millions are turning against Trump, but he's fooled other millions with his vacuous promises. Will these people

turn against him? I have my doubts. It's easy to fool people but almost impossible to make them admit they've been fooled—they're far more likely to double down on their original decision. Admitting you've been a fool calls for more humility than most people possess.

Meanwhile, Congress should be the demonstrators' target. Can they bring about change at the midterm elections? Will there even BE midterm elections? Remember that Trump said, "You'll never have to vote again." I wouldn't put it past him to declare martial law and cancel all elections: President—no, dictator—for life.

The country is in more danger than it has ever experienced. We need to fight back, but we must fight effectively. Parading with signs is only a start.

SPENCER GRANT  
LAGUNA BEACH, CALIFORNIA

#### Don't give up on MATEP fight; keep pressure on agencies, officials

In 1986 I represented several community groups that sued to stop the licensing of the MATEP power plant in the Longwood Medical Area ("Concerns About Health Risks of MATEP Power Plan Resurface," April issue). My clients were Fenway Civic, Mission Hill Planning Commission, Friends of the Muddy River, Back of the Hill CDC, and Roxbury Highlands Historical Society. The Town of Brookline was a co-party.

The defendant was the Department of Environmental Protection, then called the Department of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE). We'd heard that the DEQE hearing officer who granted MATEP

its license was an anti-nuclear activist who liked seeing a diesel power plant.

Our suit argued that clean-air laws did not allow degradation of air quality, especially in Boston, where air quality was poor. We noted that diesel was the dirtiest fuel for generating electricity, which was why it was used so rarely in urban areas. (To cite current scientific understanding, Washington State's Department of Ecology lists fine particulates, nitrogen oxides, and ground-level ozone as byproducts of diesel combustion and attributes 70 percent of cancers caused by air pollution to diesel exhaust.)

To scare us off, MATEP bragged that it had won every previous lawsuit brought against it, mostly by other power providers. Filing the case in Massachusetts Superior Court, we convinced the judge that there were no factual issues needing a trial and that the legal issues should be decided by an appellate court. The judge agreed, and we refiled the suit in the Massachusetts Court of Appeals. Before the case could be heard, the Supreme Judicial Court added it to its own docket, which the justices do with a few cases every year. So now we were arguing in the state's highest court. The court ruled against us.

My takeaway: neighborhoods should fight against air pollution. Litigation may not always work but arguing with politicians and complaining to government agencies are important tactics worth pursuing.

GALEN GILBERT  
MALDEN

## THE Fenway News

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

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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. While the Fenway has changed since then, we remain committed to the spirit of identifying problems and making our neighborhood a better and safer place to live.*

> **NEXT ISSUE** <

**Our next issue will appear on Friday, May 30.**

> **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS** <

**The deadline for letters, news items, and ads for our next issue is Friday, May 23.**

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# ANNUAL MEETING SEASON



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE FENWAY CIVIC ASSOCIATION



PHOTO: STEVE WOLF

## YEAR IN REVIEW, MAYORAL TALK, FIRST LOOK AT PARKS-SHADOW STUDY

BY LESLIE POND

On March 27, the Fenway Civic Association (FCA) held its 63rd annual meeting at Fenway Park's The 521 Overlook with over 150 attendees. An all-volunteer organization, FCA's mission is to work for a vital, livable neighborhood.

Vice-President Kathy McBride and Secretary Mary Jo Pymm highlighted the FCA's accomplishments in 2024 in the areas of development project and licensing review; environmental advocacy; and community events. Special mentions included masonry repair completion at the Johnson Memorial Gates (Westland Ave. and Hemenway St.) and ongoing participation with Fenway Cares, which raises funds and provides food distributions and preventive health services.

President Tim Horn revealed FCA's 2025 goals, which continue current programs alongside transportation advocacy, additional funding for Fens pathways improvements, repairing the Johnson Gate's lion-head medallions, and

pedestrian improvements with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Mayor Michelle Wu, referring to the uncertainty at the national level, shared that "bread and butter" community projects such as FCA's is where her heart is. She also noted the diversity of attendees, who ranged in age from college students to community elders. State Rep. Jay Livingstone and City Councilors Sharon Durkan and Henry Santana gave brief remarks.

Liza Meyer, the City's interim parks commissioner, detailed progress on "Understanding Shadow Impacts on Parkland," a research study initiated as part of the proposed Longwood Place development project at 305 Brookline Ave. For more information, visit [tinyurl.com/3v88hy52](https://tinyurl.com/3v88hy52).

Summing up afterward, McBride said, "We are thrilled to see increased engagement from our members and elected officials as the FCA works to protect parks and open space through this period of intense development."

*Leslie Pond lives in the West Fens.*

## AWARDS, A RAFFLE, GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

BY RUTH KHOWAIS

B risk pacing left time for a community conversation at the 52nd annual meeting of the Fenway Community Development Corp., held April 29 at Simmons College.

Board President Sarah Jenness welcomed more than 120 attendees, then handed off the meeting for a vote, which returned Jenness to the board and added new member Vicky Liao.

The CDC then presented community service awards to

- **State Sen. Lydia Edwards** for activism and advocacy on behalf of society's most vulnerable.

- **The Boston Badminton and Tennis Club** on Hemenway Street for organizing a holiday gift drive for CDC tenants and offering scholarships for tennis lessons to local youth.

- **Tenant organizers from Our Lady's Guild House** for spearheading a years-long campaign to save their home. Not all were present, but **Linda Atkinson, Judy Burnette, Lydia Eccles, Mary Roberta Frates, Leigh Graham, Kathryn Jenkins, and Siobhán O'Connor** will all receive awards.

Steven Farrell reviewed review his first year as executive director,

telling supporters that "We are moving forward" and "our fiscal house is in order." He listed new projects in development, including apartments at 112 Queensberry and affordable ownership projects on Hemenway Street and in Beacon Hill, a first in that neighborhood since the board authorized projects outside the Fenway.

Consultants Harry Smith and Joceline Fidalgo then took over to lead a session designed to collect feedback that will help refine the CDC's new strategic plan. They have conducted interviews and focus groups since last year, drafting a plan based on what they've heard. Seven key priorities have emerged, including expanding local organizing, adding affordable housing, enhancing services to CDC residents, and raising the group's profile. Attendees ranked to the priorities in small-group discussions. Fidalgo and Smith promised a draft plan by early summer and a "town hall" discussion of the plan later in the year.

The meeting ended with a raffle that awarded tickets to the Fenway Ball in June and Taste of Fenway in September, and a spirited round of "Happy Birthday" for board member Rosaria Salerno, who recently turned 90.

*Ruth Khowais lives in the West Fens.*

## DASHBOARD

### TRASH & RECYCLING PICK-UPS

<b>BACK BAY</b> Monday and Thursday	<b>FENWAY</b> Tuesday and Friday	<b>MISSION HILL</b> Tuesday and Friday
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### STREET CLEANING

In the Fenway, check both City and DCR schedules to see when street cleaning takes place. Find City info at [tinyurl.com/s9fyarf8](https://tinyurl.com/s9fyarf8). See the DCR schedule at [tinyurl.com/4usvd8w3](https://tinyurl.com/4usvd8w3).

## Community Center Holds First Annual Meeting



PHOTO: MALLORY ROHRIG

On April 3 about 60 residents came out for the Fenway Community Center's first annual meeting. Threaded through the evening, which included a review of 2024 and a preview of 2025, was the idea that the Center wants even more residents to learn about and use this community asset. Visit [fenwaycommunitycenter.org](https://fenwaycommunitycenter.org) to see which of 60-plus programs in May might interest you.

SOX BOX		This month's home games at Fenway Park	
SAT, 5/3 4:10PM	SUN, 5/4 1:35PM	TUE, 5/6 6:45PM	WED, 5/7 6:45PM
THU, 5/8 1:35PM	FRI, 5/16 7:10PM	SAT, 5/17 7:15PM	SUN, 5/18 1:35PM
MON, 5/19 6:45PM	TUE, 5/20 6:45PM	WED, 5/21 6:45PM	THU, 5/22 6:45PM
FRI, 5/23 7:10PM	SAT, 5/24 6:45PM	SUN, 5/25 1:35PM	



PHOTO: STEVE WOLF

## RAINY CLEAN-UP DAY MEANT 'MUDDY' WASN'T JUST IN THE RIVER'S NAME

More than 60 volunteers turned out on a soggy April 26 to clean up a winter's worth of trash in the Charlesgate section of the Muddy River. The Emerald Necklace Conservancy organized teams across the necklace, including in the Fenway, where it worked with the Charlesgate Alliance. In the photo, volunteers comb the ground above the culvert that carries the river beneath the Storrow Drive ramps and into the Charles. The Conservancy reports that more than 260 volunteers collected 3,600 pounds of garbage across all Emerald Necklace parks.



# Symposium Spotlights Research on Ecology, Green Innovation As Speaker Urges ‘Engage, Connect, Persist’

BY LESLIE POND

At the 19th annual Muddy River Symposium on April 8, attendees filled Simmons University’s Paresky Center to capacity. The Colleges of the Fenway Center for Sustainability and the Environment and the Muddy River Restoration Project Maintenance and Management Oversight Committee (MMOC) co-hosted the event, which had the theme “Environmental Policy and Advocacy: Making an Impact.” Students from the five Colleges of the Fenway presented 35 research posters on a wide range of topics, including a “greener” oral diabetes treatment with the potential to reduce environmental impact during manufacturing and by eliminating single-use injectables; a smart waste bin that monitors fill levels for optimizing trash collection routes; modeling migration patterns of humpback whales; automated hydroponic monitoring to help grow crops in locations not suitable for traditional farming; conducting outreach for the Dorchester Food Co-op; advocating for solar-energy adoption across the Colleges of the Fenway; and assessing challenges and opportunities for the sustainability efforts of several local companies.

The Colleges of the Fenway’s Center for Sustainability awarded mini grants to three research projects:

- *Emmanuel College Residence Hall Composting Pilot Program*, by Emmanuel College’s Amelia Knowles and Alison Hrivnak
- *Pollinator Pathways: Cultivating Native Habitats for Urban Pollinators at Simmons University*, by Simmons University’s Cailey Plainte
- *WickedWind: Exploring Turbine Design*, by Wentworth Institute of Technology’s Sammy Riadi.

Faculty members judged the poster presentations based on three criteria: clarity of research, contribution to the field, and the students’ oral presentation. Awards were given for the top poster presentations in each of four categories (see box).

Carol Lasky, a member of the MMOC communications team, gave an update

on the committee’s activities. She first recounted the history and achievements of the restoration project and the role of the MMOC, then spoke about its current focus on maintenance. Ongoing areas of concern include monitoring for cases of avian flu (no new cases), oil spills (no new spills since December), and water levels. Water levels are very low in certain locations, which has resulted in unwanted mud flats that can threaten ecosystems. In addition, the MMOC is exploring funding sources for restoration of the Olmsted bridges along the river and keeping invasive species—a “perennial challenge”—in check.

Keynote speaker John Rogers, associate director for Energy Analytics at the nonprofit Union of Concerned Scientists, delivered a lively talk on

“Environmental Policy Progress in Uncertain Times.” A scientist and registered lobbyist, Rogers puts analysis in service of policy goals, focusing on renewable energy and climate change. He set the stage by unflinchingly acknowledging the uncertainty coming from all three branches of our federal government: administrative funding cuts that are “a threat to what is on the [students’ research] posters,” a Congress “asleep at the wheel,” and a Supreme Court “breaking with [a 40-year] precedent” of deferring to experts—such as scientists—when a law is unclear about a federal regulation.

In the face of these and additional challenges, including climate change, Rogers shared his experiences and made a compelling case for finding

opportunities and reasons for hope. He cited the increasing use and decreasing costs of renewable energy from wind and solar as a major accomplishment. Renewable sources now make up 25 percent of U.S. energy production.

Rogers emphasized that we can take the current moment as motivation to make a difference and continue the momentum in tackling climate change. He encouraged students to engage, connect, and persist. They should engage early and often in the legislative process, connect across common values such as public health, and persist in order to advance environmental policy at the local and state level. He advised that they start by attending their local town council meetings as a less intimidating way to learn about the process and weigh in on legislation.

*Leslie Pond lives in the West Fens.*

## Top Student Projects from Muddy River Symposium

BY CAROL LASKY

These student research projects won top honors among 35 presented at the April 8th Muddy River Symposium. The descriptions are excerpted from the project abstracts.

- ASSESSING ROAD SALTING EFFECTS ON MUDDY RIVER SALINITY**
- *Presenters: Gio Houle & Yasemin Isaacs (MassArt); Michaela O’Donnell, Cailey Plainte & Avery Swasey, (Simmons)*
  - *Categories: Water, Local Social Action*

What is the impact of road salting on salinity levels of the Muddy River? Comprehensive data collected at multiple sites along the River increases the understanding of the environmental impacts of road salt on freshwater ecosystems. This research will provide policymakers with evidence-based insights to inform future environmental regulations and urban planning decisions.

- COLLEGES OF THE FENWAY SUSTAINABILITY HUB**
- *Presenters: Ella Poor (Emmanuel); Madison Williams (Simmons); Felicity Gonzalez, Lily Cohen & Katie Kranz (Wentworth)*
  - *Categories: Local Social Action, Environmental Justice*
  - **Winner: Frances Allou Gershwin Local Social Action Award**

A comprehensive, user-friendly informational section on the Colleges of the Fenway website, the Sustainability Hub connects students and the public with environmental initiatives in the Greater Boston area. It provides essential resources on student involvement, local food banks, food security organizations, outdoor spaces, community gardens, urban farming, and environmental organizations.

- LITHIUM-HYDROGEN CONVERTER**
- *Presenters: Nick Dosremedios & Brian Carriero (Wentworth)*
  - *Categories: Sustainability Science*

Net-zero regulations to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will increase the demand for battery-energy storage. While lithium batteries have provided numerous energy benefits to society, they are classified as hazardous material and are hard to recycle. One promising solution is a water-based lithium-to-hydrogen extraction process. This requires producing a reaction between the lithium battery components and water to produce 1) lithium hydroxide for further reuse and 2) hydrogen, which can be used for power generation.

- MAKE POLLUTERS PAY; YOUTH REPRESENTATION IN CLIMATE ACTIVISM AND THE CLIMATE SPACE**
- *Presenters: Joshua Luedke; Katie Doran, Nora Connolly, Mads Otis & Evelyn Powers (MassArt)*
  - *Categories: Environmental Justice, Local Social Action*

The Make Polluters Pay campaign in Massachusetts is working toward passage of a Climate Superfund Bill that would fund projects for coastal protection, wetland restoration, urban tree canopy, preemptive upgrades to transit infrastructure, and building weatherization. The project’s surveys, visual representations, narrative album, and social media content show how students around Boston, specifically at Colleges of the Fenway, respond to the climate crisis and make daily sustainability choices. Creating representation and space for our cohorts advances the goals of the campaign.

*Carol Lasky lives in the East Fens.*

## NORTHEASTERN NEWS ROUNDUP

BY ALISON PULTINAS

**IMP comments due May 9, but housing plans remain contentious**

The official City Hall review of Northeastern’s 2024-2034 Institutional Master Plan (IMP) filed March 7 is nearly complete, although overshadowed by plans to demolish and replace Matthews Arena. Public comments are due May 9.

The IMP foresees eight major projects, including two dormitories, a 1,050-bed facility at 21 Forsyth St. and a 910-bed dorm on the site of the former Punters Pub and two existing dormitories, Burstein and Rubenstein, which would be demolished.

However, at the Northeastern Task Force meeting on April 17, both Patricia Flaherty and Cassie White criticized the stated target

for housing 60 percent of undergraduates on campus by 2035. White said that the City’s own student-housing report showed that Boston College housed 66% of its full-time students on campus, and Boston University 74 percent. “We need something more ambitious than 60 percent after ten years,” said White. Northeastern’s Viktorija Abolina countered that combining academic and residential uses is hard to do, which is why the future American Campus Community development at 840 Columbus Ave. will have no classrooms as originally envisioned. She admitted that existing campus parking lots could serve as sites for future dormitories.

Quinn Valcich, the BPDA project manager for the IMP announced a final Task Force meeting on May 13 “to close out the community-benefits conversation.” The slide presentation on April 17 listed linkage funds as a community benefit, but Task Force members quickly pointed out that linkage fees are a City requirement for nonresidential development, not a community benefit. Another discussion point was the Orange Line’s Mass. Ave. Station connection at the MBTA-owned pedestrian bridge, which will be a convenient primary access for the future St. Botolph athletic facility. The university has not committed to contributing funds for improvements to the bridge.

**Public art moved for graduation**

In April, Northeastern University removed giant flower sculptures from the Krentzman Quad, months after a student petition circulated opposing the placement of the 15-foot-tall metal-and-mesh sculptures in an iconic location favored for graduation photos. Last December, the Student Government Association had voted to request the removal.

Apparently, the plan initially was for a three-to five-year display. The school’s Public Art Initiative has entered a quiet phase compared to the flood of campus projects of a few years ago, with no active contact information on the website. Former manager Thomas Vannatter left in 2023.

**Steam pipes and sidewalks**

Outside the Cabot Center on Huntington Avenue, excavations for a steam-pipe project will begin shortly. Boston’s Public Improvement Commission (PIC) approved the plans on April 10. At the hearing Sarah Leung, the Disability Commission’s representative on the PIC, focused on the new pedestrian ramps on Forsyth Street and Huntington Avenue. Curiously though, the sidewalk at 360-400 Huntington Ave. will be rebuilt with brick, not the concrete that is the City’s preferred standard for ADA access. Responding to a question from this writer, John LaPlante of Tri-Mont Engineering said the firm was asked for in-kind restoration, and Leung explained that the existing Huntington Avenue master plan specifies brick sidewalks. Todd Liming, executive secretary for the PIC, said that the City is considering a Huntington Avenue reconstruction project in the future, which may involve material changes.

*Alison Pultinas lives in Mission Hill.*

## CORRECTION

In the April issue, our article on the MATEP power plant in Longwood misspelled Hessann Farooqi’s name. We regret the error.

### IN MEMORIAM

## Alan C. Andersen

COMPILED BY BOB TOMPOSKI

Alan Andersen, a former resident of Queensberry Street, died at his home in Jamaica Plain on Dec 18. He was 72 years old.

A graduate of Bay State Junior College in Boston, Alan worked for several years at the New England Deaconess Hospital (today’s East Campus of Beth Israel Hospital). He also worked at Long’s Jewelers and several local businesses, including a pet store,



a medical bookstore, and the Boston Ramrod, the landmark gay pub and dance space located for decades on Boylston Street in the West Fens.

Alan was a regular at Fenway community meetings and was an avid member of the Fenway Garden Society. He attended the First Baptist church in the Back Bay. He had a warm and gregarious nature. Alan is survived by his husband, Paul LaPlante and many friends in the Fenway and Jamaica Plain.



PHOTOS: LESLIE POND

# VOICES FROM THE BACK BAY ‘TESLA TAKEDOWN’ RALLIES



BY LESLIE POND

At the first Tesla Takedown rally in Boston on Feb. 15, a dozen or so protesters stood in front of the Tesla showroom at the Prudential Center. Since then, protests have occurred every Saturday afternoon and the number of protesters has swelled, with peak attendance usually between 200 to 600, per organizers’ counts. Ten weeks in, the rallies are still going strong, with a nascent Tuesday series just getting off the ground.

The Back Bay demonstrations are part of a broad-based grassroots effort aimed at reducing the wealth—and therefore the power and influence—of Tesla boss and multi-billionaire Elon Musk. Protesters are fighting back against his leading role in gutting government agencies and threats to democracy. A sign held by a protester on March 22 summed it up: TESLA FUNDS FASCISTS. DON’T HELP THEM.

What has given the Back Bay rallies their momentum? One ingredient in the special sauce may be that while the protests address a serious issue, the mood is festive and friendly. That’s by design. Heather Johnston, one of the organizers, said the dominant emotion at the earlier rallies was anger. And although people are still angry, she felt motivated to make the rallies bigger and work with other attendees to “start bringing in a lot more joy and playfulness. We like to blow bubbles, we have a band that plays, we sing and dance.”

Playing up the contrast of anger and humor at the April 19 event, organizer Shua Sanchez led this rousing chant: “It ain’t fun, it ain’t funny, Elon Musk is stealing your money.” A protester led the crowd in a soul-stirring rendition of “We Shall Overcome.” And there were people in clown costumes.

It turns out clowns help invite dialogue. A Tesla owner here for the marathon stopped to confide to a clown that he was in a quandary about wanting an environmentally friendly electric vehicle and being against what Musk stands for. He said he bought it “for the car, not the person,” and he’ll probably put a sticker on it to distance himself from Musk, referring to the regret stickers with slogans like “I bought this before Elon went crazy.”

In separate interviews, both Sanchez and

Johnston said the rallies are important because they help build community for people who are concerned and want to get involved. “It’s good to be around other people that also care,” Sanchez said.

That could mean engaging across difference. Maryellen Kurkulos, who came up from Fall River, said she urged a Trump voter at the April 12 “Tax Day” rally to consider that when it comes to taxes, they’re both on the same side. She explained to him that Tesla paid \$0 in taxes last year—despite income of over \$2 billion—while most people pay taxes at a higher rate than some large corporations.

The Tesla Takedown movement provides tools for a “very loose collection of activists,”

at the start of rallies before many had gathered or taken photos of them. On April 26, a man walked by with arm raised and thumb down. Johnston says the attendees themselves help keep the rallies peaceful and festive, and a team of peacekeepers stationed around the rallies are ready to intervene if needed. Police presence is minimal, with one patrol car parked on Boylston Street.

What moves protesters to show up—some repeatedly, some taking public transit into Boston from as far as 50 miles away—for two hours on Saturdays, often in cold, wet, blustery weather?

For Sanchez, it’s the things that matter to him, including “human rights, women’s

rights, gay rights, minority rights, immigrant rights, and the attacks on science, healthcare, environmental protections, education.” He says, “If you’re upset about what’s going on in D.C. and you don’t know what to do about it, this is a great outlet for that energy.... My mood has been a lot better since these started, because it feels like we’re actually doing something.”

Johnston

also cited the mental health benefits. While she’s still alarmed, she’s “been in much better spirits.... Taking action is the best way to deal with feeling overwhelmed and feeling hopeless.”

Also, Sanchez says well-attended rallies help “change the narrative from ‘Trump has a mandate to do whatever he wants’ into ‘Oh, people don’t like what he’s doing.’”

Asked about the absence of elected officials at the rallies, Sanchez said, “One of the things that’s really exciting to me about this movement is that it’s focused on a fight between regular people and oligarchs.... We’re making our own leadership.”

Protester Carina Campobasso, who is retired, showed up on April 12 because she’s upset that someone who doesn’t understand how to run the government has taken over.

“We need to stand up to bullies,” she said.

A woman at the March 15 rally held a sign with a poignant message: MY FATHER FOUGHT NAZIS & I WILL TOO.

Ethan, who gave only his first name, has been a stalwart, standing at the curb at multiple protests with a homemade sign: DUMP MUSK HONK IF YOU AGREE. At first, the 26-year-old thought he didn’t have much to say, then spoke eloquently about why he shows up: because the Trump administration is “mindlessly dismantling agencies that are important for people” and potentially “causing millions of preventable deaths.” Every one of these agencies has a human story behind its creation, and we will have to learn those stories again if this continues, he said.

At the March 29 Global Day of Protest, a man stood with this sign: ASK ME HOW ELON’S NIH FUNDING FRZ IS KILLING CANCER PATIENTS. Aidan shared that his partner has stage 4 triple-negative breast cancer, a highly aggressive cancer that spreads to other parts of the body and is difficult to treat. She participated in a clinical trial that recently stopped abruptly without explanation, thereby halting development of a potential treatment.

Several Fenwickians have participated in the rallies, including Conrad Cizek, a housing activist. One of several speakers at the Tax Day event, he recalled how his relatives had fought for this country. Holding a sign that said, FIGHT POVERTY NOT THE POOR, he emphasized to me that, “this isn’t a Republican thing or a Democratic thing, it’s an American thing.”

Over the first three months of this year, Tesla’s stock price and Musk’s popularity have plummeted. News outlets reported on April 22 that Tesla’s profits dropped 71 percent in the first quarter, attributing it in part to backlash against Musk’s role in the Trump administration. Musk announced that starting this month he’ll spend more time running Tesla and less time in Washington, D.C.

So, mission accomplished? Not so fast. At the April 26 rally, Sanchez announced that Tesla Takedown has started a campaign for cities and states to divest public dollars from Tesla stocks and stop buying its vehicles and contracting with Musk’s companies. Tesla Takedown has posted a guide for people to get their city councils to pass divestment resolutions.

Leslie Pond lives in the West Fens.



said Sanchez, and it’s open to different organizers taking the lead. Union leaders, laid-off workers, teachers, and budget and tax justice organizations organized the “Tax Day” rally to speak out against the Trump administration’s proposed deep cuts to social programs in order to fund tax cuts for the wealthy, according to their flyer.

The Tesla Takedown website states that it “is a peaceful protest movement. We oppose violence, vandalism, and destruction of property.” Johnston emphasized that “there’s a real mismatch between the headlines of Teslas set on fire...” and the rallies, “which I think are actually really fun. People bring their kids, grandparents come...”

Johnston says the rallies “have been very safe.” Occasionally, detractors stop by but only briefly. A few have shouted at demonstrators

## HANDS OFF! RALLY ON APRIL 5



On a cold and shower-y April 5, several patriotic Fenwickians (including Kristen Mobilia, with large flag, right photo) participated in the Hands Off! National Day of Protest. The event started with a rally at the Boston Common with Rev. Mariama White-Hammond, followed by a march to City Hall Plaza, where the many speakers included Mayor Michelle Wu, Sen. Ed Markey, U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley, and a performance by the Dropkick Murphys. According

to its website, Hands Off! is a partnership among nearly 200 organizations responding to the federal administration’s funding and job cuts, dismantling of government agencies and services, and threats to basic rights. It emphasizes that “a core principle behind Hands Off! is a commitment to nonviolent action.”

Tens of thousands of people attended the peaceful rally in Boston (left photo), one of more than 1,300 rallies with millions of protestors held

across the U.S. that day. Protesters in Boston included everyone from families with young children to college students, young and older professionals, and senior citizens. Many carried American flags and signs expressing their frustration with the Trump administration, with powerful and playful messages. Near City Hall, a large group of protesters sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” as a man standing on a bench waved a large flag.

—LESLIE POND



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

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

Officials cut short a youth-jobs fair at the Reggie Lewis Center on March 29 after a fight broke out. Citing a police report, the *Globe* said that more than 1,500 students had entered by 1pm, when authorities pulled the plug. The Office of Youth Employment & Opportunity has scheduled a do-over for May 10, 11am–3pm, again at the Reggie Lewis Center. 🐞 **Influential online news site *Commonwealth Beacon* published an opinion piece**



**on the state's housing crisis by East Fens resident (and housing maven) Mat Thall. No stranger to our own opinion page, Thall argued that the Healey administration and the legislature have ignored the loss of thousands of units of “naturally occurring affordable housing”—lower-cost rental units owned by small landlords. When these owners sell, the buyers often want to upgrade the buildings and raise rents; existing tenants often wind up homeless as a result. Thall laid out a five-point strategy for preserving the supply, starting with a census to figure out just how many we actually have.** 🐞 **The owners of the derelict Alexandra Hotel at Mass. Ave. and Tremont Street filed a fourth redevelopment plan with the City that preserves most of the 1875 structure (thanks partly to an earmark for facade restoration in the proposed 2026 state budget). Crucially, elimination of a multistory tower atop the hotel has won the support of formerly hostile community groups and neighbors, according to a report in the *Globe*.** 🐞

**As it often does, The Huntington gathered a boatload of nominations for this year's Elliot Norton Awards, the Oscars of Boston theater. The company dominated three categories in the “large company” division—Outstanding Play, Lead Performance in a Play, and Featured Performance in a Play—taking four of five nominations in each. We'll learn the winners on June 2 in a ceremony at the Huntington.** 🐞 **Moving from nominations to awards, the Roxbury branch of the BPL won the 2024 Harleston Parker Medal, conferred by the Boston Society of Architects for the most beautiful building built in greater Boston in the previous 10 years. Designed by Utile, Inc., the library sits a block outside Nubian Square and opened in 2020.**

🐞 **More like hockey than baseball: the Sox played the third-coldest home game in team history on April 8, when the temperature hit 35° at the time of the first pitch.** 🐞 **The MFA dug into its current staff to find its new director, Pierre Terjanian, who takes the reins July 1. A native of Strasbourg, France, he currently serves as chief of curatorial affairs and conservation. He joined the staff a mere 15 months ago, following stints at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and New York's Metropolitan Museum.** 🐞

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLINES

B.U. Launches Phased Renovation of Warren Towers

The scaffolding is up and preconstruction preparations for planned renovations started months ago for Tower A of Warren Towers, the largest dormitory in New England. B.U. will renovate all three towers of the structure, at 700 Comm. Ave., in phases, the first of which will include a major dining hall upgrade. Where will the university house the students who'd normally live in the dorm? In the former Wheelock College buildings on the Riverway and Pilgrim Road, which will host 595 freshmen. Graduate students currently in Peabody Hall on the Riverway have been told to move out by mid-July.

Two Local Projects Land on ZBA's May 6 Agenda

The upcoming Zoning Board of Appeal hearing (May 6 at 9:30am) includes two uncommon applications for variances: 18 Symphony Road, single-family conversion to congregate living, and 81 S. Huntington Ave., hotel to homeless shelter.

Big Profits for Mission Hill Real Estate Investors

Shrewd Mission Hill real estate investors Chris Bulla and Cody Putre recently sold two classic brick three-family rowhouses at 866 and 868 Huntington Ave. for more than \$3 million each. The website for their company, Lions Harbor Enterprises, boasts that they “more than doubled rent roll before selling the property,” described as “much needed modern student housing.” Best of all, according to the site? A “record selling sale [sic] in Mission Hill.”

After Four Decades, Friends of the Muddy River Closes Its Doors

In their April newsletter, the Friends of the Muddy River announced the end of the organization's 44-year run. Isabella Callahan of Kent Street in Brookline founded the group in 1980 (she died in 2008). Not only have new groups taken up the Friends' original mission, but many improvements the group sought have been completed. Those successes include restoration of the Carleton Street Bridge, regular volunteer clean-ups and annual park events for the public, and collaborative advocacy between Boston and Brookline residents for the Army Corps of Engineers dredging project.

EGG HUNT IN MISSION HILL



On April 19 at the Back of the Hill Community Development's gently sloped passive park on Bucknam Street, Lawn Street resident and BOTH board member Suzy Kratzig organized a neighborhood egg hunt.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2025 COMMUNITY GRANT WINNERS!



Congratulations to the winners of Northeastern University City and Community Engagement's 2025 Community Grant program! We look forward to seeing the incredible work you accomplish with this grant.

Follow us!  
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City and Community Engagement



# Don't Know John Wilson's Name Yet? 'Witnessing Humanity' Makes A Strong Case For Why You Should

BY STEVE WOLF

The MFA's powerful "Witnessing Humanity: The Art of John Wilson," joins a group of career retrospectives the museum has organized in recent years to refocus on—or, better, elevate—the legacies of under-appreciated artists with deep ties to Boston. These included major surveys of modernist painters Hyman Bloom and Philip Guston; a jewel-like showing of Ekua Holmes's vibrant collages; and "Women Take The Floor," a year-long survey that stood as a public *mea culpa* for the museum's decades of dismissing women artists as not good enough to grace MFA walls.

Add this show to that list. "Witnessing Humanity" highlights John Woodrow Wilson's commitment to making art that placed Black subjects front and center and refuted the art world assumption that "black people and their special experience were irrelevant and unimportant," as he once told the *Globe*. The show lets us watch Wilson's style emerge as he turns his remarkable gifts to the task of capturing character, ennobling subjects, and communicating big themes.

Wilson enrolled in the Museum School in 1939, and even his student work—he gave his Black subjects dignity and specificity—suggests how much he resented the racist caricatures widespread in art and popular culture.

In "Deliver Us From Evil," a complex 1943 composition, Wilson describes a world consumed by racial oppression at home and war abroad. In one corner a young Black man—clearly Wilson himself—gazes at the viewer. Overlapping vignettes wheel around him like a parade of Hieronymus Bosch horrors: an impoverished Black family, a greedy white capitalist, corpses in a war-ravaged city, and not one but two lynchings. Nazi soldiers and weapons compound a sense of menace and fear. Near the center, a Jewish mother holds a baby and a Black mother tends to a toddler, mirror images of tragedy and nobility that link Jewish and Black persecution.

After graduating from the SMFA then Tufts, Wilson won a fellowship to study in Paris in 1947. In a city that had long welcomed African Americans artists—Wilson would likely have known James Baldwin, who arrived a year after he did—he immersed himself in collections of African artifacts looted from French colonies while studying under pioneering Cubist Fernand Léger.

The exhibition makes Léger's influence clear: in side-by-side prints, both artists mix blocks of color with strongly outlined images of heroic everymen and -women in factories and

on streets. We can see Wilson bending his style toward Léger's, but his words makes clear he had the Cubist's number: You had "to be a 'Little Léger' in order to get anything from him."

Wilson admired Léger's valorization of workers, and his next move brought that instinct into even sharper focus. A John Hay Whitney fellowship allowed him to move to Mexico for six years in 1950 to study murals, a form born from the country's rich tradition of criticizing economic and political injustice through art. Wilson admired masters like Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, who embraced murals as a way of reaching all classes, an ideal medium for political commentary, and a tool for showing everyday people that their lives had profound dignity.

Although he focused on printmaking, Wilson completed one mural in Mexico, "The Incident." It shows up in this exhibition only as a photo and preparatory studies because it was painted over not long after completion. In "The Incident," a window slices diagonally across the image. On the left, inside a house, a Black family huddles, terrified mother protectively embracing a child while her grimly determined husband stands behind

construction worker in a safety helmet gazes solemnly into the sky. Subtle gradations of black give his arms and face a palpable solidity; everything else reads as flat, with Wilson using white space, corralled by the

portraiture of family and friends becomes his central concern. Beautiful and intimate, these works combine subtly rendered faces and skin, often with only the barest hints of lines to define clothing, a technique that rivets

our attention to the subject. In "Richie No. 1" from 1981 Wilson captures his nephew as a watchful adolescent whose gaze might seem wary or dreamy.

Portraits on paper seem to have led Wilson to a different kind of portraiture in the 1980s: sculpture. In fact, sculptures constitute some of the artist's most widely-known work, and studies for four important examples dominate the final section of the exhibition. Most touching is "Father And Child Reading," commissioned for Roxbury Community College in 1985 and installed there in 1990. The gallery contains multiple studies of men holding or reading to boys, and Wilson has talked about his own father's emphasis on education and reading as key formative influences.

Within a few years, Wilson also completed two large busts of Martin Luther King Jr., one of which became the first art-work depicting a Black person in the rotunda of the US Capitol. (The other stands in an Olmsted park in Buffalo.) He also created "Eternal Presence," the oversized head of a Black child that sits in front of the National Center of Afro-American Artists, east of Egleston Square in Roxbury. The exhibit includes a video of residents reflecting on the meaning of the statue—commonly known as "The Big Head"—intercut with images of people cleaning the statue in what looks like a big party, suggesting the community's loving embrace of and protectiveness toward the statue.

John Wilson emerges from this exhibition as a gifted native son who deserves broader recognition, and with any luck, "Witnessing Humanity" will change that.

Steve Wolf lives in the West Fens. "Witnessing Humanity: The Art of John Wilson," co-organized with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, continues through June 22. On May 28, two MFA curators discuss Wilson's work in a remote presentation, free to members. Info at [mfa.org](https://mfa.org) (Programs>Lectures tab).



Left: "Richie No. 1" captures Wilson's nephew in a characteristic later-career portrait that blends painstakingly rendered faces and sketchy, almost dashed-off clothing to frame the face. Above, Wilson returned to repeatedly to the theme of fathers passing on knowledge to their sons, as in this 1964 study. The exhibition includes both two- and three-dimensional studies for the statue "Father And Son Reading," installed at Roxbury Community College in 1990.

occasional outline, to suggest clothes and a torso. Quick strokes that recall Ben Shahn suggest a background of smokestacks and bricks. With astonishing economy, Wilson gives us a dignified portrait of a human, not a caricature.

The Reporter cover art foreshadows Wilson's art from the 1960s onward, which fills the rest of this gallery. With a few exceptions—notably 2001's "Richard Wright Suite," six scenes of hardship and racial violence inflicting a Southern Black family at the center of a 1938 short story by Wright—



them, hand on the barrel of a shotgun. His scowl ushers the viewer through the window to the titular incident taking place outside: hooded Klansmen cutting a rope holding the crumpled body of a lynched Black man. (Lynching continued in the United States into the 1960s.) Even these fragments convey the work's power and Wilson's mastery—and make you want to throttle whoever destroyed the original.

The exhibit devotes its largest gallery to work from Wilson's 1956 return into the 1990s. Unexpectedly, it opens with a cheery yellow-painted reading nook, complete with beanbag chairs and shelves of books. Wall exhibits feature Wilson's drawings for two kids' storybooks and for a biography of Malcolm X for chapter-book readers. The storybook images startle: Their subjects feel gentle in comparison to his politically charged works, and their use of color contrasts vividly with the stark black-and-white palette that characterized much of his work. Additional books showcase other Black artists, including fellow Roxbury native Ekua Holmes.

Nearby, in arresting art for *The Reporter* magazine (more black and white), a

## TURKEYS TROT INTO AUDUBON CIRCLE

A block west of the St. Mary's stop on the Green Line's C branch, Lydia Roy's "Turkey Floréale" brings a touch of springtime (and some whimsy) to the Beacon Street trolley reservation. The "Turkeys Around Town" program chose proposals from local artists for decorating fiberglass turkeys installed in Brookline's commercial districts. The public-art program chose the species in recognition of the birds' local proliferation in recent decades.



## LAST CALL

Through Sun, 5/25: *Waters of the Abyss: An Intersection of Spirit and Freedom*, original commissions from Haitian artist Fabiola Jean-Louis. At the Gardner Museum.



# May

CALENDAR

Sat, 5/4

The **BOSTON MODERN ORCHESTRA PROJECT** concludes its 28th season at Jordan Hall at 3pm. 30 Gainsborough St. Info and registration at [bmop.org](http://bmop.org). **FREE**

Wednesday & Thursdays

The Boston Parks **SUMMER FITNESS SERIES** comes to Symphony Park, 39 Edgerly Road. Rainy-day classes indoors at Morville House, 100 Norway Street. Supported by the Berklee Neighborhood Grant and the Parks Department. **FREE**

- Wednesdays—Beginning Tai Chi with Sifu Huan Zhang, 10am.
- Thursdays—Chair Yoga with Michelle, 10 am.

## @ THE CENTER

The Fenway Community Center is open six days a week. Visit [fenwaycommunitycenter.org](http://fenwaycommunitycenter.org) for details.

- Tue, May 13, 6pm: **JUSTINE TOURELLOTTE ART EXHIBIT, 6PM**
- Wed, May 21, 5:30pm: **OFFICE HOURS WITH REPRESENTATIVE JAY LIVINGSTONE**
- Fri, May 30, 6pm: **BOXING CLASS WITH BEANTOWN BOXING**

Thu, 5/8 ➡ Sun, 6/15

The Huntington presents the moving Tony-winning musical **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA**. Tue-Thu 7pm; Fri-Sat, 7:30pm; Sat-Sun, 2pm (check schedule for additional matinees). Tickets \$29–180. Details and tickets at [www.huntingtontheatre.org](http://www.huntingtontheatre.org)

Sun, 5/11

Join the Fenway Civic Association’s annual **GUIDED BIRD WALK WITH NATURE MAN MIKE**. All levels welcome. Bring binoculars.

**WED, MAY 7** Join the Planning Department for a joint task force/public meeting on the proposed Institutional Master Plan project at **ONE JOSLIN PLACE**. 6pm. Register at [bosplans.org/1JoslinTF\\_Pub](http://bosplans.org/1JoslinTF_Pub).

**THU, MAY 8** City Councilor Sharon Durkan hosts **OFFICE HOURS**. Phinista, 96 Peterborough St. 4– 6pm.

**THU, MAY 8** Join your neighbors for the **FENWAY CDC’S ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**, residents advocating together for affordable housing. Dinner provided. Contact [lruizsanchez@fenwaycdc.org](mailto:lruizsanchez@fenwaycdc.org) for information. 6-7:30pm, Fenway Community Center, 1282 Boylston St.

Rain or shine, 7:30am at the Japanese Bell outside the Kelleher Rose Garden (by the footbridge across from the MFA). **FREE**

Sun, 5/11 & Sun 5/18

The City and Fenway Civic Association bring music, arts, community, and fun to the **NEW EDGERLY PLAZA**. 5/11: a New England Conservatory duo. 5/18: The 3 UmiZumis and Luci Martin. Supported

## COMMUNITY meetings

**TUE, MAY 13** The Planning Dept. hosts a meeting on **LONGWOOD PLACE, PHASE 1 [305 BROOKLINE AVE.]**. Learn about and discuss Skanska’s proposed development. 6pm. Join remotely at [bit.ly/4cREOG0](https://bit.ly/4cREOG0).

**THU, MAY 15 MAYORAL CANDIDATE FORUM** with four announced candidates for Boston Mayor: Kerry Augustin, Domingo DaRosa, Josh Kraft, and Michelle Wu. GBH News political reporter Saraya Wintersmith moderates. Remote event, 6:15–8pm. Register at [tinyurl.com/3v42f2wb](https://tinyurl.com/3v42f2wb).

by a Berklee Fenway Neighborhood Improvement Grant. **FREE**

Thu, 5/15

**NEC PREP YOUTH PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA** presents outstanding young musicians in a concert featuring Gershwin’s *An America in Paris* and Prokofiev’s Piano *Concerto No. 3*. Jordan Hall, 7:30pm. Info and tickets at <https://necmusic.edu/events/nec-prep-youth-philharmonic-orchestra-concert/>. **FREE**.

**THU, MAY 22** Attend a **LIVE PUBLIC FORUM FOR THE DISTRICT 7 AND AT-LARGE BOSTON CITY COUNCIL SEATS**. A collaboration of the Boston Ward 4 Democratic Committee, Reclaim Roxbury, Fenway CDC, NAACP/Boston Branch, Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants, New England Community Project, Madison Park Development Corp., MassVOTE, Right to the City, True Alliance Center, Boston Ward 12 Democratic Committee, and Rox Vote. Moderated by political journalists Yawu Miller and Saraya Wintersmith. The Dewitt Center (122 Dewitt Drive) at 6:00 pm. Register at [bit.ly/BostonCCForum](https://bit.ly/BostonCCForum)

## How Fenway Residents Experience a Nationwide Housing Crisis

BY LAURA AUGENBRAUN

Boston, like many other cities across the country, has been navigating the current housing crisis and the accessibility of affordable housing for low-income individuals. This nationwide crisis, according to the US Chamber of Commerce, began after the Great Recession and has created a shortage of more than 4.5 million homes and an increase in housing prices.

Cassie White, director of policy and community organizing for the Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC), has seen the impact this has had on the Fenway.

“There’s definitely not enough income-restricted housing, but also what we call ‘naturally occurring affordable housing,’” White said. “In the Fenway, we have a lot of institutional pressures, a lot of students who are competing with long-term residents; we know that also can drive up rent. There’s a lot of different dynamics at play, in addition to the housing shortage.”

Fenway CDC is an affordable-housing provider dedicated to developing and preserving low-income housing and advocating for low-income housing individuals. It appoints community members to committee boards, works with community members to advocate for municipal policy changes, and builds apartments dedicated to low-income housing.

Recently, the organization developed Burbank Terrace, at 72

Burbank St., with all 27 units intended for income-restricted housing, and it has been focusing its advocacy on updating the City’s policy on inclusionary zoning.

Inclusionary zoning requires that at least 15 percent of units be set aside as income-restricted housing in new developments with more than seven units. In larger buildings, an additional 3 percent of units must be set aside for people who hold housing vouchers. White explained that Inclusionary zoning began as a mayoral ordinance, until advocates—including the CDC—pushed for it to be incorporated into the zoning code to ensure its permanence. Now, CDC works to ensure that the policy gets updated so it continues to address the affordable housing crisis.

While there is work being done to help low-income housing individuals, some community members continue to have issues with these policies, specifically the compliance side. Myra Shane, a Fenway resident for nine years and Boston resident for 19 years, receives a federal Section 8 housing voucher. Shane says she ran into a handful of problems while moving into her new apartment after being forced to leave her old one due to health concerns from a restaurant that was blowing smoke into her unit.

Shane said she felt penalized for her income and voucher status during her search for a new home. She described being shown inadequate apartments, which delayed her move. Once she’d moved into a new unit, she

was required to fill out two housing-recertification documents, a process she’s historically only had to do once a year for Section 8.

“Every year I got mad because there was just too much paperwork for us to be filling out when, in fact, we are low-income families, we don’t have the 401(k)’s, the money, we don’t have that. Section 8 checks that all out, every year it got harder and harder for me to do,” Shane said.

Shane thinks the new process was tedious and invasive, requiring her to fill out 21 pages of paperwork and submit a 30-day ledger from her bank. The new certification was required by the Boston Planning Department and under the inclusionary zoning ordinance. Shane didn’t believe that Section 8 families should be required to fill out a second recertification, so she fought back against this policy, speaking with Mayor Michelle Wu and employees from the Mayor’s Office of Housing (MOH).

Eventually, after multiple months of speaking out, Shane received a message from MOH that the second recertification process was no longer required.

“While I’m grateful that my individual situation has been resolved, I want to make it clear that this isn’t just about me. There are many other Section 8 tenants, especially in the Fenway, who are still being required to complete a second, unnecessary recertification,” Shane said. “This not only creates confusion, it places an undue burden on families already dealing with the

complexities of housing insecurity.” She hopes her outcome will become a permanent part of the policies surrounding Section 8 and low-income housing in Boston. *Laura Augenbraun lives in the West Fens.*

## GRADUATION CALENDAR

- **MAY 5-10**  
Northeastern University College Celebrations—Matthews Arena
- **MAY 8**  
Mass College of Pharmacy and Health Careers—10:30am/3:30pm, Leader Bank Pavilion
- **MAY 10**
  - > Berklee College of Music—10am, Agganis Arena
  - > Emmanuel College—10am, on campus
  - > Boston Conservatory at Berklee 4pm, Berklee Performance Cent
- **MAY 11**  
Northeastern University—10am/4pm, Fenway Park
- **MAY 16**  
Simmons University—9am/1pm, MGM Music Hall
- **MAY 18**
  - > Boston University—1pm, Nickerson Field
  - > New England Conservatory—2pm, Jordan Hall
- **MAY 22**  
MassArt—1pm, Leader Bank Pavilion

[ADVERTISEMENT]



**WHAT**  
Discussion of the Duck House Revitalization

**WHERE**  
Fenway Community Center (1282 Boylston; enter from Jersey St.)

**WHEN**  
Tuesday, May 20—5:30 pm

We’re beginning to explore possible uses for a renovated Duck House that would benefit both the park and our shared community, making the structure and its surrounding land a safe and enjoyable destination—a meeting-in-the-middle place for the East and West Fens.

Please join FENSFund, the Fenway Community Center, and the Boston Parks and Recreation Department to get a photo tour of the current interior, learn more about the history of this project, and help brainstorm ideas during the first of many community meetings. The design firm Landing Studio will present some initial ideas to spark discussion. No decisions will be solidified during the meeting, but we’re still very excited to get this important process started!

**HOSTED BY FENSFUND & THE FENWAY COMMUNITY CENTER**