

Narrative: South Dorchester is a big, *diverse* neighborhood, but its history of racial segregation, redlining, and gentrification has led to the inequitable distribution of resources (ie. schools, parks). The division of the community -- largely among ethnic and racial lines -- has had long-lasting effects on its social resilience. Not to mention, the city has failed to address equity for this underserved, underprivileged neighborhood; South Dorchester does not receive the same eco-benefits (of energy conservation, air clarity, carbon sequestration, and stormwater mitigation) because of its lack of tree canopy, especially when compared to other Boston neighborhoods. However, the community is still united, pressing the city to take actions to balance its neighborhoods adequate, equitable tree coverage for a greener -- and healthier -- future. Trees and green spaces are important to everyone's health and wellbeing. We want to make sure everyone has access to these benefits - mental, physical, financial, etc.

What we did and why we did it:

We set up interviews with several figures in Boston, in order to learn more about projects they conducted to increase tree canopy and open spaces, increase equity within South Dorchester neighborhoods. First, we spoke with Maggie Owens, a research analyst and urban planner working with the city of Boston to learn more about the city's goals for the future of Dorchester regarding diversity and inclusion in conversations around equitable open space initiatives and climate resilience. Then, we talked with community leader, Saba Ijadi, who works with the Codman Square Climate Justice Alliance, to hear from him how to empower and engage communities with issues of environmental justice. Later, we interviewed three individual residents, Vivian Hoang (17), Elliott Lacen (27), and Geraldine Hughes (57), each with unique

perspectives, to hear from them more specifically about their personal experiences with trees and green spaces as well as how they felt about their communities. We also reached out to the community via survey to get a better understanding of how residents feel about open green space and trees in general. Through both the survey and the interviews, we gained some insight into what local residents would like to see for the future of the urban forest in the neighborhood and got a better understanding about how green spaces, trees, and diversity is important to the South Dorchester community.

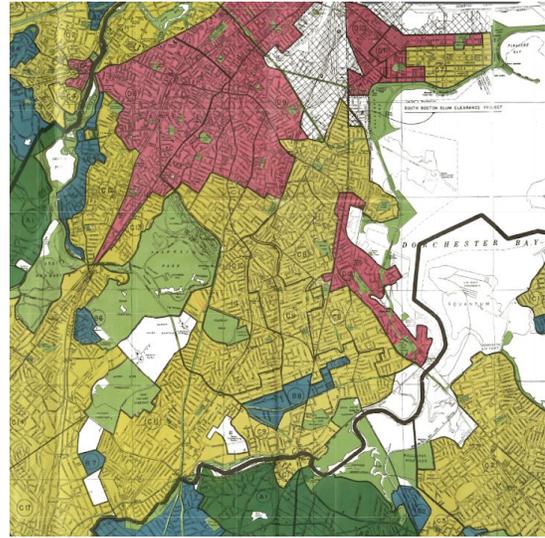
Major findings:

By researching more about South Dorchester and reviewing the present day map analysis, we found that the demographics in South Dorchester are quite distinctly grouped into sub-communities. Some valuable information we obtained from the maps specifically is that the Neponset area not only has a lower minority population than other parts of South Dorchester, but also has significantly higher median household income levels, less dense population, and is not limited by not knowing English. This directly juxtaposes the other side of South Dorchester, closer to Roxbury, which has the opposite demographics - densely populated, majority-minority communities with lower household income, and additional language barriers. This was important to recognize so that we were made aware of the inequity within the South Dorchester community itself, let alone the Dorchester neighborhood and city of Boston, so that we could address it.

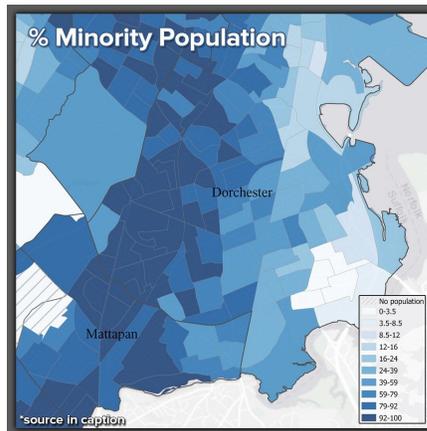
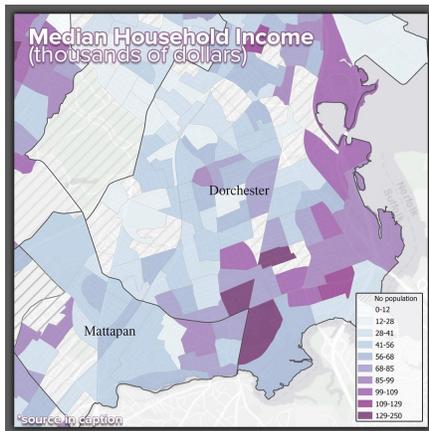
Past:

The underserved, underprivileged South Dorchester we know today is heavily rooted in Boston's history of systemic racism, as demonstrated in the *government-sanctioned* practice of redlining — the categorization of neighborhoods' risk for mortgage lenders based on their concentrations of racial and ethnic minorities. The majority of South Dorchester

Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America



was rated a C: 'Declining' or a D: 'Hazardous', discouraging financial institutions from offering residents of the area any forms of financial assistance. Redlining exacerbated issues of economic



inequality, denied residents access to homeownership, and perpetuated racial segregation as emphasized in the neighborhood's

Maps created by Raquel Jimenez from 2018 5-Year American Community Survey Data

demographics as visualized in maps created by Raquel Jimenez. These underlying issues plaguing the community are actively affecting the present-day distribution of resources, including tree canopy and green space. "Redlining" and Exposure to Urban Heat Islands map by Dan Pisut shows that neighborhoods like South Dorchester, where residents are more likely to be unable to afford cooling systems, lack adequate tree coverage and suffer from hotter summer

temperatures, highlighting the inequitable state of the urban forest in Boston. This exemplifies the limited access that South Dorchester residents have to eco-benefits *like* energy efficiency, carbon sequestration, stormwater filtration, etc. especially in comparison to other neighborhoods that have upwards of 30% tree canopy. The overarching generalizations made about South Dorchester by the HOLC (responsible for redlining) have played a large role in the city of Boston's inequity (past and present) against the neighborhood. Because it is clear that the present of South Dorchester is a product of its past, in the future, actions must be taken to address the systematic oppression of the community, especially in regard to green spaces and the urban forest so that residents are not disproportionately affected by a lack of climate resilience.

Present:

We took lots of the shots and used them in our project video and posts, taken from across the South Dorchester area. Looking through all of the footage of green spaces and streets with and without trees, we noticed how different the tree canopy is in South Dorchester communities.



(Codman Square)



(Shawmut)



(Greater Ashmont)



(Ashmont Station)

We interviewed community residents and leaders to get a better understanding of what residents experience and how people can then take action from there. This helped us understand the complexities of the South Dorchester neighborhood, since there are multiple, ethnic enclaves spread out (such as a large Vietnamese population in Fields Corner, and Irish population in Adam's Village). From this, along with additional research about the current demographics of South Dorchester, we were able to conclude that the separation of in our interview with Vivian, she gave some interesting perspective on how the racial diversity in her neighborhood was not necessarily a bad thing and that she enjoyed being able to try different cuisines along Dorchester Avenue. With this mindset, we were able to ensure our project showed respect and included all of South Dorchester into the larger narrative, and not just the areas we were comfortable being in or had previously interacted with. We were inspired to go out to Codman Square a few times to get a feel for the area, take good footage of the community there, visit one of the parks mentioned, and incorporate that into the present-portion of the project. In this way, we were able to highlight the beauty of each community, without much favor to one or two specific areas, but instead focusing on what the residents had to share about their personal, favorite spaces or trees and not our own.



(photo including corner stores mentioned)



(Roberts Park, Codman Square)

Future:

For this project, We took numerous pictures and videos of parks in the Neponset area, including Pope John Paul 2 Park (the sprinkler park, and playground), and Toohig Park on Gavin Blv. When we traveled around my neighborhood taking shots of the various parks, I realized how many people with different backgrounds lived in Dorchester. Over the past few weeks, we interviewed numerous residents of South Dorchester such as Gerialdine Hughes, and Elliott Lacen. During these interviews, We asked them questions about the trees, and diversity within their neighborhood along with what memories they have; which gave me insight on how green spaces and diversity impacted them as people. Also, We interviewed Maggie Owens, a research analyst and planner with Angelica. From this interview We learned a lot more about the open spaces throughout Dorchester, We learned more about how the Boston Government includes the community into her company's decisions, and We learned more about future plans such as the Parcel Priority Plan. All this information gave us input into how the city government preserves and builds open spaces within numerous communities such as South Dorchester.



Sources:

1. Interview with community resident: Geraldine Hughes
2. Interview with community resident: Elliott Lacen
3. Interview with community resident: Vivian Hoang
4. Interview with Saba Ijadi
5. Interview with Maggie Owens
6. Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America, Digital Scholarship Lab, University of Richmond
7. “Redlining” and Exposure to Urban Heat Islands, Dan Pisut
8. Maps created by Raquel Jimenez from 2018 5-Year American Community Survey data
9. Pictures/videos of green spaces and of interviewees
10. Online survey created

Statistical Atlas

Data from the US Census Bureau. Road data © OpenStreetMap contributors.

Neighborhoods provided by Zillow. Updated on Sept. 14 2018.

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statisticalatlas.com/neighborhood/Massachusetts/Boston/South-Dorchester/Overview