

Boston Neighborhood Descriptions

Allston / Brighton

Allston's radiant neighborhood is best known for its student population due to its proximity to many colleges and universities. In recent years, an influx of immigrants and young professionals has taken an increasingly active role in the neighborhood. This varied mix of people creates one of the most energetic and diverse populations in Boston. Harvard Avenue, Commonwealth Avenue and Brighton Avenue host many ethnic restaurants and popular watering holes. Multi-family homes and condominiums line the streets of this Brighton, which is located in the northwest corner of Boston, on the shores of the Charles River. Many of Brighton's small businesses are located along Washington Street, which runs straight through Brighton Center to Oak Square. The Brighton Center Main Streets Program has been actively attracting new businesses to the neighborhood, as well as offering grants for storefront renovations. Families, young professionals and graduate students are all lured to Brighton for its tranquil yet dynamic atmosphere.

Back Bay

It's easy to understand why the Back Bay is one of America's most desirable neighborhoods. Newbury Street, Boylston Street and Commonwealth Avenue are lined with unique shops, trendy restaurants and vintage homes, making the Back Bay an extremely fashionable destination for Boston residents and visitors. In fact, it's not uncommon to spot celebrities strolling up and down these picturesque streets. This bustling neighborhood also houses the two tallest members of Boston's skyline, the Prudential Center and the John Hancock Tower, in addition to architectural treasures such as Trinity Church and the Boston Public Library.

Beacon Hill

One of Boston's oldest communities, Beacon Hill gets its name from a beacon that once stood atop its hill to warn locals about foreign invasion. Approximately one square mile in size, Beacon Hill is bound by Beacon Street, Bowdoin Street, Cambridge Street and Storrow Drive. Its architecture and layout is reflective of old colonial Boston, consisting of brick row houses with beautiful doors, decorative iron work, brick sidewalks, narrow streets, and gas lamps. Beacon Hill is also home to the Massachusetts State House and America's first African Meeting House. Charles Street, the neighborhood's main thoroughfare, is lined with antique shops and restaurants. Beacon Hill has been home to many notable Americans, including Louisa May Alcott, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Daniel Webster, Robert Frost, Sylvia Plath, and Senator John Kerry.

Charlestown

Situated on the banks of Boston Harbor and the Mystic River on the north side of the city, Charlestown has translated its historical roots into a thriving 21st Century neighborhood. As the home to such significant landmarks as the U.S.S. Constitution, the Bunker Hill Monument and the Navy Yard, Charlestown's allure has enticed a new generation of immigrants and young professionals to join its traditionally Irish-American population. Residents, new and old, frequent the local restaurants and establishments along Main Street and in City Square.

Dorchester

Dorchester, Boston's largest neighborhood, is also one of its most diverse. Long-time residents mingle with newer immigrants from Ireland, Vietnam, and Cape Verde. The nation's first Vietnamese Community Center is located in Fields Corner, the heart of the Vietnamese community in Boston. Dorchester Avenue anchors the neighborhood business district with a unique mix of ethnic restaurants, beauty salons, electronics stores, and pharmacies. Franklin Park, considered the "crown jewel" of Frederick Law Olmsted's Emerald Necklace Park System, is located here. The Park features 527 acres of green space and walking paths, a zoo, and an 18-hole municipal golf course. Neighborhood pride is strong in Dorchester, as former residents have been known to wear T-shirts proclaiming "OFD" - "Originally From Dorchester." Bordered by the Neponset River and Boston Harbor, Dorchester residents enjoy the riverfront amenities of Pope John Paul II Park as well as harbor beaches and boating opportunities.

Fenway / Kenmore

Perhaps most recognized as the home of Fenway Park and the Boston Red Sox, Fenway/Kenmore also boasts many of the City's top cultural institutions, including the Museum of Fine Arts and Symphony Hall. Fenway/Kenmore also has a strong academic presence, including Boston Latin School, America's first public school, as well as several institutions of higher learning. Many of these undergraduate students, as well as young people throughout the city, are drawn to the lively bars and clubs along Lansdowne Street. The Fenway is another central thoroughfare that encircles the Back Bay Fens, the neighborhood's preeminent green space, which was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted.

Jamaica Plain / Mission Hill

Jamaica Plain, or "JP" as the locals call it, is a classic "streetcar suburb" that has evolved into one of Boston's most diverse and dynamic neighborhoods. The ethnically diverse area is home to many Latinos, young families, and a growing gay and lesbian community. Hyde and Jackson Squares have significant Spanish-speaking populations from Cuba and the Dominican Republic. This blend of cultures is reflected in local businesses, such as the many different restaurants which line Centre Street, one of its main thoroughfares. Residents and visitors enjoy walking, biking, and running along Jamaica Pond situated on the Jamaica way, part of Boston's Emerald Necklace.

With the addition of mixed-income housing, the renovation of One Brigham Circle and a strong business district along Tremont Street and Huntington Avenue, Mission Hill is alive with renewed energy while still retaining its original character. The community consists of a large African American and Hispanic population, a healthy collection of students from nearby colleges and young families who work in the Longwood Medical Area, making it one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Boston. New condominiums now join the traditional brick row houses and many three-decker homes that mark this architectural landmark district. Located just one mile from downtown Boston, Mission Hill also houses the historic Mission Church.

North End

Home to American patriot Paul Revere, the North End is one of Boston's most historic neighborhoods. Traditionally a first stop for immigrants arriving in Boston, the North End is most well known as an enclave of Italian immigrants. Today the North End is populated by a mixture of Italian Americans and young professionals who are attracted to the neighborhood's tight-knit feel and access to downtown. Tourists come from near and far to sample authentic Italian cuisine, enjoy a cannoli or a cappuccino, and explore its narrow streets. In recent years, a number of boutiques have opened in the North End specializing in everything from trendy clothing to jewelry. The North End also offers access to Boston's waterfront along Commercial Street. Residents and visitors can enjoy strolling and relaxing in the newly renovated Christopher Columbus Park, and during summer evenings the park is host to a performing arts series.

South Boston

Once a predominantly Irish Catholic community, in recent years South Boston has become increasingly desirable among young professionals and families who are attracted to the neighborhood's strong sense of community and quick access to downtown and public transportation. People from all over the city enjoy taking a stroll around Castle Island, a Revolutionary War-era fort and 22-acre park that is connected to the mainland. "Southie Pride" is on full display in March when city residents flock to the neighborhood to enjoy the annual South Boston St. Patrick's Day Parade. Today the breathtaking South Boston Waterfront is emerging as Boston's newest neighborhood. Already home to the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, planned development for the Waterfront includes residential, office, retail, and hotel use. The Institute for Contemporary Art, slated to open in September, stands as an iconic symbol of the South Boston Waterfront's unlimited potential.

East Boston

Originally a center of shipbuilding, East Boston has always been a neighborhood of immigrants. Today its population is made up largely of Italian-Americans and immigrants from Central and South America and Southeast Asia. That diversity is reflected in the neighborhood's myriad of ethnic restaurants. The nation's first branch library was built in East Boston in 1870. The housing is a mixture of old and new, including many restored triple-deckers. Logan Airport, is located here, making East Boston a gateway to people from around the world. Located across Boston Harbor, East Boston residents enjoy fantastic waterfront views of the city skyline.

South End

Located just minutes from downtown and the Back Bay, in recent years the South End has become one of Boston's most popular neighborhoods. It has attracted a diverse blend of young professionals, families and a vibrant gay and lesbian population to this Boston Landmark District. You will be sure to notice the South End's renowned Victorian brownstone buildings and homes as you walk along Tremont Street, Columbus Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue. Small business owners also enjoy the amenities of the South End and are supported by the national award winning Washington Gateway Main Streets Program. Some of Boston's finest restaurants, a thriving arts community and nearly 30 parks also call the South End home.

Roxbury

Roxbury is home to the largest minority community in Boston and is situated between the South End and Jamaica Plain. It is a neighborhood on the rise, home to many small businesses in Dudley Square, as well as the new Mosque and Cultural Center in Roxbury Crossing. Roxbury is an affordable alternative in the city and a short commute to campus via the Silver or Orange Lines.

Brookline

Located minutes from downtown Boston by car or T, the Town of Brookline has a distinctively suburban feel, but with the convenience of a city. Excellent schools, exceedingly safe streets, a strong sense of community, and proximity to Boston make Brookline one of the more desirable towns in the Boston area. The town revolves around the shops and commercial areas of several bustling neighborhoods, of which Brookline Village and Coolidge Corner are the most notable, while a number of parks, tot lots, and a public swimming pool provide ample recreational space. Commute to campus from Brookline is on the “B”, “C”, or “D” trains of the Green Line T, and varies depending on distance from campus.

Neighboring Communities

Cambridge / Somerville

Home to the world-renowned intelligentsia of Harvard University and MIT, the City of Cambridge is also a stimulating collection of neighborhood and ethnic sights and sounds. Cambridge is an eminently diverse and student-friendly community. The Fresh Pond area offers parks, tennis courts and a golf course, while community boating is available on the Charles River. Commute to campus varies depending on location, but is easily accessible via the Red Line subway.

The most densely populated community in the entire U.S., Somerville provides a more affordable alternative to living in Cambridge while still being located close to downtown. It is almost exclusively residential, but has a lot to offer in terms of culture, cuisine, and lifestyle, especially in the Davis Square area. It is a very student-friendly community and is about 45 minutes away on the Red Line.

Newton

Despite proximity to Route 128 and the Mass Pike as well as extensive shopping facilities, Newton contains a number of quiet, residential neighborhoods, along with excellent schools and recreational facilities and a safe, suburban feel within 30 minutes of Boston. Parts of Newton are close to the “D” Green Line subway, with an approximately 45 minutes commute to campus.

Arlington

Arlington offers a town beach, sailing on Spy Pond, and a number of parks and bike trails at Menotomy Park. A recent influx of professionals in recent years has fostered a strong cultural awakening to the arts through its Center for the Arts, which provides classes, poetry readings, open studios, and other activities.

Medford/ Malden

Conveniently located on Route 93, Medford features such diverse offerings as the sprawling Middlesex Falls Reservation, two malls, Tufts University, swimming for residents in Wrights Pond, and numerous parks scattered throughout the city. Commuters may take bus routes, commuter rail or the Red Line to the Boston campus, which will vary in time depending on location.

Malden offers considerable shopping facilities, a diverse ethnic makeup contrasting a strong suburban feel, numerous town squares, and TUSM’s Sharewood Clinic. Malden is a 20 minute commute by car or a 30-45 minute commute via the Orange line to campus.

Quincy

A quick 20 minute commute to Boston via Route 93, Quincy offers excellent shopping, parks, beaches, and substantial ocean frontage. Commute to campus via the Red Line takes about 45-60 minutes.

Watertown / Belmont

Watertown and Belmont are suburban towns along the Charles River outside of Boston. They offer many recreational facilities, excellent shopping in the Arsenal Mall. Access to Route 2 and the Mass Pike is easy, making commute to campus best accomplished by car (about 30-35 minutes), but there are trolley lines that bring commuters to Harvard square, and to the Red Line T.

West of Boston

Cities such as Framingham and Natick are approximately 20 miles west of Boston. Both offer easy access to the area’s main highways including the Massachusetts Turnpike, Route 9, and Route 30, as well easy access to the commuter rail train.