

December 31, 2001

Final First Year Progress Report

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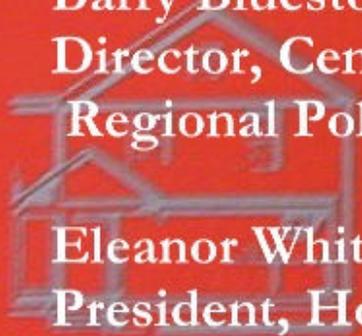
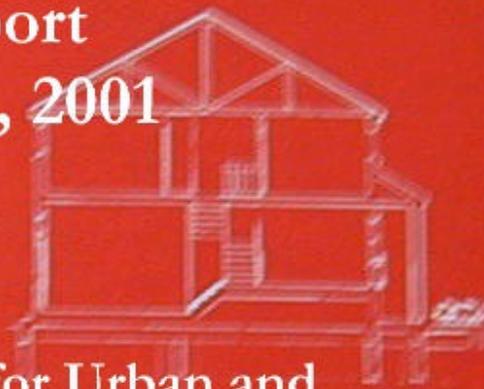
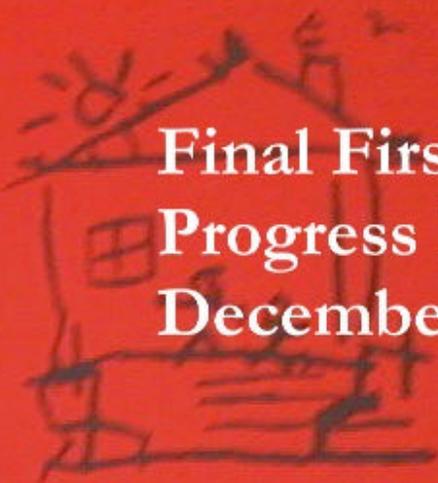
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**World Class
Housing
Collaborative**

**Final First Year
Progress Report
December 31, 2001**

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Regional Policy**

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Inc.**



Executive Summary

In its first year of operations, the World Class Housing Collaborative (WCHC) has accomplished all of the tasks identified by the Collaborative in its initial proposal to the Fannie Mae Foundation and FleetBoston Financial. Indeed, it has gone beyond the original first year plan to begin a number of important initiatives. Through scores of meetings with community leaders, neighborhood associations, community development corporations, and city agency personnel, the Collaborative has generated enormous enthusiasm for the services it is now offering all of these groups. In particular, we can point to the following successful efforts in our first year:

Major Completed and Ongoing Activities

- ◆ **Full staffing of the World Class Housing Collaborative.**

The WCHC hired a community liaison officer as promised in the original Fannie Mae/Fleet proposal, an executive coordinator for the Collaborative, and recruited from the Northeastern University faculty experts in architecture, law, real estate finance, and civil engineering.

- ◆ **Outreach to Boston Political Leaders**

In anticipation of attending literally dozens of community meetings, the WCHC has met with Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, with key members of the Boston delegation to the Massachusetts legislature, and with Boston City Council members. These meetings were used to introduce the WCHC and its mission to political leaders in order to assure them of our purpose and gain support for our community activities.

- ◆ **Outreach to Community and Neighborhood Organizations**

With guidance from its Community Liaison Officer, WCHC members have continuously met since the project began with literally dozens of community leaders in the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston, the areas identified in our original Fannie Mae/Fleet proposal. The purpose of these meetings has been to introduce the WCHC to them and to provide them the opportunity to request pro bono assistance from the Collaborative.

- ◆ **Established Strong Relationships with the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Department of Neighborhood Development**

The WCHC has had numerous meetings with staff from both the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the Department of Neighborhood Development in order to coordinate our neighborhood activities with those of official city agencies.

- ◆ **Completion of “*Bridging the Gaps: The Revitalization of the Four Corners Neighborhood in Boston*”**

This report for the Azuza Christian Community of Boston was sponsored by the World Class Housing Collaborative and carried out by graduate architecture and public policy students from five local universities including Harvard, MIT, Tufts, Northeastern, and UMass Boston. The report provided a conceptual plan for the development of a youth center and youth group home plus an affordable mixed-use affordable housing/commercial project (5 city lots) in Roxbury.

◆ **Completion of the *Geneva Avenue Urban Studio* for the Dorchester Housing and Open Space Action Team (DHAT)**

The Dorchester Housing and Open Space Action Team (DHAT) was selected as the Collaborative's first major "client". Under the direction of WCHC member, NU Architecture Professor Peter Wiederspahn, twenty-one students led by three faculty members worked continuously with DHAT from September through December to generate a plan for housing, open space, and commercial development along Geneva Avenue in Roxbury.. The Geneva Avenue "urban studio" produced a vast array of demographic, transportation, crime, and open space reports for the community, complete architectural drawings and models for new housing, commercial development, street redesign, and open space improvements. This studio is now being used as the starting point for several housing developments, mixed commercial and housing projects, and open space redevelopment.

◆ **Geneva Cliffs Housing Development**

Following from the Urban Studio, the WCHC is working to assist DHAT and the Dorchester Bay Community Development Corporation acquire a parcel of land on an abandoned NStar (formerly Boston Edison) substation lot at Geneva and Bowdoin Avenues where 24-26 mixed-income owner occupied housing units can be constructed. The Collaborative will assist in the design of the housing units.

◆ **The "Grove Hall Gateway" Projects**

The Collaborative has agreed to assist the owners of two of the most centrally located sites in the Grove Hall neighborhood to produce up to 180 units of mixed income housing. The WCHC is currently providing background information on development techniques; it has assisted the owners in obtaining legal counsel, a professional architect, and potentially a management agent; and it will assist in architectural analysis and locating front-end equity investment in this Grove Hall "signature" project.

◆ **Developers' Clinic**

In October and November, WCHC carried out its first *Developers' Clinic* attended by over twenty potential inner city developers. The Clinic, consisting of three four-hour sessions carried out in the space of three weeks at Northeastern, provided a basic introduction to the world of development and all of the requirements that must be met for successful mixed income housing construction and management. The response of the participants was uniformly positive; they requested that WCHC schedule additional sessions of the Clinic in the future.

◆ **Additional WCHC Fundraising**

In order to continue its efforts, the WCHC has stepped up its fundraising activities. WCHC has approached various foundations and corporations for completing the funding of the Collaborative and all of its projects. In December, FleetBoston Financial agreed to a second injection of \$50,000 based on the success of the Collaborative in its first year.

In summary, the members of the WCHC are elated by the progress in the first year of its existence and encouraged by the prospects for making a meaningful contribution toward the development of a significant number of new and rehabilitated "world class" housing units in the years ahead.

World Class Housing Collaborative

FINAL REPORT

YEAR 1

Introduction

In its original proposal to the Fannie Mae Foundation and FleetBoston Financial in October 2000, the Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University (CURP) proposed the creation of a unique university-based institution to assist community organizations and developers construct new and rehabilitated housing throughout the Greater Boston region -- beginning in Boston's Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods. The new institution would be known as **the World Class Housing Collaborative -- or WCHC**.

In part, the WCHC was spurred by the publication of a major study carried out by CURP for the Boston Catholic Archdiocese and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce. That report, "A New Paradigm for Housing in Greater Boston" called attention to the growing housing crisis in the region. Home prices and rents were skyrocketing to levels that made it increasingly difficult not only for low-income residents, but for many working class and even middle income families, to afford. The report called for the construction of 36,000 net new units of housing over the next five years and noted that this could only be accomplished if literally dozens of social, political, and economic barriers to new construction could be overcome.

The World Class Housing Collaborative would be established to provide technical assistance to community groups, neighborhood associations, and community-based developers with help in overcoming all of the barriers identified in the CURP report.

From the beginning, we defined what we meant by World Class Housing.

World Class Housing is more than a physical structure.

It is housing that is built around the life of a community.

It includes social services and economic opportunities.

It is housing that incorporates transportation efforts, public safety measures, civic initiatives and the environment.

World Class Housing anchors, transforms and stabilizes communities.

For housing to provide a strong and secure investment, it needs to be connected to the activities that make neighborhoods vibrant, safe, and creative – transit connections, parks and civic spaces, shopping and job opportunities, social services, educational programs, and recreational opportunities for young and old alike.

The World Class Housing Collaborative thus involves much more than the production of housing for it will also ensure that revitalizing neighborhoods provide a range of social and community services to ensure that no resident gets left behind in the transformation of blighted streets and sidewalks.

As a first principle, the Collaborative stated that it would always take its lead from the community. Every project to which WCHC lends technical assistance will have active community involvement. The Collaborative will take its direction from the community, partnering with local officials, neighborhood organizations, and individuals to realize a vision for neighborhood rebirth. Neither Northeastern University nor the WCHC will create the original idea for any individual development; all such ideas will be generated by entities within the community.

The Collaborative's day-to-day focus would be on *project-specific implementation*. WCHC will offer site-specific planning and development strategy for local construction projects that are in the works, as well as provide support to community organizations and neighborhood associations as they move from conception to construction.

The technical assistance services offered by the Collaborative would include financing, environmental assessments, community relations, and property management. The highly-experienced and respected members of the WCHC would also lend their credibility and relationships with decisionmakers to assure that the community's priorities are heard and understood at the highest levels of government. Ultimately, the Collaborative will develop an inclusive, community-based, streamlined process for housing development that can be replicated in neighborhoods throughout the region.

While the Collaborative would ultimately plan to offer services in neighborhoods throughout Greater Boston, assistance would first be provided to housing units in the Roxbury section of Boston and will involve the construction of a wide range of housing types on available vacant sites (including in-fill parcels) and buildings suitable for rehabilitation.

From the beginning, the Collaborative set out to assist in the creation of 200-300 new units of housing in stages over a three-year period. The goal was to create enough housing in a Roxbury neighborhood to support the business development and social services that are at the core of the "world class" concept.

The founding members of the new Collaborative included the university's Center for Urban and Regional Policy (CURP), the Urban Law and Public Policy Institute (ULPPI) and Housing Partners, Inc., a locally-based housing consulting firm with strong ties to the University.

WCHC Tasks

In its original proposal to the Fannie Mae Foundation and FleetBoston Financial, the World Class Housing Collaborative enumerated a set of tasks in order to meet its objectives during its first **three** years. We have restated these tasks here so that the considerable progress we have made in the first year alone can be put in the overall context of the full program.

Task 1 The WCHC will meet with representatives of all major community groups, advocacy organizations, and community development corporations in the area to assure that our

pilot area -- the “Grove Hall Triangle” has been designated correctly. This first set of meetings will establish the dynamic successfully used by the principals of Housing Partners, Inc. in the Inner-City Task Forces at the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) and will model the participatory process that will be used as the fulcrum of decision-making throughout the project.

- Task 2 The WCHC will work closely with the city of Boston, primarily through its Housing Chief, Charlotte Golar-Richie, and the staff of the Department of Neighborhood Development, to identify and inventory city-owned sites in the target area that are suitable for housing development, both single-family and multifamily. We will seek to identify suitable privately-owned sites as well. Based on the commitments contained in the city’s recently-released housing strategy document *Leading the Way* (to which Eleanor White of Housing Partners contributed) we believe that we can help construct a fast-track process for city disposition of land and city permitting.
- Task 3 The WCHC will also work closely with Boston-based developers -- both nonprofit and for-profit -- to assure their interest and availability to develop available parcels and to rehabilitate suitable buildings. We will encourage them and help them to obtain control of sites within the target area and compete for available funding from public and private sources. They will be a strong presence to advocate with us for streamlined public approval processes. In return, the WCHC will assist them in identifying financing and funding vehicles and will help to create connections to community residents and services.
- Task 4 The WCHC will identify all relevant social service, education, and health providers serving the community and assure that they become part of the planning process. In addition, they will be encouraged to present action plans to assure that their services are integrated into housing development and revitalization plans. Only in this way can the vision of world-class housing be realized. The WCHC will be available to advocate with them for resources within their own worlds.
- Task 5 The WCHC will work with local business leaders and business educators to assure that commercial and retail development will complement the new housing to be produced, and that employment opportunities can be generated for residents of the new housing, both youth and adults.
- Task 6 The WCHC will work with public safety officials to assure that the new housing will enjoy a high level of safety and security.
- Task 7 The WCHC will assure that as specific housing proposals are brought forward by developers, these proposals will be reviewed and critiqued in a timely manner by the Collaborative and that developers will be strongly encouraged to be responsive to legitimate concerns of the neighborhood. If this responsiveness is forthcoming, the Collaborative will actively advocate for project approval by the city and financing entities.
- Task 8 The WCHC will recruit design professionals to review designs for new, mixed income, and mixed use developments. The Collaborative will work with these architects to review designs that are cost effective and at the same time enhance the overall appearance of the neighborhoods where they will be constructed. In addition, the Collaborative will recruit from Northeastern University real estate finance experts, lawyers, civil engineers, economists, and other social scientists to assist in the development of world class housing.
- Task 9 The WCHC will convene public and quasi-public housing funders, including the City’s Empowerment Zone staff to assure that all sources of development assistance are identified and used to their full potential. The Collaborative will work with its

financial supporters to maximize the effectiveness of existing financing vehicles and minimize each partner's risk in the transaction.

Task 10 Throughout the process, the WCHC will develop materials for use in other communities to explain the concept and experience gained from its initial projects and experience. Ultimately, the WCHC will develop a resource kit so that the process can be more easily replicated in subsequent locations. The WCHC will also establish a method for evaluating the various elements of the process: the viability of the holistic concept, effectiveness of the community participation process and financing arrangements, the degree of innovation and creativity resulting from it, and the bricks-and-mortar accomplishments in the neighborhood.

Task 11 Assuming the successful development of the World Class Housing model, the WCHC will convene representatives at other area universities to collaborate with us on future housing projects.

To carry out these tasks, the WCHC was committed to hiring an executive coordinator for the Collaborative as well as a community liaison officer. These staff members are to be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the project and oversee coordination of the tasks outlined above.

YEAR 1 COMPLETED TASKS

In its first year, the Collaborative has completed the following tasks.

Organizational Tasks

- **Hired an Executive Coordinator and Community Liaison Officer**

In January of 2001, the Collaborative hired an executive coordinator (Gretchen Weismann) to oversee the daily administrative functions of the WCHC. The coordinator has been responsible for collecting reports, maps, and background information on projects associated with the Collaborative; for writing and editing the materials distributed by the Collaborative; for all record keeping associated with the project; for research on models that can be used to further the goals of World Class Housing; for attending and organizing WCHC working group meetings; and for coordinating all information and contacts related to the WCHC initiative.

The Collaborative also hired a community liaison officer (Boyce Slayman) to facilitate the relationship between the community, local developers, and the city. Recognizing the sensitivity of urban development issues, the community liaison was hired to serve as a resource for the community groups in their dealings with other interested parties as WCHC-assisted projects move forward. The liaison also articulates the concerns and aspirations of the community to the WCHC working group and participates in all development meetings.

- **Recruited and organized faculty from throughout the university to contribute to the provision of technical assistance to community groups and their developer partners.**

Since the Collaborative's founding early this year, the idea of World Class Housing has been generating enthusiasm throughout many departments and centers at Northeastern. Professionals in the field of housing and community development have now joined together with faculty from the Departments of Art and Architecture, Civil Engineering, Political Science, Sociology, Law, and Business to contribute expertise in housing design, finance, law, economic development, public health, and environmental assessment. The Collaborative has thus provided an exciting opportunity to recognize and utilize numerous university resources and to build a new model of effective university-community partnerships. Together, this group has solid expertise in wooden structures (especially 3-deckers) and multi-unit family housing, community organizing, real estate law, real estate finance, site assessment, brownfield remediation, and the public sector decisionmaking process.

The Members of the Collaborative now include the following. Short biographies are found in the WCHC brochure.

Barry Bluestone
 Founding Member, WCHC
 Director, NU Center for Urban and Regional Policy

Doris Bunte
 Founding Member, WCHC
 NU Center for Sport in Society
 Former Member, Massachusetts House of Representatives
 Former Director, Boston Housing Authority

Michael Glavin
 Director, State and Local Government Affairs
 FleetBoston Financial

David Langseth
 Associate Professor
 NU Department of Civil Engineering

Jim Rowan
 Founding Member, WCHC
 Clinical Director, NU Urban Law and Public Policy Institute

Marvin Siflinger
 Founding Member, WCHC
 Chairman, Housing Partners, Inc.
 Former Executive Director, MHFA and Former Director, HUD Boston Area Office

Boyce Slayman
 Community Liaison Officer, WCHC
 Senior Fellow, NU Urban Law and Public Policy Institute
 Senior Fellow, NU Center for Urban and Regional Policy

James Wang
Assistant Professor
NU Department of Civil Engineering

Gretchen Weismann
Executive Coordinator, WCHC
Senior Research Associate, NU Center for Urban and Regional Policy

Eleanor White
Founding Member, WCHC
President, Housing Partners, Inc.
Former Deputy Director, MHFA and Former Actg Director Hsg. Dev, HUD Area Ofc.

Peter Wiederspahn
Associate Professor
NU Department of Architecture

Dennis Wright
Founding Member, WCHC
Director, NU Urban Law and Public Policy Institute

Shiawee Yang
Associate Professor
NU College of Business Administration

- **Developed a brochure for use in explaining the World Class Housing concept and the services available from the Collaborative**

WCHC designed and produced a brochure to describe the mission of the Collaborative, its long range objectives, the working partners, and the services that the Collaborative brings together in a cohesive strategy to expedite housing production. The Collaborative is also maintaining a portfolio with all potential and active development projects, meeting notes, community contacts, requests for service, parcel information, development documents, and research related to World Class Housing. This portfolio will serve as a definitive history of WCHC and help provide the basis for replicating the WCHC model in other neighborhoods and cities.



- **Maintained organizational momentum through biweekly and monthly meetings**

For the first six months of WCHC's first year, there was so much activity that the Collaborative held biweekly meetings to keep all members aware of all WCHC projects and to approve projects. By July, virtually every WCHC member was involved in one or more projects often requiring a considerable time commitment. General meetings of the

Collaborative are now limited to once monthly, although several special sessions have been organized.

Community Outreach

- **Convened discussions with city officials, elected officials and other community leaders, potential funders, social service and educational providers, architects, and planners to explore the challenges of the World Class Housing concept, with special reference to the Greater Boston setting.**

Members of the WCHC have met with the City of Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development (DND), the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Boston Society of Architects, neighborhood residents, and potential financiers to discuss potential and on-going development projects. These meetings were designed to introduce WCHC and outline the elements of World Class Housing. The WCHC concept has generated considerable enthusiasm, particularly given the Collaborative's stated intention to put the community first by working to facilitate the development of housing that is connected to other vital community services and needs. We have received a very positive response from the Mayor of Boston, Charlotte Golar-Richie (Director of DND) and her staff, and Mark Maloney (Director of the BRA) and his staff.

The Collaborative has joined forces with the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the DND, and the Boston Society of Architects to help expedite the development of mixed income housing along the Blue Hill Avenue Mainstreets corridor – close to the original Grove Hall Triangle area targeted by the WCHC.

The Collaborative has worked closely with the Dorchester Housing and Open Space Action Team (DHAT) to consider assistance with the development of various DHAT properties along Geneva and Bowdoin Avenues. DHAT staff have submitted a proposal to WCHC for architectural and site assessment assistance for three major parcels in the area. *As noted below, after considering these proposals and touring these sites, WCHC has voted to provide full assistance to DHAT on a site plan for Geneva Avenue between Columbia Road and Bowdoin and to help expedite the development of housing on the Geneva Cliffs site designated by DHAT.*

WCHC meetings have been held with the following federal, state, and local officials, community leaders, and housing experts:

Robin Drill and Jack Wilson, Fannie Mae Massachusetts Partnership Office
Michael Glavin and staff, Fleet Bank
Gail Latimore, Executive Director, Codman Square Neighborhood Dev. Corp.
Deborah Jackson, the Boston Foundation
Patrick Lee, Trinity Financial
Milton Benjamin and staff, Community Development Finance Authority
Robert Pyne, MassHousing
Senesie Kabba, Executive Director, New Vision CDC
Ann Houston and staff, Mass. Housing Partnership
Esther Schlorholtz, Boston Private Bank

Thomas Menino, Mayor of Boston
Charlotte Golar Richie, Director, City of Boston Dept. of Neighborhood Development
Sheila Dillon and Bruce Ehrlich, DND
Mark Maloney, Director, Boston Redevelopment Authority
John Dalzell and Lynn Berkley, BRA
Marie St. Fleur, State Representative
Byron Rushing, State Representative
Staff of Dianne Wilkerson, State Senator
Chuck Turner, Boston City Councillor
Staff of Charles Yancey, President, Boston City Council
Jeanne DuBois, Executive Director, Dorchester Bay CDC
Marvin Martin, Director, Four Corners Action Coalition
Ralph Cooper, Veterans Benefit Clearinghouse
Ray Weaving, Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation
Sherry Flashman, Consultant, Dorchester Housing and Open Space Action Team (DHAT)
Davida Andelman, Executive Director, DHAT
Richard DeAgazio and staff, Boston Capital
Donna Finnegan, Chairman, Fields Corner CDC
Sister Virginia Morrison, Executive Director, Grove Hall CDC
Rev. Eugene Rivers, Azusa Christian Church
Eva Thorne and Ken Johnson, Azusa Christian Church
Nancy Jameson, Director, Fair Foods
Michael Long, Bethel AME Church
Alyce Lee, community resident and former Chief of Staff to Mayor Menino
Donna Latson Gittens, CauseMedia
Theresa Brewer, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation
David Wright, African-American Federation

- **Black Legislative Caucus Lunch**

In February 2001 WCHC members met with representatives from the Massachusetts Black Legislative Caucus to introduce the World Class Housing project. The attending representatives gave strong support to the Collaborative's mission and expressed an interest in maintaining and strengthening the relationship between the community and Northeastern University. There was also some concern about gentrification and parking and traffic problems in the Grove Hall area. The WCHC followed up the meeting with a letter to the City regarding the need for a Grove Hall area traffic study as requested by these public officials. (See Appendix 2)

- **Convened Meetings with Neighborhood Associations**

Members of the Collaborative, in some cases in conjunction with developers, have met with eight neighborhood associations, or representatives of neighborhood associations, to outline the WCHC project and the types of community support that the Collaborative can offer. These groups range from small resident organizations to organized, well-established planning committees. Members of the



Collaborative have also met with individuals from local pastors to the Vice President of the Franklin Park Zoo.

- **Held meetings with potential housing developers to explain the services available from the WCHC.**

Members of the WCHC have met with more than 20 local developers who are either in partnership with existing community groups or have an interest in working with a local community group on a specific site. These meetings have been used to ascertain their interest in working towards World Class Housing goals. The Grove Hall Triangle area identified by the WCHC, as well as nearby neighborhoods, contains many separate neighborhood associations, with distinct boundaries and individual community leaders. WCHC has been working to include all neighboring groups and potential developers in initial discussions.

WCHC meetings were held with the following individuals:

Russell Gibson, community-based developer
Brother Shear Israel, community-based developer/property owner
Murphy Gregory, community-based developer/property owner
Fred Fairfield, community-based developer/property owner
Ralph Cooper, Veterans Benefit Clearinghouse
Richard Taylor, community-based developer
Dwayne Jackson, community-based developer
Caleb Clapp, inner-city developer
Jonathan Kaye, inner-city developer

- **Held meetings with community leaders to identify specific sites for initial stages of the first housing development initiatives.**

The Collaborative has received many requests for assistance from developers and area community groups. These requests have ranged from an informal interest in working with the WCHC to a desire for specific types of assistance including architectural sketches of a busy intersection, mediation, and site assessment. In order to provide guidance to the community and determine appropriate development projects, the collaborative has collected data about the community's socioeconomic makeup, the area's housing stock, and the availability of vacant parcels for housing development.

- **Partnership with the City and Housing on Main Streets**

Beginning in February 2001, the Collaborative began meeting with DND, BRA, and the BSA as part of their *Housing on Main Streets* initiative. This initiative, organized by staff at the BRA, is focused on creating housing opportunities along Main Streets in Roxbury, as part of a neighborhood revitalization effort. This initiative is beginning with Blue Hill Avenue, but will eventually extend to other neighborhoods, including Four Corners, part

of the Grove Hall Triangle area. There were eight major meetings with participants in this group, four of which included leaders from the Blue Hill Avenue region.

- **Participation in Meetings with Blue Hill Avenue Mainstreets Community Groups**

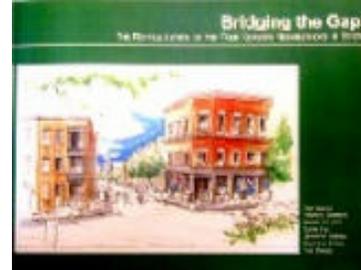
During the spring and summer, there were four scheduled meetings at Freedom House in Roxbury to introduce *Housing on Main Streets* to neighborhood residents and to gather community input on development and planning along Blue Hill Avenue. The WCHC participated in all of these meetings. Residents explained their interest in homeownership opportunities and affordable housing as well as mixed-use development and traffic calming measures. At least two members of the Collaborative have attended all community meetings, which usually drew participation of about 50 people at each meeting.

WCHC APPROVED PROJECTS

In its first year, the WCHC approved participation in four major projects and has begun or completed work on all of these.

- **Affordable Housing Competition**

The Center for Urban and Regional Policy served as faculty and institutional sponsors in the first regional affordable housing contest sponsored by the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston. Seven students from area universities including Northeastern, MIT, University of Massachusetts Boston, Harvard, and Tufts worked together on this WCHC sponsored project.



The student team took as its client the Azusa Christian Community, a group headed by Rev. Eugene Rivers. The client owns several buildings along Washington St. in Roxbury. In one of these, it would like to develop a center for troubled youth. The WCHC-sponsored student team suggested that the Azusa Community could renovate one of the buildings as the youth center, renovate a second as a youth residential facility for those in the youth center, and construct mixed income housing in the remaining buildings.

The team worked for six weeks on this project and produced an entire design for the project as well as cost estimates for their reconstruction. Architectural renderings of the buildings as well as a vision of the streetscape were produced as part of the project.

Based on this student effort, the WCHC has been asked by the Azusa Community to work with them on this project as well as a larger one that envisions the construction of a multimedia performance and training center on Washington St.

The Collaborative is now considering another community project in the Grove Hall area for Year 2 Competition.

- **Dorchester Housing and Open Space Action Team Projects (DHAT)**

In its first full-scale project, WCHC agreed to work with the Dorchester Housing and Open Space Action Team (DHAT) on the development of a gateway to the long neglected neighborhood at the intersection of the corner of Bowdoin and Geneva streets, and the development of affordable housing on a two-acre site adjacent to the intersection. In addition there are some remaining private and vacant sites that have great potential and may be incorporated into the overall development strategy after the initial planning takes place.



In order to assess the viability of development in this area, DHAT provided members of the WCHC with an extensive site tour of the area in late June. DHAT is a neighborhood-based planning and advocacy group for affordable housing founded in 1995. It is an informal collaboration of community agencies, resident groups, private and non-profit housing developers, and public officials dedicated to promoting affordable housing. Jeanne DuBois, executive director of the Dorchester Bay CDC, Marvin Martin, Director of the Four Corners Action Coalition, and David West from the City of Boston’s Department of Neighborhood Development also attended the tour.

In a formal proposal to WCHC, DHAT asked the Collaborative for the following assistance:

Geneva Avenue Study

1. Prepare planning and urban design recommendations for Geneva Avenue, between Columbia Road and Bowdoin Street, to include :

- Street edge treatments and set-backs for proposed new development
- Traffic study and recommendations
- Guidelines for off-street and any on-street parking
- Improvements to street lighting, pedestrian crossings, sidewalks
- Creation of an attractive “gateway” to the Bowdoin/Geneva neighborhood and Main Streets at the Bowdoin St./Geneva Avenue intersection, e.g., through a combination of new building design features, improved traffic patterns, pedestrian crossings, and other public improvements.
- Design guidelines for new buildings at the Bowdoin/Geneva intersection (e.g., height, massing, parking, buffers)

2. Propose alternative development scenarios and technical assistance for undeveloped and/or underused sites on Geneva Avenue. This would include options for new development of vacant land and redesign/redevelopment or possibly relocation of some unsightly and incompatible existing uses on the Avenue in order to bring more appropriate commercial and/or housing development to these sites. Included in the design phase of this project will be the consideration of building relocation and/or the improved site use of:

- 1) The Five Star Oil Company on Bowdoin Street (14/03194). At the base of Geneva Cliffs, the business was recruited by the City of Boston 7-8 years ago. The biggest problem is the use of the site for oil trucks and for parking of tractor-trailers by friends and family of the owners.
- 2) Fair Foods, the non-profit food distribution organization currently- housed in tractor-trailers between the Holland School and ABCD Head Start building (14/00037 & /00038). This is a widely supported community enterprise in terms of its mission, but there have been long-standing unhappiness over the condition of the site. Negotiations with Fair Foods have been difficult over many issues. Immediately to the rear of Fair Foods, ABCD is now developing 40+ units of elderly housing and issues of access and buffers have been a source of tension with Fair Foods. Even given existing uses, with ABCD Head Start and the Holland School as immediate abutters, the Fair Food site conditions are a problem. With all the new proposed development, this becomes even more of an issue.
- 3) Private vacant land on Geneva Avenue (14/01121 and /01122; 27,097 sq. ft.), opposite Fair Foods are several adjacent parcels of privately-owned long-standing vacant land that may be suitable for new development.
- 4) Private vacant land (20,824 sq. ft.) owned by the Mayer Brothers 453-479 Geneva Avenue between Tonawanda and Bloomfield Streets.

WCHC considered the DHAT proposals and came up with the following response:

Northeastern's Department of Art and Architecture offered to use the DHAT site area as the location for the department's Fall 2001 urban design studio. This studio course, open to senior architecture students involves a complete analysis of a particular neighborhood and development of architectural renderings for new buildings, streetscape design, open space uses, etc.



Beginning in September, twenty-one students working under the direction of Professor Wiederspahn and two adjunct faculty from the Harvard Graduate School of Design, met with members of the Geneva Avenue

community to learn about the neighborhood and to hear what kinds of concerns residents had about their community.

From mid-September through late October, the students undertook a number of key studies of the neighborhood and constructed a three dimensional model of the entire community.

- ❑ A *traffic study* was conducted to understand traffic congestion and pedestrian crosswalk problems
- ❑ Working with the MBTA, a *commuter study* was conducted to ascertain the average mass transit home to work commute times
- ❑ Working from Boston Police Department data, a *crime study* was conducted revealing where every reported crime took place in the neighborhood
- ❑ A *youth study* was conducted to ascertain what facilities could be developed to provide alternative meeting places for young people in the neighborhood
- ❑ A *green space study* was conducted to ascertain what sections of the neighborhood could be developed as public recreation space

At the end of this process, an all-community meeting was held at the Holland School on Geneva Avenue where the urban studio students presented all of their findings. In addition to more than 35 community residents, the meeting was attended by the Director of the City's Department of Neighborhood Development, senior staff from the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and staff from Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). By all accounts, and especially those of community residents, the students had done a superb job of understanding the issues most important in the neighborhood.

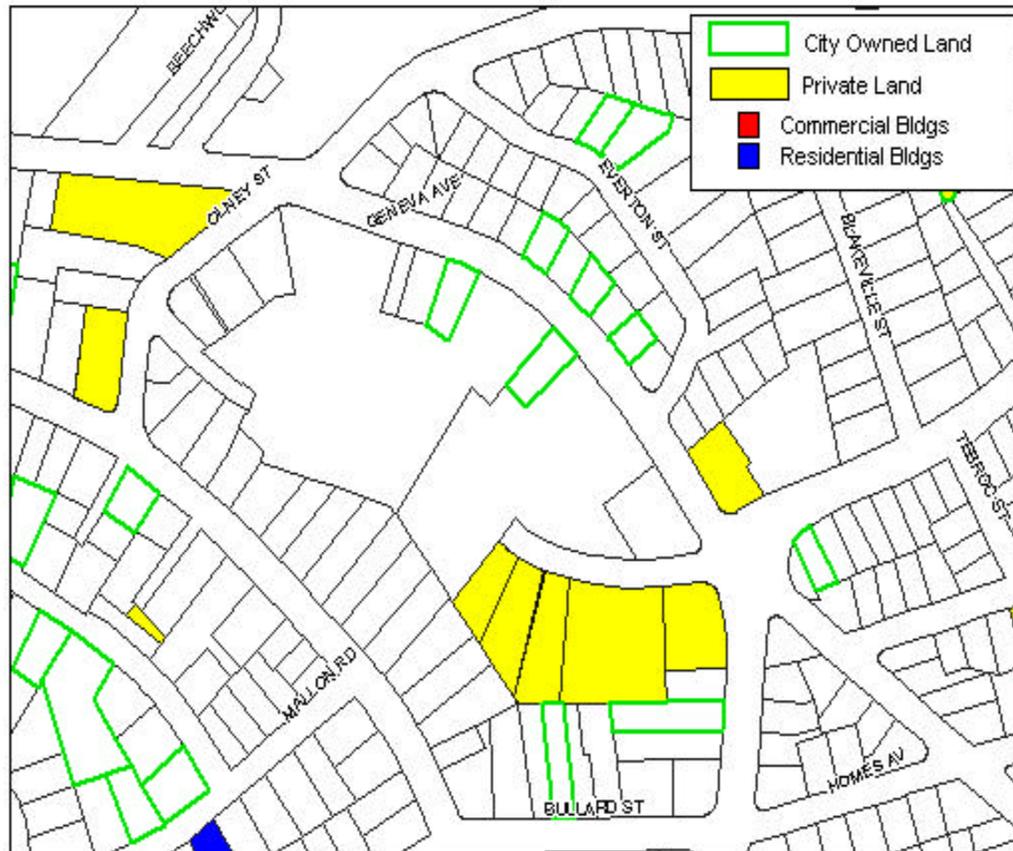


From November through mid-December, the urban studio shifted its focus to develop architectural renderings and 3-dimensional models of various alternatives for housing projects, commercial development, a new subway stop (of great interest to community residents), and green space renewal for the community.

All of these designs were presented at a second all-community meeting in the Holland School community center on December 13, 2001. Altogether more than one hundred people attended this evening event including dozens of neighborhood residents as well as many officials and staff from a variety of city agencies. Of particular note, we understand that Fair Foods' participation in this meeting represented their first appearance at any community meeting in many years, in spite of many invitations from local groups. They pledged cooperation with any planning efforts in the future. Again, the student teams received rave reviews for their efforts.

In the next step in this process, the WCHC is funding the publication of all of the plans drawn up by the students. These large format bound volumes will be made available to DHAT and to various city agencies. Based on these plans, WCHC is now working with DHAT to initiate development of the most promising of these designs. During year 2, the Collaborative hopes to assist in the development of at least one of the housing developments envisioned by the urban studio.

Geneva Cliffs



The WCHC has also agreed to work with DHAT on its Geneva Cliffs project. Geneva Cliffs refers to an almost two-acre site at the major intersection of Geneva Avenue and Bowdon Street that has great potential for new affordable housing and improved community open space. The site includes a 51,000+ square foot site, currently owned by NStar Electric utility (formerly Boston Edison) that had a transformer located on it (which has now been removed). Boston Edison had previously indicated an interest to sell this site and Dorchester Bay CDC, with support from DHAT and Four Corners Action Coalition, was involved in active negotiations to acquire the site. However, since NStar took ownership of the utility, NStar has put the deal on hold at least until the site has been re-evaluated for energy needs. The Collaborative has agreed to assist DHAT in negotiations with NStar for transfer of ownership of this site. WCHC lawyers will be called upon to work on this effort.

The site is adjacent to 75,000+ sq. ft. of City Conservation Commission land designated as an “urban wild” permanent open space. This site has been neglected for years and is an eyesore rather than an amenity in the community. DHAT is promoting a plan to improve the whole site, integrating a plan for new affordable housing on the NStar site and a greatly improved Conservation area. Dorchester Bay has estimated the ability to create 20- 23 affordable townhouse homes. The City’s Parks and Recreation and Conservation Commission Departments are enthusiastic about the possibilities DHAT presented them with and are eager to work with them cooperatively.

The site presents an unusual opportunity to create a unique housing community that is integrated with and complemented by an upgraded urban wild site, which can serve the larger community as well as the new development. The residents surrounding the site in the Mt. Bowdoin Betterment Association area and in the newly renovated 60-unit Geneva Avenue Apartments on the other side of Geneva Cliffs have a great stake and interest in seeing major improvements and accessibility to this site.



Most of the land is cliff or ledge that extends from the beginning to the end of the area and is visible along Geneva Avenue. There is a severe grade, making access difficult. Major challenges and needs for the site include:

- Geotechnical assessments to evaluate the ledge and determine options and feasibility for road access.
- Site assessment is needed and full 21E studies, given the considerable likelihood of contamination remaining from the transformer, even though Boston Edison reported the site was clean. The oil company (Five Star) at the base of the sight also raises concerns.
- Alternative funding sources to complete these assessments and address the issues that arise will also be needed.

The WCHC has agreed to assist DHAT with these three tasks.

The geotechnical and environmental analyses are crucial components of a full feasibility study to determine development options and designs for Geneva Cliffs. Members of the Collaborative, David Langseth and James Wang from Northeastern’s Department of Civil Engineering have confirmed their interest in working with DHAT on the development of this site. Both are experts in contamination, and have a special interest in Brownfields.

WCHC lawyers and real estate financial experts have agreed to work with DHAT on locating possible funding sources for this project.

- **Grove Hall Gateway Project.**

In November, the WCHC agreed to work with a number of property owners in Grove Hall to develop a major mixed income, mixed use project that ultimately could include up to 180 units of new housing.

This project grew out of meetings WCHC members Eleanor White and Boyce Slayman with property owners Murphy Gregory and Brother Israel (owners of property adjacent to the Silva Building in Grove Hall) and Walter Little of the Grove Hall Board of Trade. Mr. Gregory and Brother Israel are proposing an ambitious project (or projects) of elderly and family housing with ancillary commercial space. The properties -- adjoining the Silva Building up Warren Avenue, and vacant land/storefronts across Warren Avenue from the Silva Building -- if appropriately redeveloped could have a significant impact upon Grove Hall and the surrounding area. These owners, although not experienced developers, are committed to providing job opportunities for local residents in both construction and management of the properties, social amenities for future residents (in line with the world-class housing concept), and sensitive architectural treatment that would complement the proposed revitalization of the Silva Building. They are committed to entering into an active community review process as well. They are very clear, however, in needing assistance in accessing available planning and financing programs and in structuring the kind of community process that they understand is part of the world-class housing idea.

WCHC has agreed to provide development counseling to the property owners and work with them to find appropriate professionals and consultants for the project. We have already provided assistance with engaging a lawyer, architect, affordable housing consultant, and property management company. The Collaborative will also assist with contacts with the relevant city agencies. The development team seems to be very pleased with the help they have received to date from the Collaborative.

- **Developers' Clinic**

Based on Collaborative discussions with principals in the Grove Hall Gateway project, it became clear that the WCHC could assist neighborhood property owners, contractors, and small scale developers with a clinic on the basics of housing development. The idea for the clinic brought forward such a positive response that the Collaborative quickly developed a three-session program to meet the revealed need.



The developer clinic presented by the WCHC was meant to serve as either a primer or refresher course on inner-city affordable or mixed-income housing development in

Boston. The Collaborative brought together an extremely distinguished faculty of experts and practitioners in the field. Our goal was that at the end of the three four-hour sessions participants would have a good grasp of the range of disciplines needed for a successful development, how to access the technical experts, and how to coordinate an effective development team. The participants/students (totaling approximately 20 people) had a range of experience, although most had not carried out large-scale development to date.

Participants invited and attending the clinic were:

Brother Shear Israel	(Grove Hall property owner)
Murphy Gregory	(Grove Hall property owner)
Fred Fairfield	(Grove Hall property owner)
Harlon Jones	(Potential developer, Grove Hall)
Walter Little	(Potential developer, Grove Hall)
Leslie Lewis	(Grove Hall property owner)
Sister Virginia	(Grove Hall CDC)
Frank Thomas	(Contractor/Developer, Roxbury)
Russ Gibson	(Developer, Roxbury)
Robert George	(Franklin Park Zoo)
Marc Germaine	(Azusa Christian Church)
Faubert Smith	(Grove Hall property owner)
Don Muhammed	(Boston Nation of Islam)
Virginia Parks	(Fields Corner CDC)
Donna Finnegan	(Fields Corner CDC)
George Chen	(Crosswinds Company)
Robert MacArthur	(Crosswinds Company)
Marvin Martin	(Four Corners Action Coalition)
David Wright	(African-American Federation)
David Andelman	(Dorchester Open Space and Housing Action Team)
Senesie Kabba	(New Vision CDC)
Troy Butell	(New Vision CDC)
Lisa Davis	(Codman Square CDC)

The Clinic was very successful, if we can judge from the reaction of the students. All speakers were interesting and exactly on point, and the participants were fully-engaged and very appreciative of the opportunity to attend. They were particularly grateful at the opportunity to ask a lot of questions and get very candid answers from active practitioners in this complicated field. All three sessions have in fact gone over their allotted time, due to extensive questions and discussion from the audience. We believe that the Clinic will have a very positive effect upon the relationship that WCHC has so far established with the community in Roxbury and Dorchester, as well as with the City of Boston and Fleet (both of which have been represented at both sessions).

At the final session of the Developer Clinic, the attendees requested the following:

1. That we keep them together as a “class” with follow-up, more advanced, sessions

2. That we put on more of these introductory clinics with new groups of participants
3. That we call on them as needed for “testimonials” on the effectiveness of the clinics when dealing with potential funders, etc.

- **Research and Evaluation**

Members of the collaborative have collected a variety of data on the WBG Triangle area including land maps showing vacant, city-owned, and BRA-owned parcels and zoning maps for the WCHC development area. The BRA and the DND have prepared special maps for the WCHC to our specifications. The collaborative has also amassed demographic information on several neighborhoods, detailing socio-economic characteristics based on census data and neighborhood studies. An inclusive database of university-community partnership projects, comparable world class housing models, and local financing options is underway building on the knowledge and experience of collaborative members, as well as primary research by staff and interns at the Center for Urban and Regional Policy. The collaborative is working to catalogue all current city and local development projects in the area, and their stage of development, drawing from city records and conversations with local developers, and community groups. Finally, the collaborative is amassing all of the reports and strategic plans that pertain to the Roxbury development area.

- **Fundraising**

Two members of the Collaborative, Barry Bluestone and Eleanor White, have been involved in raising additional funds to complete the budget for the first year of its efforts. The Northeastern University Development Office has offered a great deal of support for this effort. Currently, several Boston-area foundations, corporations, and individual families are reviewing the WCHC proposal.

Fundraising meetings and discussions have been held with:

Jack Manning & Richard DeAgazio, Boston Capital, Inc.
Kenya Crumel, Seedco
Charlotte Kahn, Boston Foundation
Carey Shea, Surdna Foundation
Michael Glavin & William Fenton, FleetBoston Financial
Robin Drill, Fannie Mae Corporation
Jeffrey Sacks, Brown, Rudnick, Freed & Gesmer