



OASIS @ BARTLETT

AN URBAN, OUTDOOR ARTS RETREAT AS A PRESCRIPTION FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH

A CASE STATEMENT FOR SUPPORT OF OASIS@BARTLETT
ROXBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

URBAN RESILIENCE

is defined as the capacity of a community to survive, adapt and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks it may experience. Effective urban resilience strategies must be equitable, that is, they must address underlying stresses like institutional racism, violence, divestment and aging infrastructure, poverty, environmental degradation and other chronic challenges.

(Adapted from The City Resilience Framework developed by The Rockefeller Foundation and its partner, the global design firm, Arup)



Cover photo: early concept

PROJECT LEADERSHIP

Nuestra Comunidad Community Development Corporation has been serving Roxbury, Massachusetts since 1981, with a legacy of creating communities of opportunity, developing new community assets, and transforming neighborhoods through economic development. It accomplishes its community revitalization mission by: developing high quality affordable and mixed-income rental and home ownership housing; encouraging homeownership through homebuyer education and coaching; increasing financial resiliency through financial coaching and foreclosure prevention; engaging community, developing neighborhood leaders, and preventing and reducing crime through community organizing; and by promoting economic development and fostering small business creation. More than 800 apartments affordable for working families and 150 homes developed by Nuestra are now creating neighborhood stability and wealth. Today, Nuestra, with its partner, Windale Developers, continues its mission with a new development, Bartlett Station, a multi-phased mixed use complex of 323 units, serving approximately 1,000 residents with affordable and market rate rentals and home ownership opportunities in the Dudley Square neighborhood, along with significant opportunities for local businesses and workers.

Nuestra Comunidad has long been an advocate and supporter of local arts and culture. For nearly 10 years, visual artists and performers have been featured at gatherings large and small, as Bartlett Station's construction phase continues. These events are supported by the leadership team and staff of Nuestra, in partnership with local artists, performers and arts organizations. Nuestra has also long been invested in supporting "green initiatives" and urban open space.

Nuestra Comunidad committed to investing 1% of the Bartlett Station construction dollars on developing Oasis@Bartlett, a new public arts park serving the entire Roxbury Community. Nuestra has already set aside nearly 1,000 square feet of space in Building D to serve as a local art gallery, another 600 square feet for storage of equipment for the park and stage, and six units of housing for local artists.

Nuestra is fully committed to provide ongoing support for Oasis@Bartlett, in all phases of its development and operation. When completed, the park will be able to seat up to 500 for performances and host 1,000+ visitors at festivals.

Oasis@Bartlett,
an urban park in
Dudley Square,
Roxbury that
will enhance
the quality of
life of residents
and provide a
gathering place
to enjoy nature
and the arts



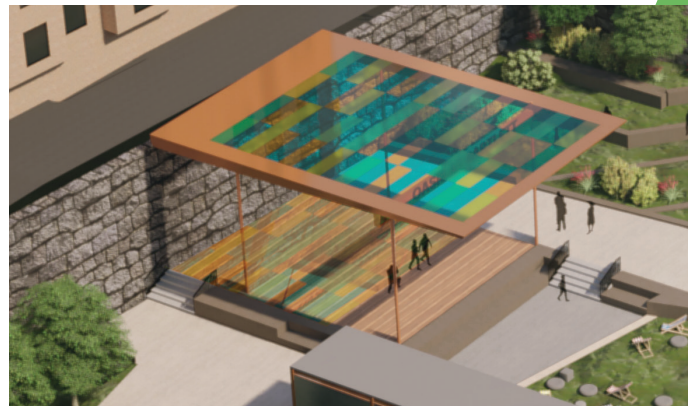


THE PROJECT

Bartlett Station, the largest-ever mixed income, mixed use development in Roxbury, sits on an 8-acre brownfields site that was formerly an MBTA bus yard. When completed, 323 new apartments, condos and town homes plus 50,000 SF of retail and office space for local entrepreneurs will enhance the Dudley Square neighborhood. Commercial tenants will include a local grocery store opening on 2020. Since beginning construction in 2017, 76 units in two buildings have been completed along with 13,000 SF of retail space. More buildings are poised to begin construction, and the buildout will continue through 2023.

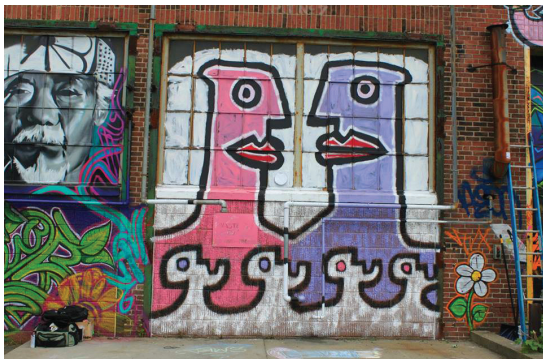
To create Oasis@Bartlett 15,000 square feet of space has been set aside to create an urban oasis that will include grassy areas,

an urban grove of native trees (Bartlett Pear and Russet Apple), seating for visitors, an art gallery, both temporary and permanent visual art installations, and a performing arts stage. When completed, Oasis@Bartlett will provide 1) a safe and healthy gathering place for residents and visitors; 2) both seasonal and year round training and employment for local residents (adults and teens); 3) opportunities for local artists to share their talents and for local audiences (with a Roxbury and Boston focus) to enjoy a wide variety of performances, exhibitions, festivals, classes and interactions; and 4) installations highlighting the rich history of the neighborhood and the cultural influence of its artistic past. It is anticipated that Oasis@Bartlett will serve the community year-round with seasonally-appropriate activities.



THE VISION

When completed, Oasis@Bartlett is an active and vibrant community gathering place for celebrating every season. The park is *the* neighborhood place to sit quietly and enjoy nature and the place for festivals, exhibitions, performances, and interactive participation, with a focus on supporting local artists, local audiences, and locally-based vendors.



CURRENT CONDITIONS AND NEEDS

Dudley Square, a thriving neighborhood business district within Boston's Roxbury community, is a diverse neighborhood and the center of African-American culture in Boston. Currently, the area faces rapid redevelopment, driven by a dynamic real estate market. In the past few years, for example, the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, an economic anchor (new headquarters of the Boston Public Schools) and the first supermarket in thirty-five years were completed and opened. Roxbury's population has grown significantly between 2000 and 2018, by 17%. Despite this redevelopment and growth, the neighborhood continues to experience persistent inequities in wealth and health, compared to other parts of the City. According to the "Health of Boston's Children Report 2013", institutional racism continues to drive health disparities, as people of color face discrimination in every aspect of life including employment, encounters with the criminal justice system, and access to healthy food. 23% of residents ages 25 and over have less than a high school diploma. 83% of Roxbury residents are of color.

Higher rates of environment-related illness are evident. Roxbury asthma-related emergency department visits for children ages 5-17 in 2014-15 were 256.8 per 10,000, the highest in Boston. The Bartlett Station site once used

as a bus storage facility where emissions were making residents sick, is designated "an extreme heat island" according Boston's Climate Ready Report of 2016. Analysis reveals that "Roxbury has some of the hottest daytime temperatures in Boston during summer months and faces risk from several climate hazards including storm water flooding and extreme heat that can endanger residents with vulnerable health". This status of "extreme heat island" is likely one source of Roxbury's high rate of environmentally-caused disease, including cardio-vascular illness, asthma and other respiratory illnesses compared to other Boston neighborhoods.

With a population of 62,000, 54% of Roxbury's residents live at or below the poverty line, with an unemployment rate higher than Boston or Massachusetts, especially among young adults. While Boston's median income is \$50,000, in Roxbury the median income is about \$30,000. 68% of Roxbury households have income less than 60% of AMI, or low income. Displacement is a reality, with 28% of Dudley Square residents at risk for being driven from the neighborhood due to gentrification. Roxbury has the highest percentage of residents under the age of 20 in Boston, at 30.7%. Teenagers make up 8.9%, among the highest in the City.

The 20th Century erosion of Boston's industrial base affected Roxbury adversely, as did the flight of middle class residents to the less dense suburbs. With the abandonment by the late 1970s of much of the housing and many businesses, vacant land became abundant. All of Roxbury meets at least one of the State's Environmental Justice criteria and in most neighborhoods, including Dudley Square, multiple criteria. These criteria, combined with the prevalence of families with children and overall neighborhood density, result in high scores for "park need".

Roxbury has 3.7 acres of open space per 1,000 residents, which is about half of the open space for other communities in Boston at 7.59 acres per 1,000. As Roxbury's population is growing rapidly, the need for parks will be even greater.



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THE BENEFITS

Research shows that the presence of nearby natural areas and green spaces strengthens social ties among neighbors by encouraging the use of common spaces. Strong community relationships increase the likelihood that individuals will work together to achieve common goals, exchange information, and maintain informal social controls, which lead to cleaner and safer public spaces, more stable neighborhoods and less crime, and can have a positive impact on public health. Recent studies demonstrate that green spaces in urban areas may actually decrease violent and property crimes in neighborhoods: one study comparing 98 apartment buildings in an inner-city neighborhood indicated that residents with higher amounts of nearby nature reported fewer violent and minor crimes, as well as fewer incivilities. A similar survey found that 90% of property crimes occurred in areas without vegetation. In a Chicago study, residents reported fewer incidents of illegal activity in places containing urban nature; and a Philadelphia study found that participants who walked by a "greened" lot showed decreased heart rate, a sign of reduced stress, compared to a control group.

Trees and vegetation in urban neighborhoods improve air quality resulting in lower rates of asthma and wheezing. Many more studies are providing scientific evidence that nature provides a multitude of health benefits, as access to nature motivates healthy behaviors like exercise and improves and/or sustains positive mental health. Other studies show that living near green space improves overall health, particularly among the homeless, the elderly and those with lowered socio-economic status.

For the artists in Roxbury, having a local place to perform, to create and to interact with community will keep them among us and provide cultural experiences for many who cannot afford either the time to travel to events or the high cost of tickets in downtown Boston. For the youth, our local artists can provide mentoring, encouragement of creativity and access to opportunities. Nuestra is also addressing the expressed need for artist live/work space within close proximity to Oasis@Bartlett. Stable affordable housing itself reduces stress and improves health outcomes.



Working Team event at OASIS@BARTLETT. Singer, Eva Davenport.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

With all of the issues facing this urban population, the people of Roxbury remain committed to positive change. The community is supportive of the new housing opportunities being developed and amenities that will improve their quality of life. While some of the artists have left Roxbury, many in Nuestra's network have stayed, hoping to become part of the Oasis@Bartlett gallery, exhibition and performance scene, as well as live/work space. Their continued presence and participation in the community engagement process was stellar.

With the participation of the Executive Leadership at Nuestra and a Volunteer Working Team of Artists and Arts Administrators, Consultant Andrea Kaiser, guided the process of a community survey, community focus groups, key informant interviews, and public meetings between January and September of 2018. She also worked with Executive Director, David Price, and Project Manager, Robert Springer, to bring together a vibrant professional team of architects, theater designers, acoustical engineers and landscape

architect to design Oasis@Bartlett as a hub for community social, artistic, cultural and nature activity. A thorough written report was issued in September of 2018 and is available electronically.

The community engagement process continues, as Andrea and Nuestra's Senior Leadership Team work to strengthen partnerships within the educational, cultural and historic preservation groups in Roxbury, including the formation of a Steering Committee of local stakeholders providing regular input on design, programming and operations. Meetings with the local business owners and operators to explore linkages are scheduled to begin in the spring of 2019, as Oasis@Bartlett will have a positive impact on business activity.

Local artists continue to provide performances and temporary interactive installations and exhibitions at Bartlett Station, in anticipation of the opening of Oasis@Bartlett in 2021.

COMMUNITY BENEFIT

Throughout the community engagement process, responses from many participants



Working Team member Franklin Marval

included the need for a "local park for local artists and local residents". Respondents feel that their neighborhood has been promised many things in the past, most of which have not come to fruition. They want a local park in which to connect with nature; they want a venue in which to share their culture; and they want to enjoy a variety of artistic presentations in a more intimate and safe setting in which they can actually interact with artists. They want a local venue that offers affordable and free events that provides increased access for low-income residents. They want to have an urban oasis of which they can be proud, share with their friends, and visit often.

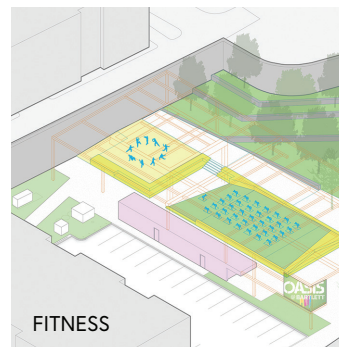
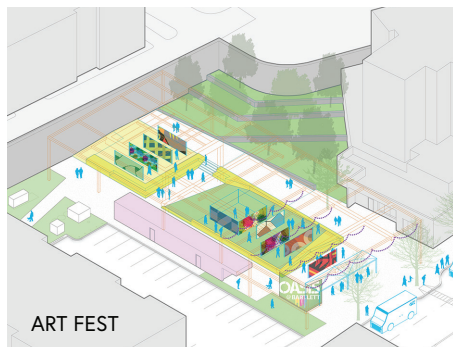
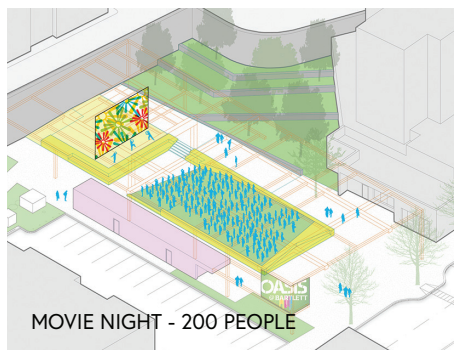
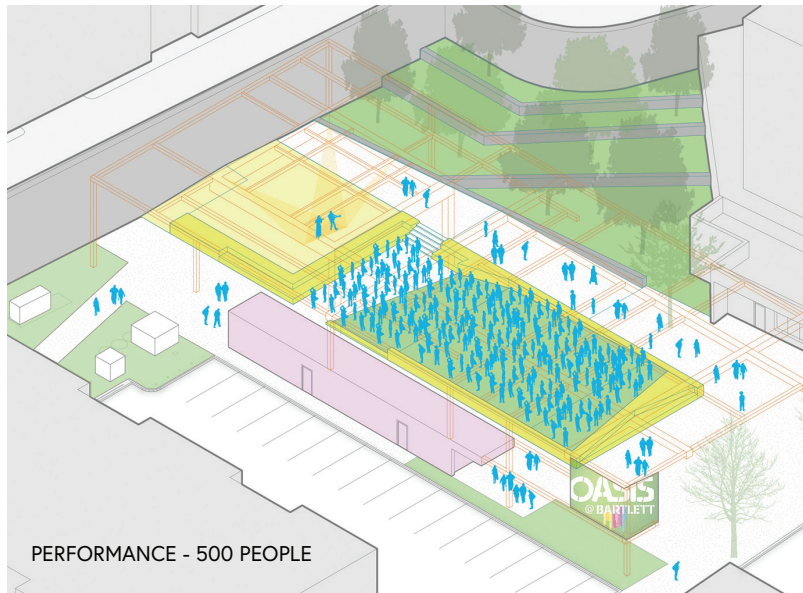
Residents have expressed interest in both volunteering at the park and accessing both part-time and full-time employment. Providing training, mentorship, access to internships and employment for local residents will enhance skills, tools and options for employment.

Another important community benefit is the increased revenue and support of local businesses who will provide goods and provisions for Oasis@Bartlett, including refreshments and goods for purchase during park events and activities.

DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PHASES

When the design team completed its initial rendering in October of 2018, the Oasis@Bartlett vision became visible, presenting a place of natural beauty with the flexibility to provide residents and visitors with a lovely setting of lawn and shade trees, shrubs and plantings in which to breathe clean air, interact with others, and participate in exercise classes and activities on the stage or sit quietly enjoying the open space. The walking paths, urban grove, open-air stage, and space for art installations and working artists to share their talents allow for both intimate and large-scale productions of every genre of art to be presented.

Initial cost estimates to complete the entire project (infrastructure and site preparation, lawns, plantings, trees, seating, stage, dressing area, rest rooms, storage space, and box office) will cost about \$6,000,000. Since the project is privately developed for public use, it has been determined that the most practical way to construct the park is in four phases: 1) Site preparation and infrastructure to support the stage (Approximately \$1M); 2) the planting of trees, grass, shrubs, seating areas for visitors, and the erection of a temporary stage (Approximately \$1M); 3) construction of the permanent stage (Approximately \$3M); and 4) construction of the gallery, dressing rooms, rest rooms, and box office (Approximately \$1M). By taking a phased approach to the project, Nuestra can target its fundraising, including public and private resources, corporate naming rights, individual donors, members, and the business community. After the completion of Phase 2, when the park is open and a temporary performance stage installed, Nuestra and the staff will pilot a variety of programming options, marketing strategies, ticket pricing and event sponsorships; assess audience attendance, satisfaction and input; and create a programming schedule that will maximize use through a balanced budget derived from both earned and unearned revenue. thereby assuring artists, audiences and funders that the investment in Oasis@Bartlett is valued.





PUDDING STONE WALL



RAIN GARDEN



BARTLETT PEAR TREE



ROSETTE APPLE TREE



OPERATION OF OASIS@BARTLETT

Nuestra intends to engage a Coordinator for Oasis@ Bartlett whose experience includes managing outdoor space and programming arts and recreation activities and performances. It is anticipated that the administrator will be hired in 2020 on a part-time basis to assist with Phase 1 and Phase 2 construction; plan the gala opening and first year programming schedule; spearhead the annual fundraising efforts; and recruit and train both volunteers and part-time staff. Nuestra staff will support the marketing and financial management tasks. The administrator will take on full-time duties when the park is formally opened.

Revenues to support the Coordinator and events will come from fundraising, vendor fees and ticketed events. Under the legal and management structure created by Nuestra, buildings at Bartlett Station will be assessed monthly fees to support a portion of the routine maintenance and upkeep of Oasis@Bartlett.

Until the administrator is hired, Consultant Andrea Kaiser will support the planning and development activities. She is a seasoned arts presenter and fundraiser. Nuestra is actively seeking arts organizations that are already presenting to local audiences as future partners in Oasis@Bartlett in order to share resources and staff.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

TO MAKE OASIS@BARTLETT SUCCEED

- GIVE – PARTNER – VOLUNTEER – ATTEND
- Donate today by visiting nuestracdc.org
- Make a significant gift to earn naming rights
- Sponsor one or more of our events or festivals
- Invite proposals to fund one or more Construction Phases
- Partner with us to produce exciting community-based programming
- Explore becoming a vendor, concession operator, or business partner
- Lend your expertise by serving on various planning and event committees
- Attend our public meetings and pre-opening events



Learn more today
by calling 617-989-1206
or emailing info@nuestracdc.org

