

GREATER BOSTON CHURCH PLANTING PROFILES

Neighborhood of Roslindale

City of Boston, Massachusetts

GEOGRAPHY

Roslindale is located about 6 miles southwest of downtown Boston. It is bordered by the neighborhoods of West Roxbury to the west, Jamaica Plain to the north, Roxbury to the northeast, Mattapan to the east, and Hyde Park to the south. Roslindale comprises 3.72 square miles with a population density of 9,306 persons per square mile. 36.8% of Roslindale is open space.

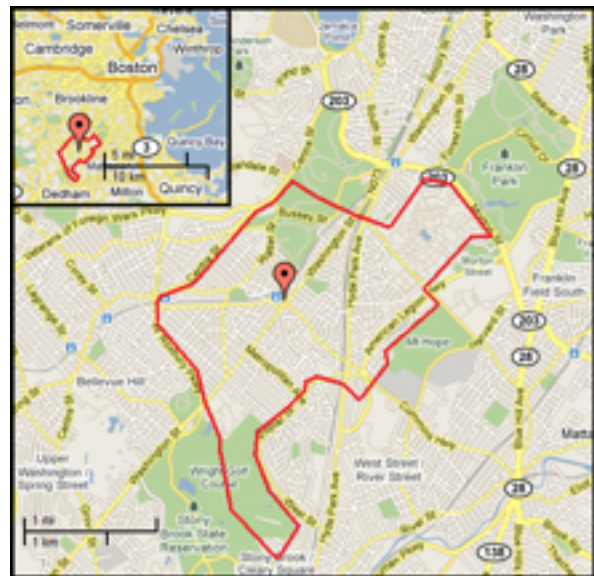
HISTORY¹

Roslindale was a rural farming community outside of Boston and remained so through much of the 19th century. A railroad disaster in 1887 is credited with attracting the attention of urban Bostonians to the area, and many relocated to Roslindale for its quiet and beautiful country setting. Better transportation infrastructure (including electric streetcars) accelerated Roslindale's growth.

Today's Roslindale wasn't always called "Roslindale" nor was it always part of the City of Boston. Prior to 1870, the area was known as South Street Crossing. When the government rejected that name for a new postal district, local townspeople selected the name "Roslindale," purportedly on the suggestion of one who felt the area reminded him of the the town of Roslin, Scotland. At that time Roslindale was part of the town of West Roxbury (along with Jamaica Plain) which had seceded from the town of Roxbury some 20 years earlier. In 1874, West Roxbury was annexed by Boston, and Roslindale became part of the city.

With its reputation as Boston's "Superb Suburb," Roslindale grew steadily throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. German, Irish, Italian and other European immigrants arrived in the early years, followed by Greeks and Eastern Mediterraneans in the late 20th century. More recently, Asians and Latinos have moved to Roslindale, and the neighborhood continues to become more diverse and more urbanized.

By the 1950s, Roslindale Village was called "the commercial powerhouse of southwest Boston" as its shops served all of the surrounding neighborhoods. But the Village could not compete with the advent of large shopping centers outside the city in the 1960s and fell



into decline. General social unrest, arson and school busing made the late 60s and 70s a difficult time to live in the area, and many families withdrew to the suburbs.

In the mid-1980s, Roslindale began to make a comeback. Roslindale Village experienced significant new investment and underwent substantial renovation as a beneficiary of the country's first urban Main Street program. The Village thrives today as the commercial center of the neighborhood with its restaurants, bakeries, bookstores and shops.

NEIGHBORHOODS AND PLACES OF INTEREST

Roslindale Village (also known as Roslindale Square) is the commercial center of Roslindale. Its village square configuration is unique in the city of Boston. In 1985, Roslindale Village became the first urban Main Street program in the country, sparking a significant revitalization of the square which thrives today. Adams Park is the centerpiece of the square. The park hosts concerts, community events, and a weekly farmers market during the warmer months.

Roslindale may be broken up into several smaller neighborhoods, each with a unique personality.

¹ ROSLINDALE 2000 Census of Population and Housing Summary File 3 (SF3) Data Report # 584, Boston Redevelopment Authority, December 2003. <http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/pdf/ResearchPublications//584Roslind.pdf>. For additional history, see: <http://www.roslindale.net/pages/historicalfacts.html>, <http://roslindalehistoricalsociety.org> and http://www.roslindale.net/news/07_01_Phoenix/phoenix1.html.

Neighborhoods to the north and west of Roslindale Village such as the Longfellow Area and Peters Hill are generally residential and less densely populated. Areas to the east of the Village tend to be more dense, with a mixture of residential and commercial spaces, and more ethnically diverse.

Healy Playground is one of the larger play areas in the city, including a tot-lot, ball fields, basketball courts. The adjacent Flaherty Community Center includes a pool and community meeting area.

The green spaces of the Forest Hills Cemetery, Arnold Arboretum, George Wright Golf Course, Mt. Hope Cemetery and Stony Brook Reservation all border Roslindale.

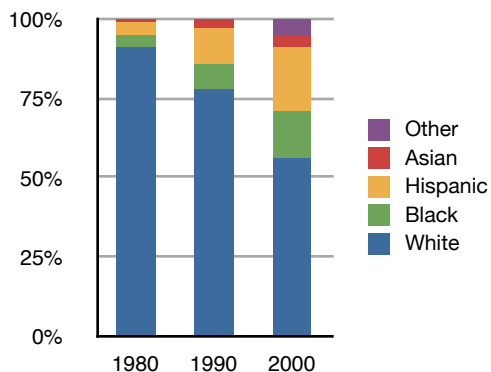
DEMOGRAPHICS²

In 2000, Roslindale's population was 34,628, up 5.1% from 1990. About 56% of the population was white, 15% black, 20% Hispanic, 4% Asian and 5% other. These proportions have shifted significantly since 1980 as seen in the chart below. Roslindale is becoming progressively more diverse and more international.³

Median income in Roslindale exceeds that of Boston

47% of housing in Roslindale is owner-occupied, 53% is renter-occupied (data from 2000). 52% of the housing stock is single-family homes, 28% is two-family, and 12% is three-family; the remainder of the housing is comprised of apartment and condos (data from 2005).

Roslindale has a fairly well-educated population, with 55% of residents over 25 years old having some



college education. Nearly one-third have bachelor's or graduate degrees. (Data from 2000.)

TRANSPORTATION

The most common form of transportation in Roslindale is automobile. The MBTA commuter rail stops in Roslindale Village, with service to downtown Boston within 20 minutes. Numerous bus routes also serve the area. The MBTA Orange Line subway terminates at Forest Hill Station just north of Roslindale, about a 20 minute walk from Roslindale Village.

RELIGION

The Emmanuel Gospel Center lists 19 active Roslindale churches on its website.⁴ Of these, 5 are Orthodox churches (Greek, Russian and Eastern). The list also includes a Greek-Catholic church, a Roman Catholic parish, and Anglo-Catholic church and several mainline Protestant churches (United Methodist, United Church of Christ, Baptist and Lutheran). Ethnic churches include Haitian Methodists and Baptists, as well as a few pentecostal churches with ethnically diverse congregations. The evangelical churches situated in Roslindale include a Congregational church and an Assemblies of God church. Other churches just outside Roslindale also serve the neighborhood, such as Jubilee Christian Church, a 5,000 member African-American megachurch located in nearby Mattapan.

CHURCH PLANTING OUTLOOK

Roslindale is generally regarded as one of the most demographically mixed neighborhoods in the city. Blacks, Whites, Asians and Latinos live in close proximity. The area is socioeconomically bended as well. Parts of Roslindale have maintained a sense of "small town America," but other parts are highly urbanized. Like other parts of Boston, immigration has played an increasing role in Roslindale life for the past several decades.

A church plant in Roslindale will need to understand and engage the dynamic changes taking place in the neighborhood. A church planter will need to be comfortable in cross-cultural relationships and interested in bringing disparate people together for the sake of the Kingdom.

In the end, only God can effect the kind of gospel renewal needed in this neighborhood. Our prayers and church planting efforts would be well-directed toward the end of seeing His Kingdom come in Roslindale.

² Demographic data from the Boston Indicators Project at <http://www.bostonindicators.org/IndicatorsProject/GeographyAtAGlance/Default.aspx?id=2360> and Heart of the City Project at <http://ksgaccman.harvard.edu/hotc/displayplace.asp?id=11515>

³ *Revitalizing Urban Main Streets: Roslindale Village*; Department of Urban Studies & Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Spring 2005, found at http://www.roslindaleboardoftrade.com/pdf/Roslindale_MIT_Study.pdf.

⁴ <http://www.egc.org/churches/index.html>