

# THE BOUNDARIES OF DORCHESTER

By:

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# Geographic Overview

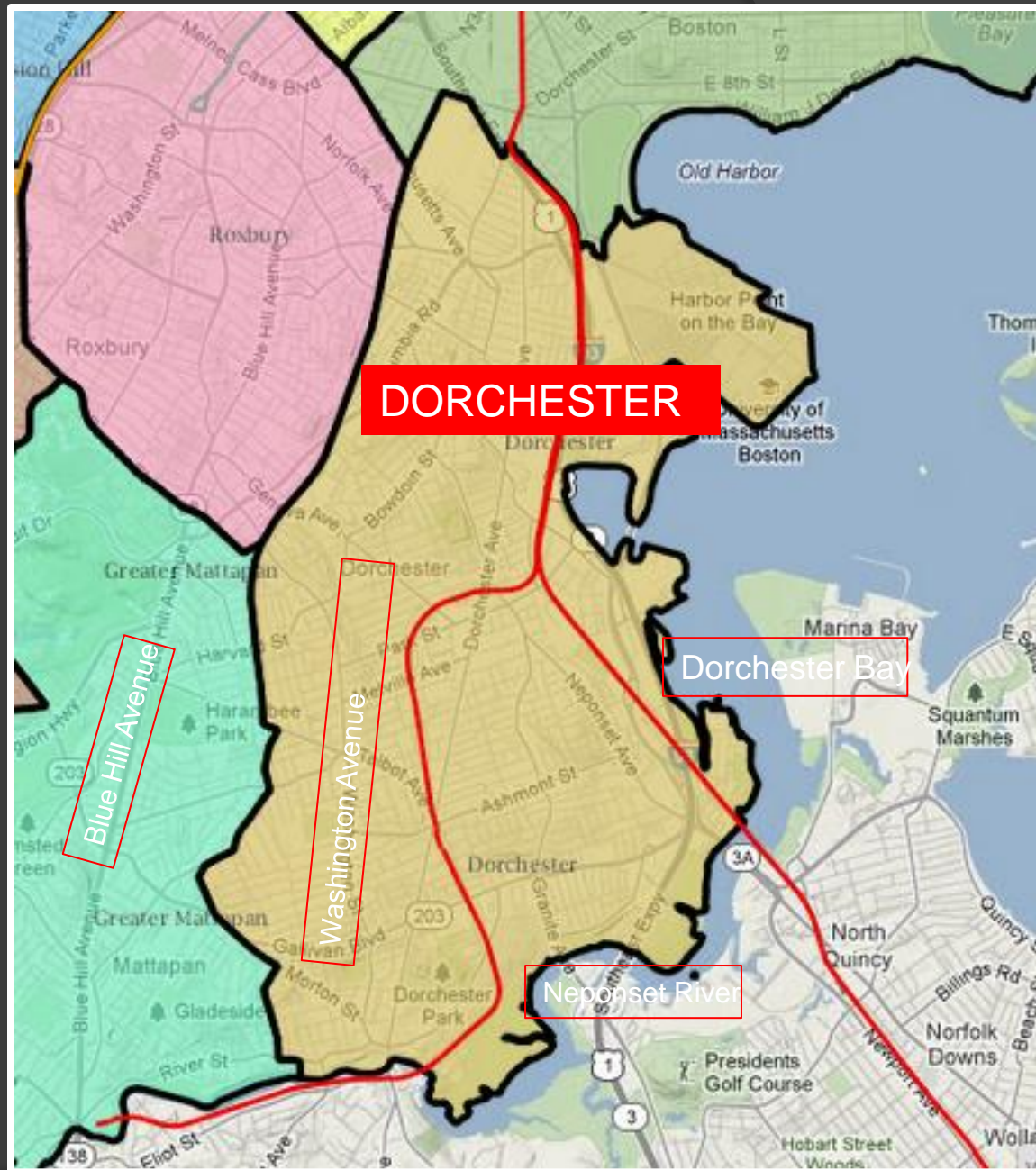


\*picture taken by Jack Smith on 11/11/12

# Geographic Overview:

# Dorchester within Boston

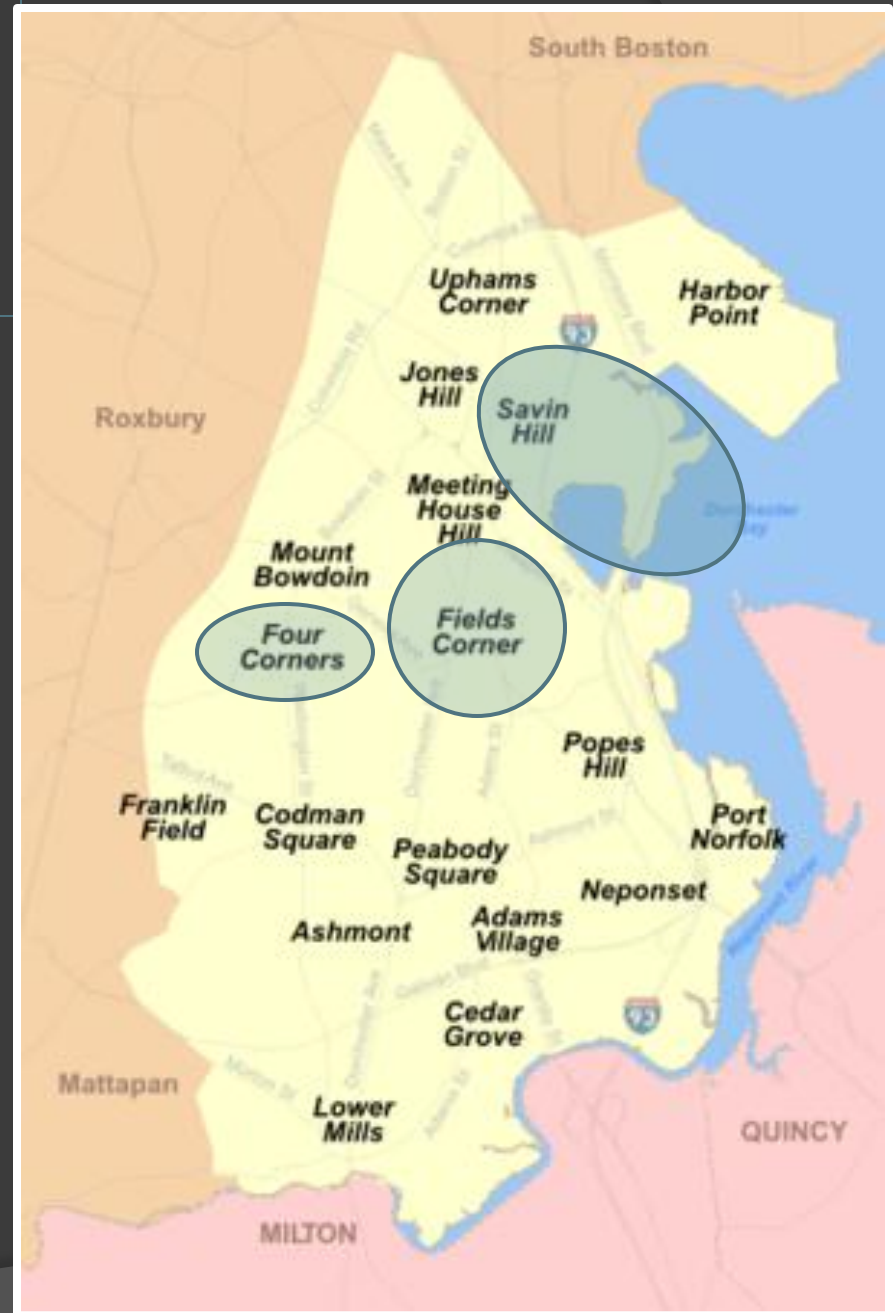
- Dorchester is bordered on the east by Dorchester Bay and on the South by the Neponset River.
- The Western boundary is not uniformly agreed upon but extends roughly to halfway between Washington Avenue and Blue Hill Avenue and separates it from Roxbury and Mattapan
- The Northern boundary is route I-93, which separates it from South Boston



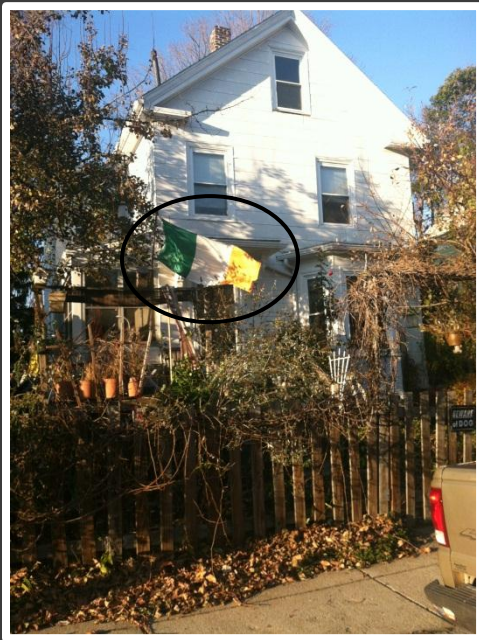
# Geographic overview:

## Sub-neighborhoods within Dorchester

- Dorchester is Boston's largest neighborhoods, and is thus divided into further sub-neighborhoods by commercial areas and major streets
- The major sub-areas that we evaluated are:
  - Four Corners
    - Intersection of Washington Ave. and Harvard St.
  - Fields Corner
    - Dorchester Avenue and Adams St.
  - Savin Hill
    - Northern Dorchester Avenue and East of I-93





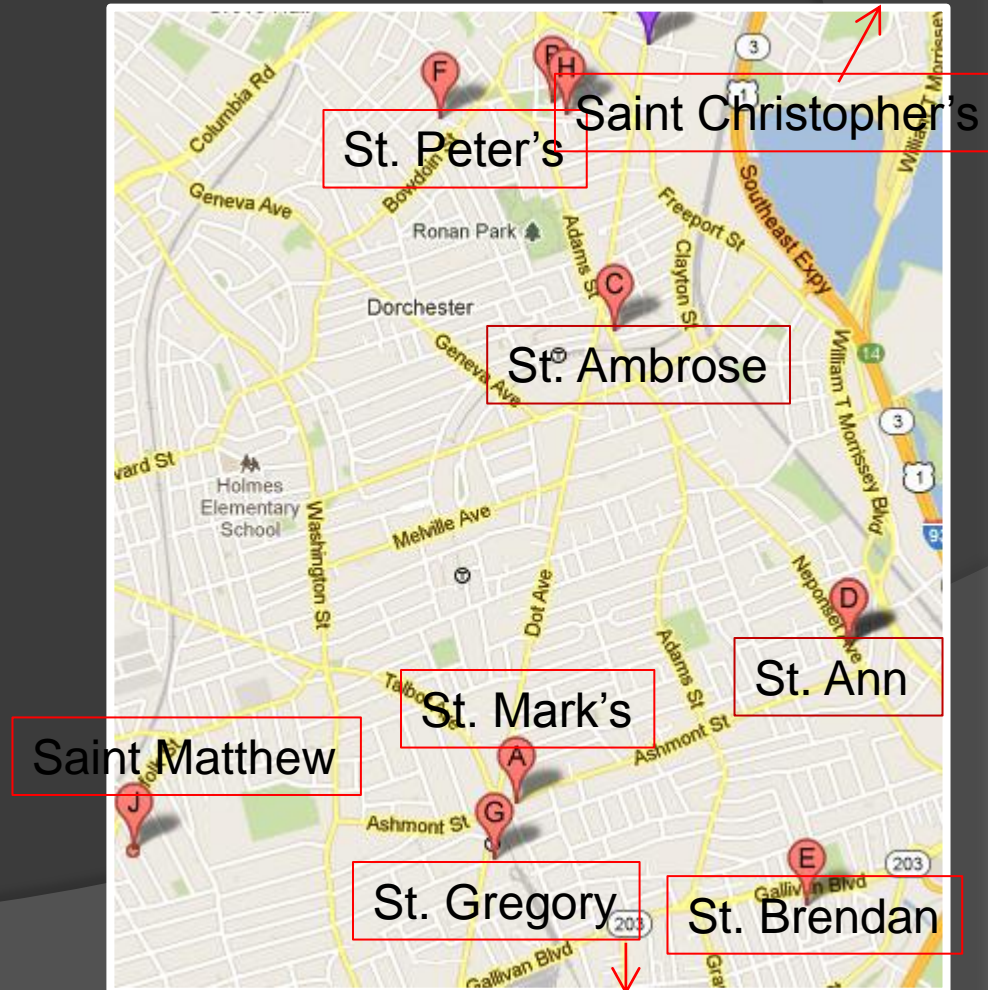


# Historical Overview

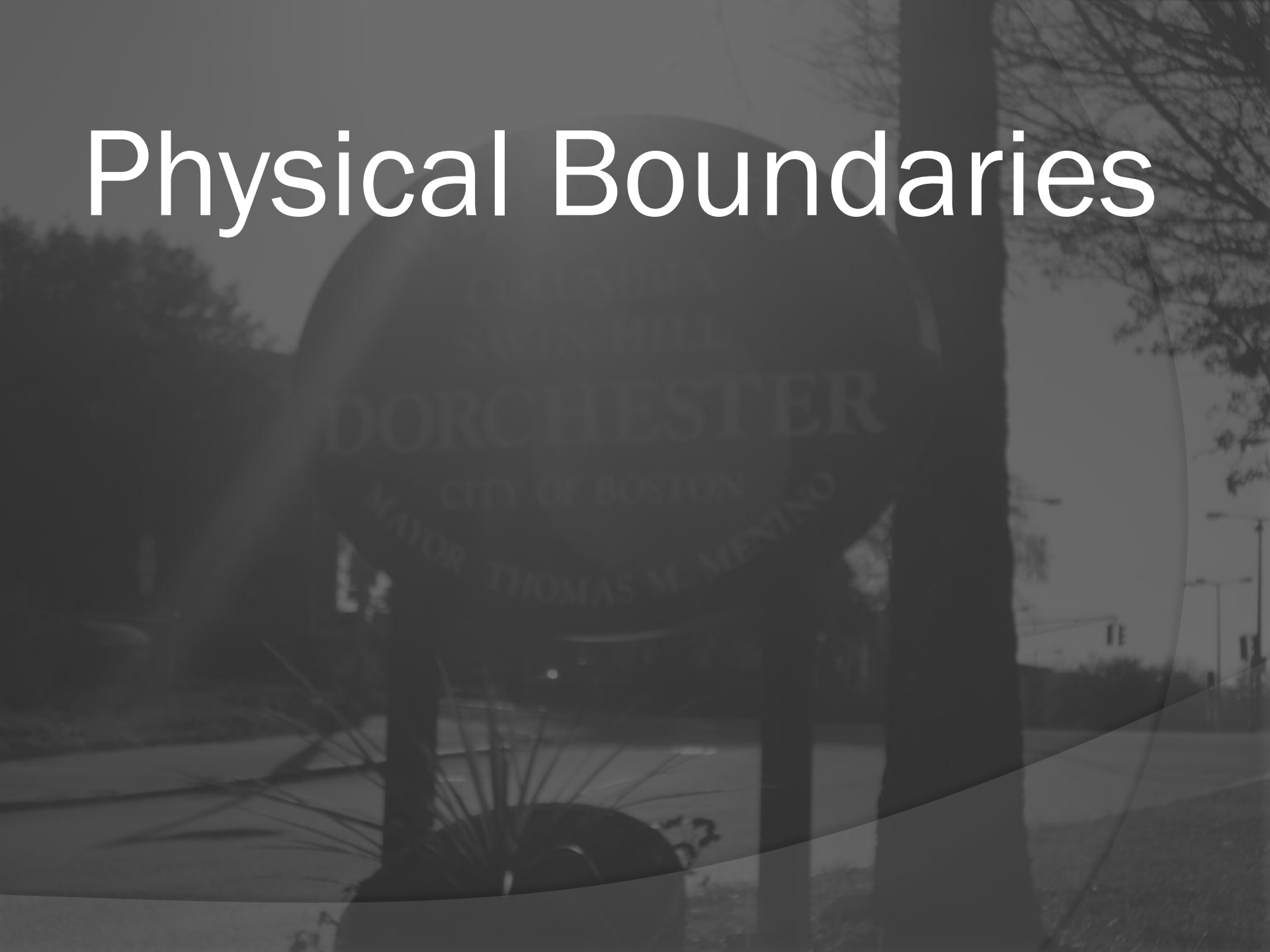
- Dorchester was once a very Catholic neighborhood, inhabited by many Irish immigrants. Remnants of this Irish heritage are still quite visible today, although the Irish are no longer a majority population.

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this predominantly Catholic culture led to the organization of Dorchester by parish, or church community. Today, the Catholic population is not significant enough throughout Dorchester to sustain this organization, and these boundaries have been largely replaced by racial ones. However, there are still significant Catholic pockets in Southern Dorchester near the Ashmont T stop.

\*picture taken by Jack Smith on 11/11/12;  
Parish information from The Archdiocese of Boston;  
Map from Google Maps

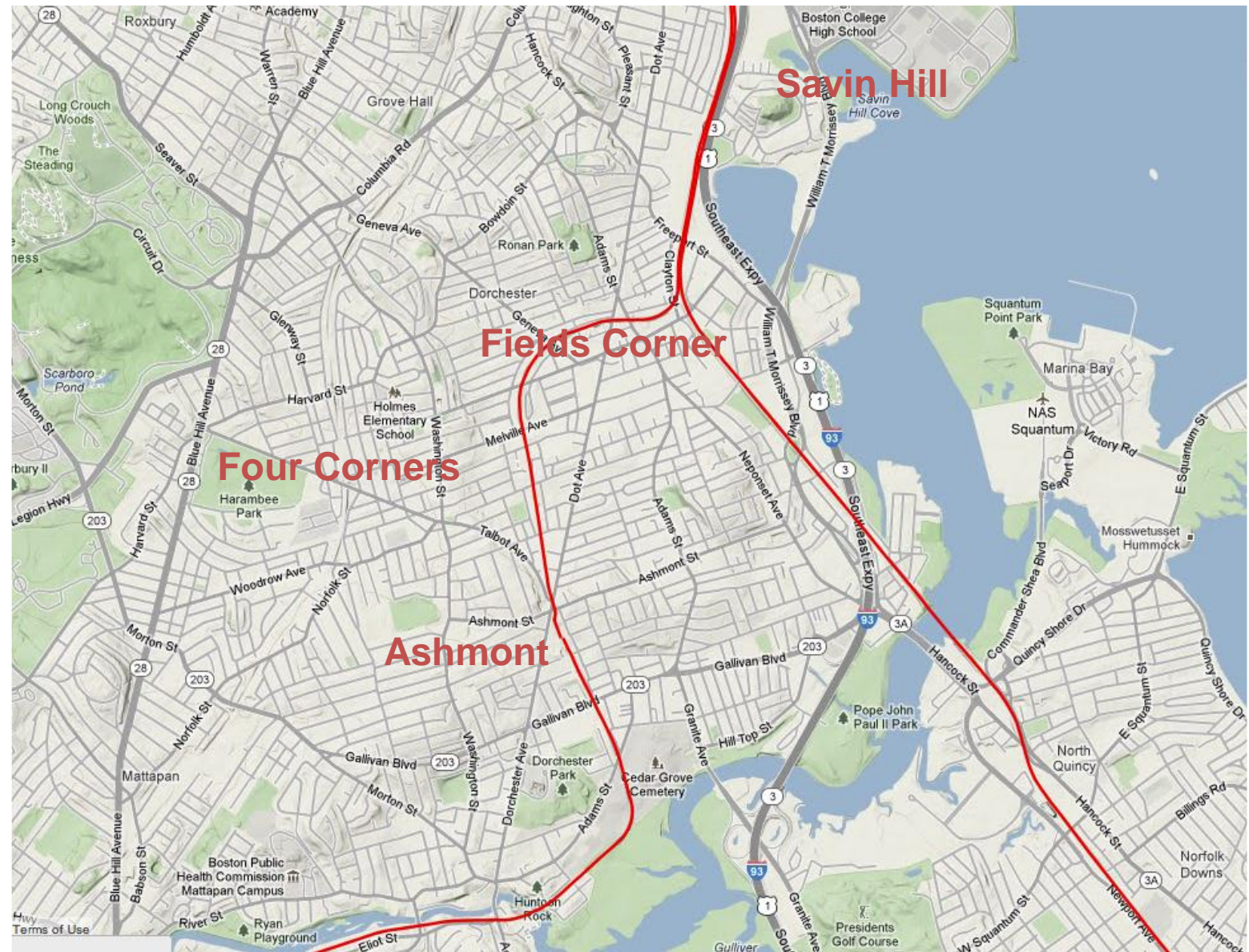


# Physical Boundaries





# Subway Boundaries

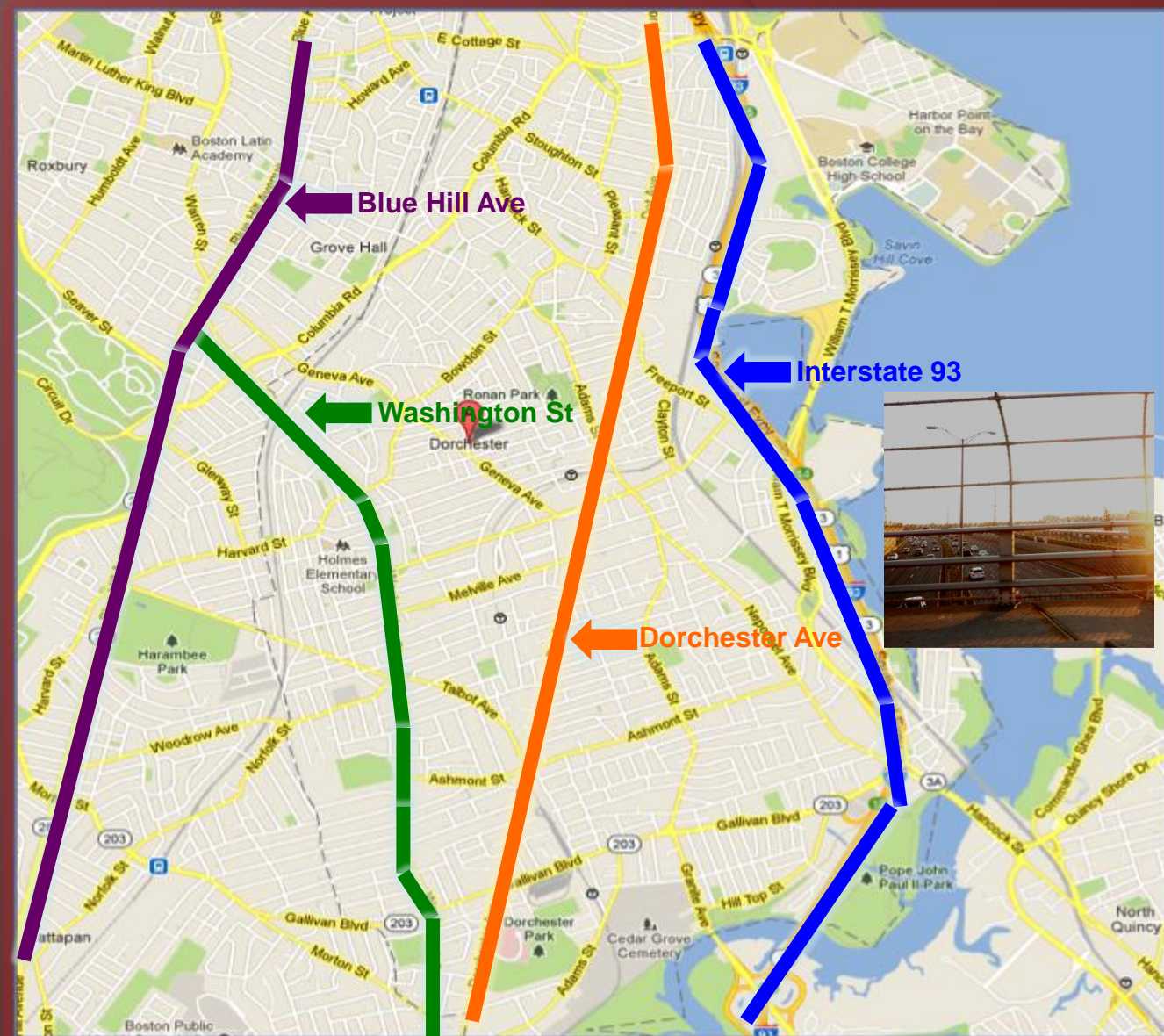


MBTA Red Line in Dorchester



# Road Boundaries

- Interstate 93
  - Connects Quincy (borders Dorchester to the south) to downtown Boston
  - Separates Savin Hill from rest of Dorchester
- Dorchester Avenue
  - Stretches from South Boston to Lower Mills
  - Cut in half by Red Line tracks
- Washington Street
  - Used to be the “invisible line” in the 1960s/1970s for separating blacks and whites
- Blue Hill Avenue
  - Separates Roxbury from Dorchester



\*Google Maps Shot of Dorchester with Road Labels;  
photo taken by Peter Barfield on 11/11/12



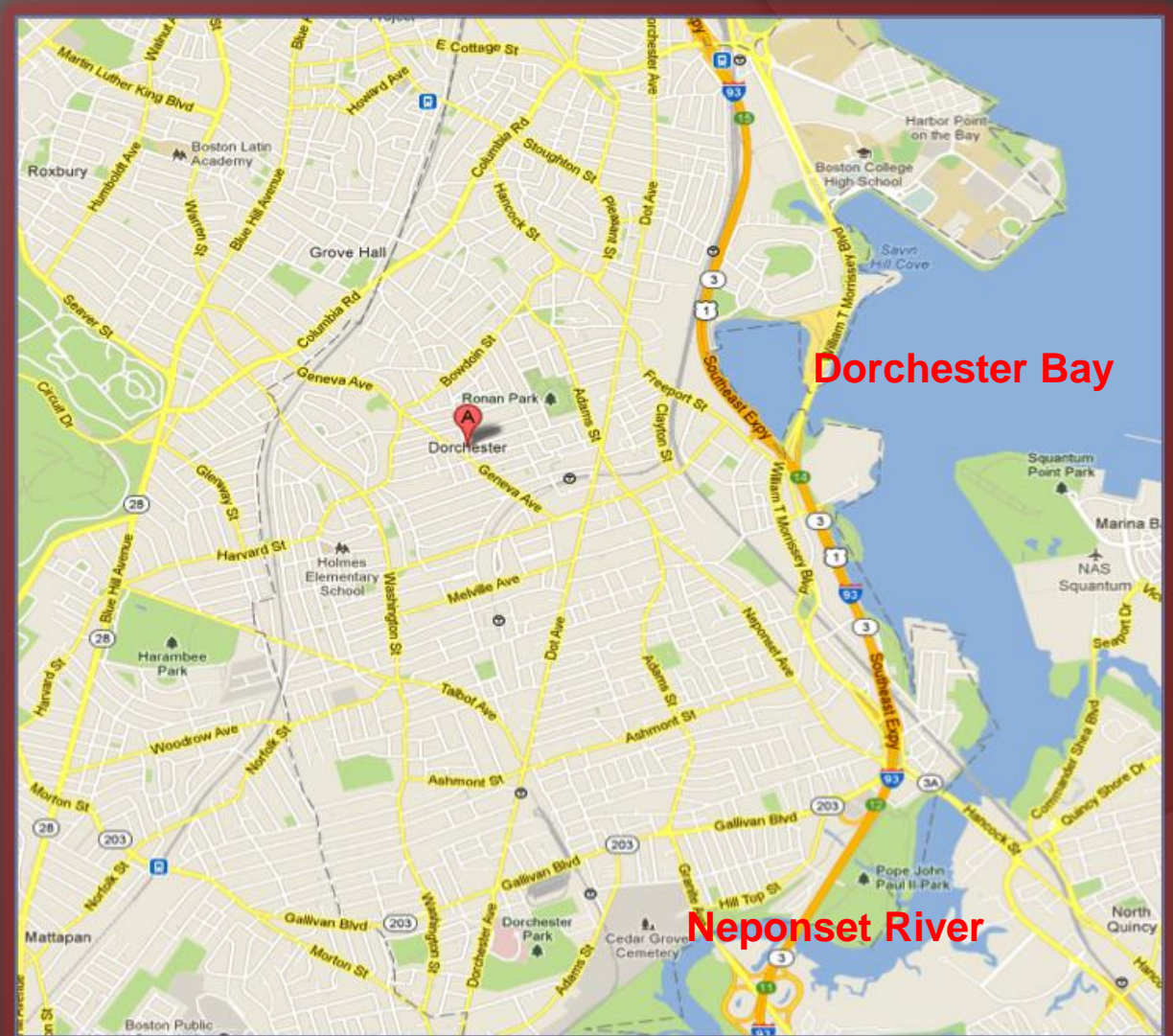
# Water Boundaries

## Dorchester Bay

- Provides eastern border for Dorchester
- Savin Hill is main area that has public beach access

## Neponset River

- Boundary between Dorchester and Quincy/Milton



Google Maps Shot of Dorchester with Waterway Labels

# Surrounding Area Boundaries

## Milton

- Separated by Neponset River
- Connected via MBTA Mattapan Express
- Higher-end families; more white

## Quincy

- Separated by Neponset River
- Connected via MBTA Red Line

## Mattapan

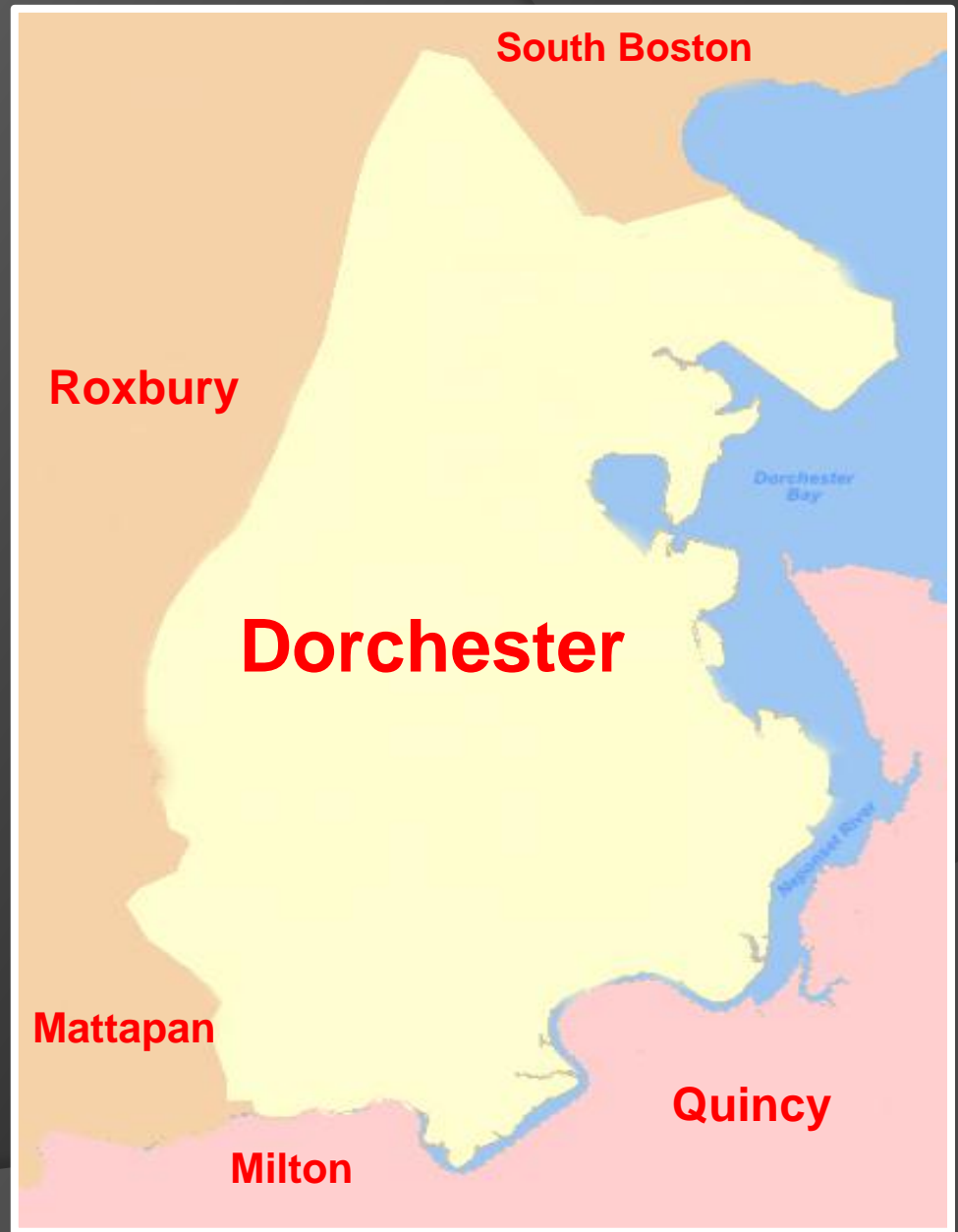
- Connected via MBTA Mattapan Express

## Roxbury

- Blacks and Africans are prevalent

## South Boston

- Connected via Interstate 93
- Boundary between Dorchester and downtown Boston



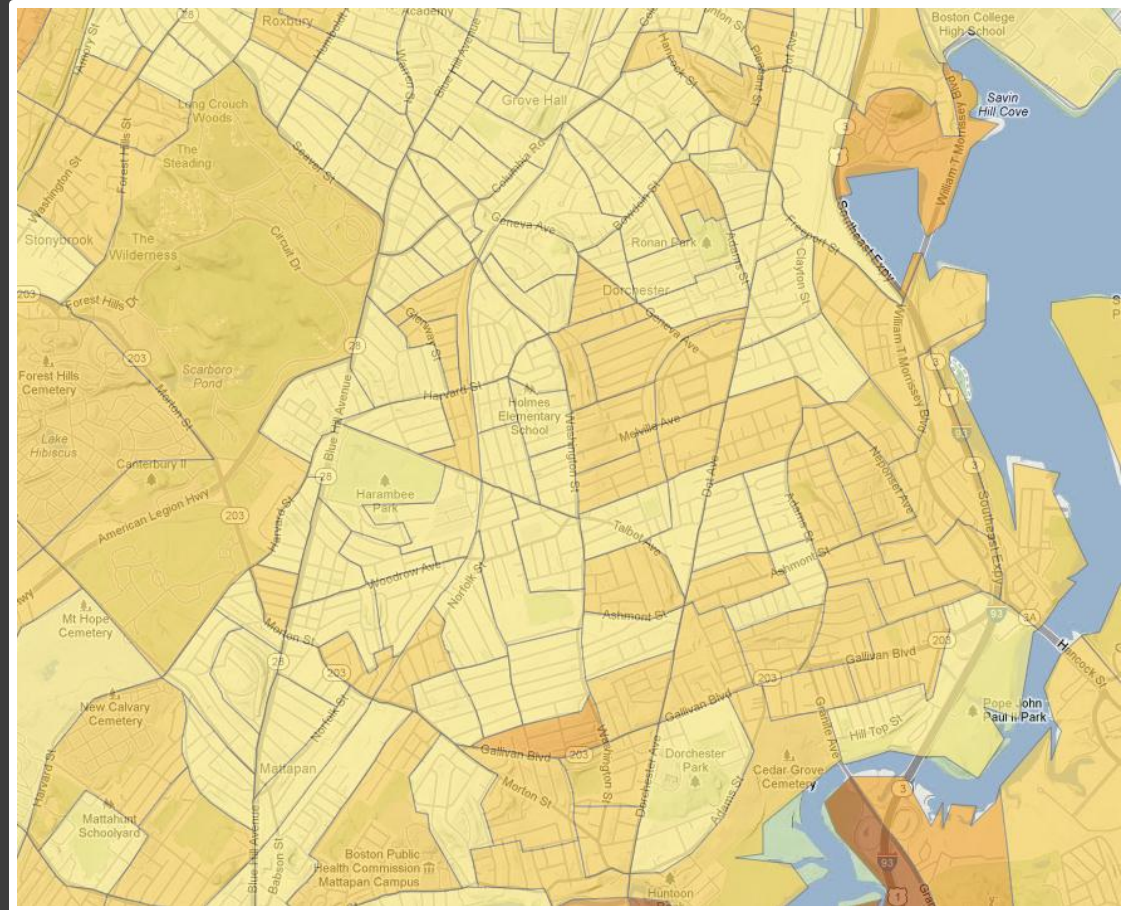
# Economic Profile





# Standard of Living

- Median household income \$37,890
- Owner 33.7%
- Renter 66.3%
- Poverty rate 19.05%

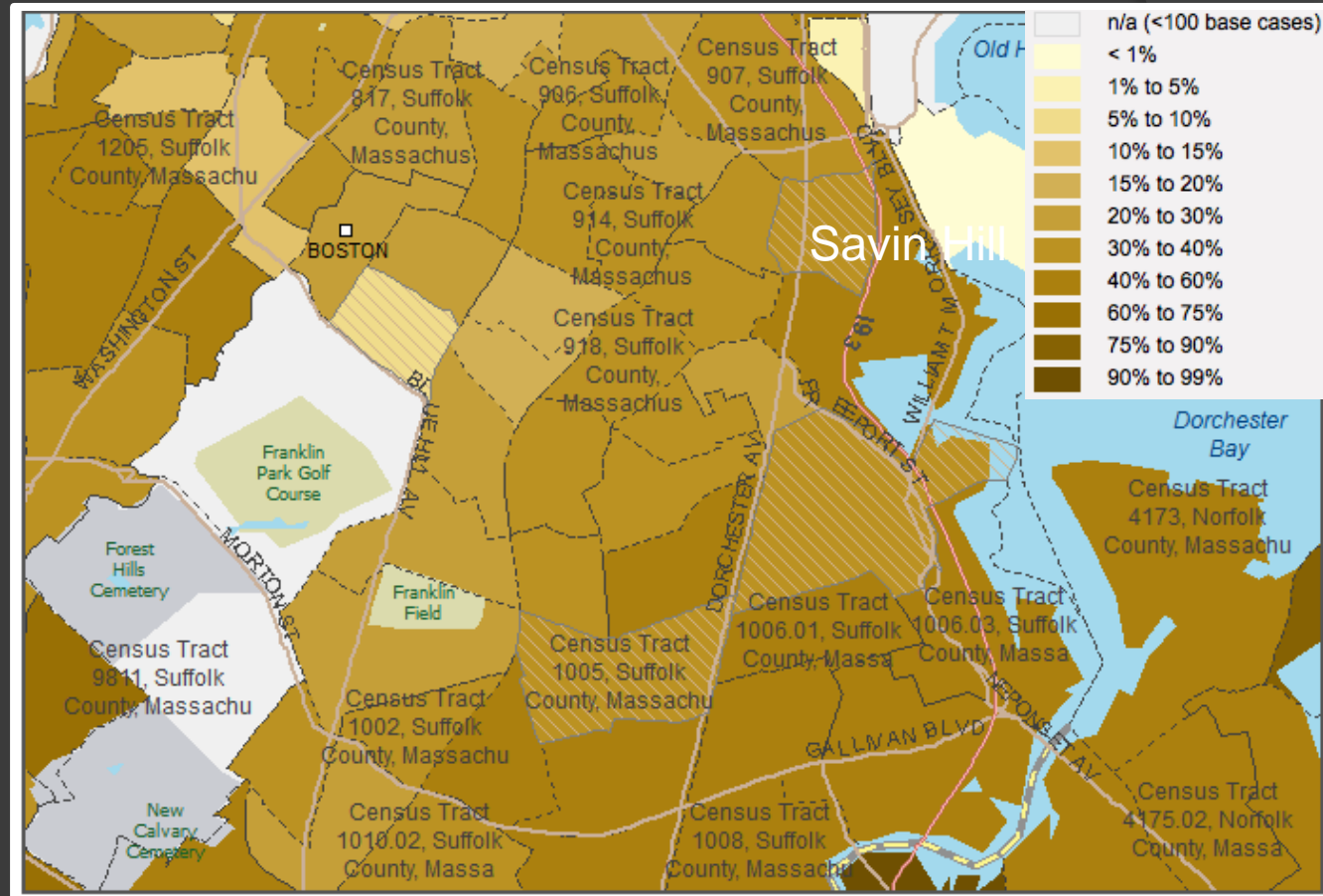


Median income of Dorchester population (darker=higher income)

# Economic Boundary: Home Ownership

- Owner 33.7%
- Renter 66.3%
- More ownership in the east in Savin Hill
- Northwest:** Multi-family, apartments, public housing, industrial parks
- Southeast:** Residential, single-family home neighborhood

Percent Owner Occupied Housing



"Percent Owner Occupied Housing, 2010." Map. Social Explorer. Social Explorer. Web. Nov 18 2012. (based on data from U.S. Census Bureau)

# Economic Profile

- Types of businesses and employment
  - Predominantly ethnic family owned businesses
  - Commercial areas in Harbor Point
  - Commercial districts: Bowdoin, Fields Corner, Codman Square, Peabody Square, Adams Village and Lower Hills

## Industry for the Civilian Employed Population

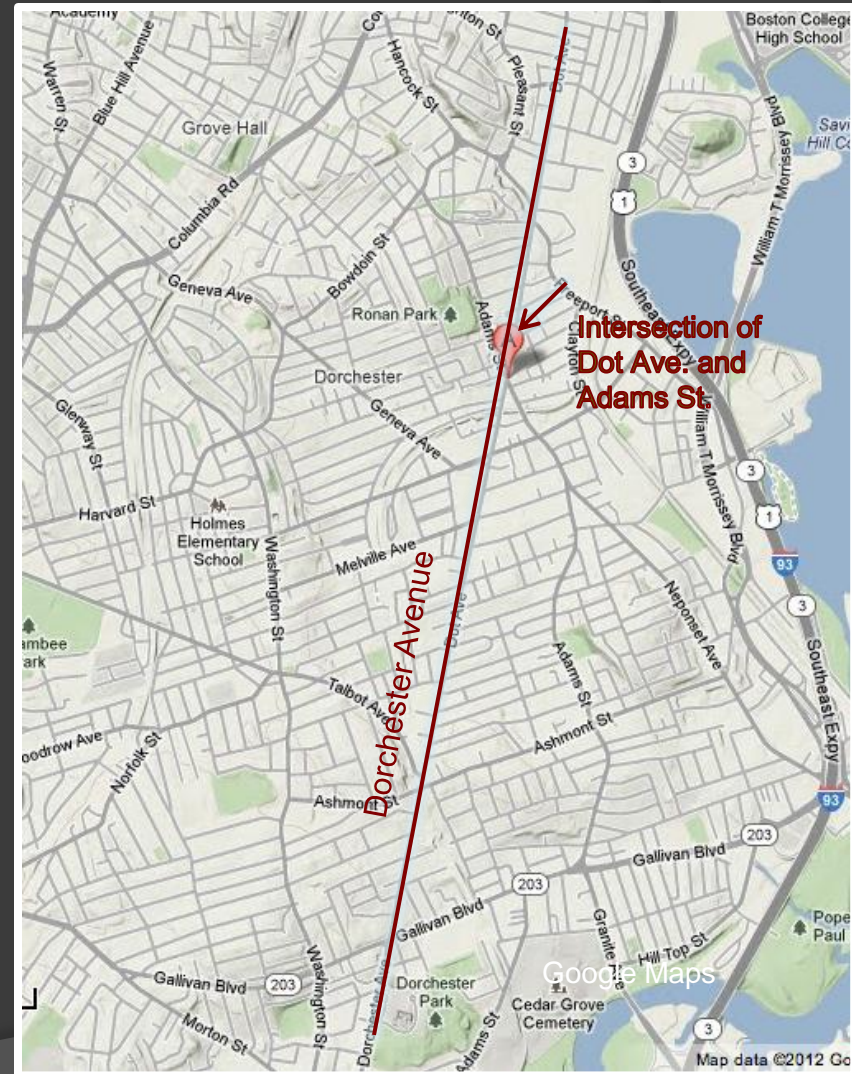
Industry for the Civilian Employed Population 16 Years and Over	Estimate	%
Total:	51,656	100.0%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	148	0.3%
Construction	2,361	4.6%
Manufacturing	2,803	5.4%
Wholesale trade	710	1.4%
Retail trade	5,437	10.5%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	2,361	4.6%
Information	861	1.7%
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	4,072	7.9%
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5,909	11.4%
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	15,441	29.9%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	5,014	9.7%
Other services, except public administration	3,358	6.5%
Public administration	3,181	6.2%

2005-2009 American Community Survey, Published June 2011



# Business Boundary

- Main business districts at the intersection of Dorchester Avenue (“Dot Ave”) and Adams Street
  - Dot Ave is a major business spine that divides west and east
    - Inexpensive variety stores, fast food chains in the west
    - Higher end restaurants, cafes, and commercial properties in the eastern, more suburban areas like Savin Hill
- Dorchester’s immigrant population has a significant economic impact on the local community
  - Family-owned businesses



# Business Boundary (cont.)

- Family owned businesses
  - Fields Corner, Savin Hill: Vietnamese, Irish respectively
  - Uphams Corner: Cape Verdean
  - South West: Caribbean (Haiti, Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Tobago)



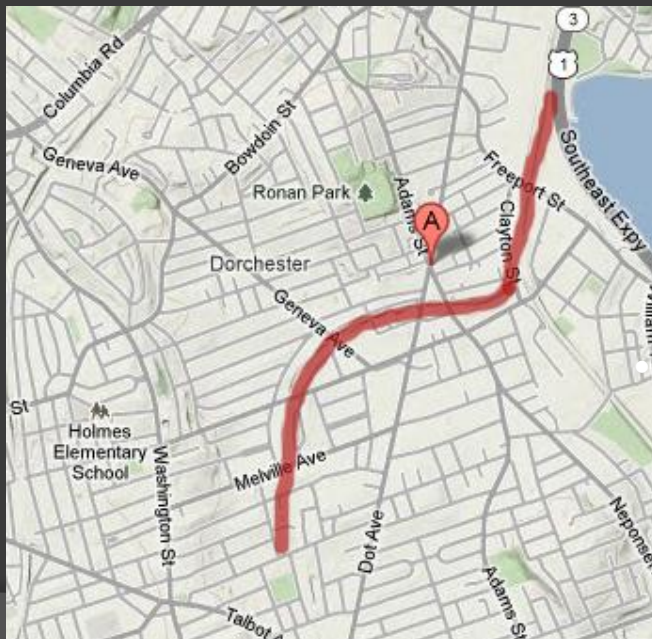
Beauty Supply in Uphams Corner



Jamaican Restaurant in Four Corners



Vietnamese Restaurant in Fields Corner



Google Maps

One clear boundary was the red MBTA line (shown on the left) which divides the Vietnamese businesses from more commercial franchise (i.e. fast food chains, H&R Block) below

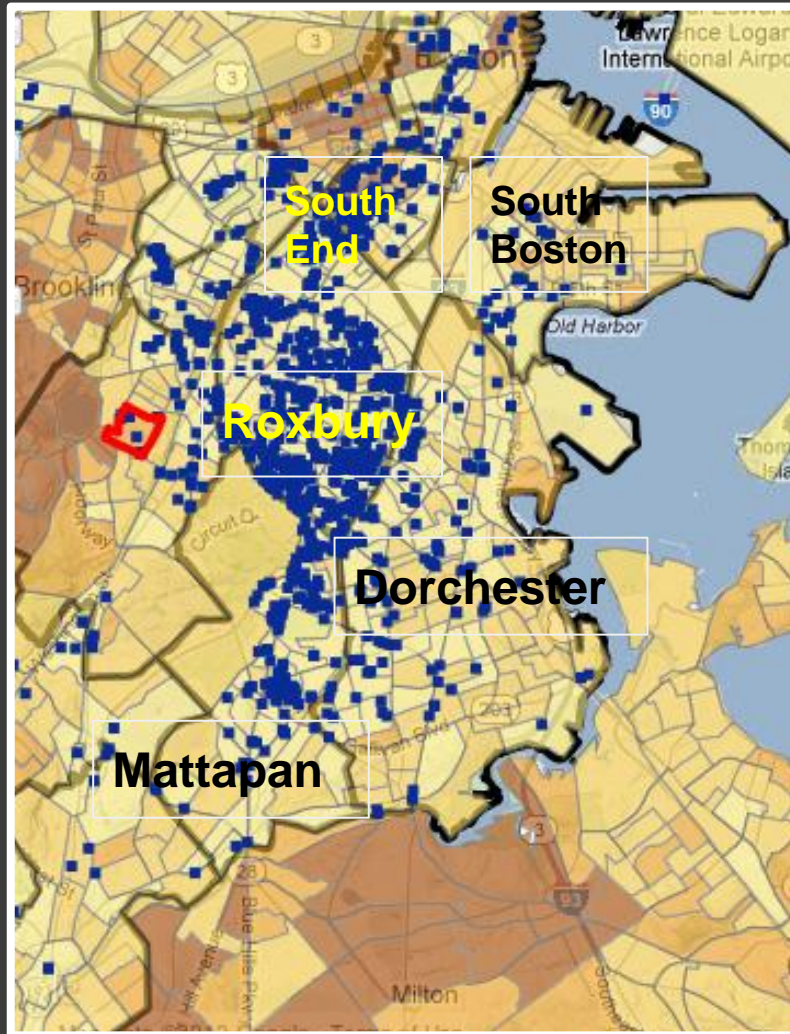
\*photos taken by Jack Smith on 11/11/12

# Income Distribution Boundaries

A dark, semi-transparent circular graphic is centered on the page. It contains text that appears to be from a stone or metal sign in Dorchester, Boston. The text inside the circle includes "DORCHESTER", "CITY OF BOSTON", and "MAYOR THOMAS M. MENINO". The background of the slide is a grayscale photograph of a park-like area with trees and a path.

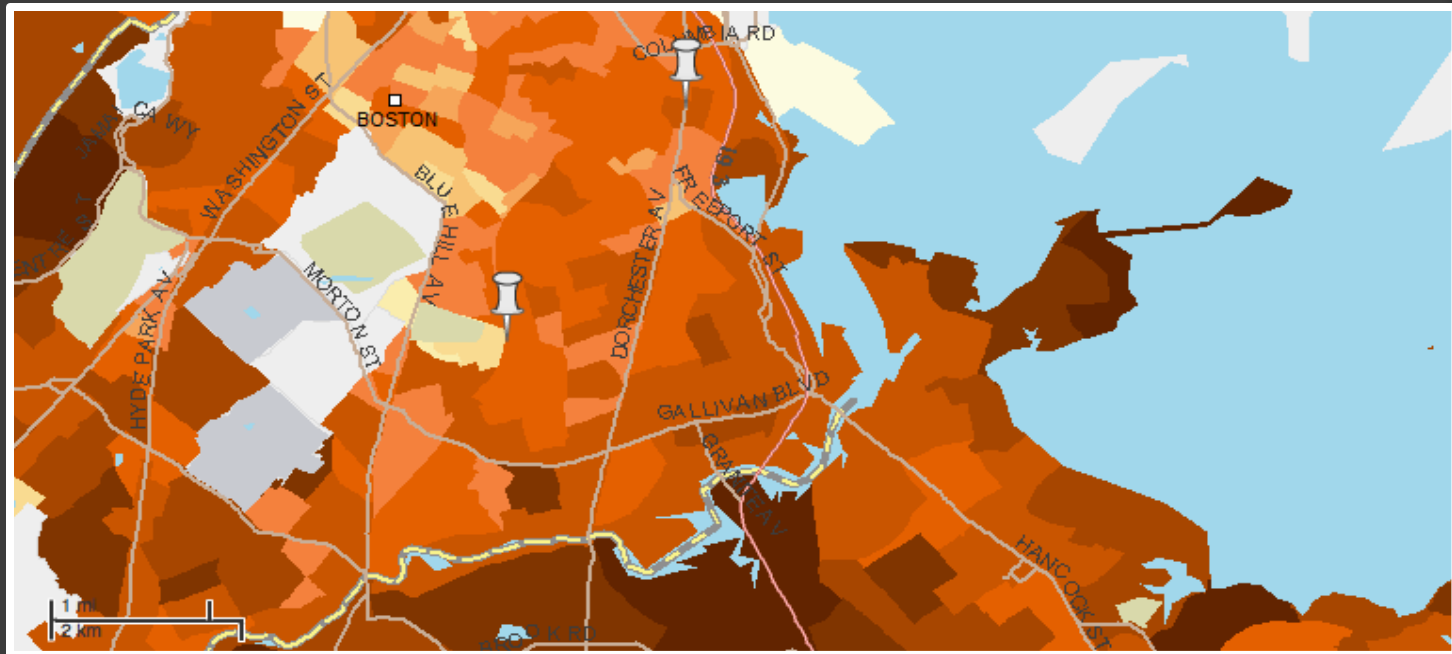


# Income and Subsidized Housing



- Darker Shading on this map represents higher median income
- Dorchester is fairly uniform in terms of SES, but subsidized housing units (blue dots) are concentrated in the western half
- Neighborhoods with demographic similarities:
  - Roxbury
  - South End
- With differences:
  - South Boston
  - Mattapan

# Owner- vs. Renter-Occupied Housing



- Darker areas on this map represent areas with higher concentrations of owner-occupied housing
- Unsurprisingly, Dorchester's highest rates of homeownership are in areas with the highest SES
- Rates are particularly high in the Savin Hill Park/Over-the-bridge area (across I-93)

# Spotlight on Sub-Neighborhoods

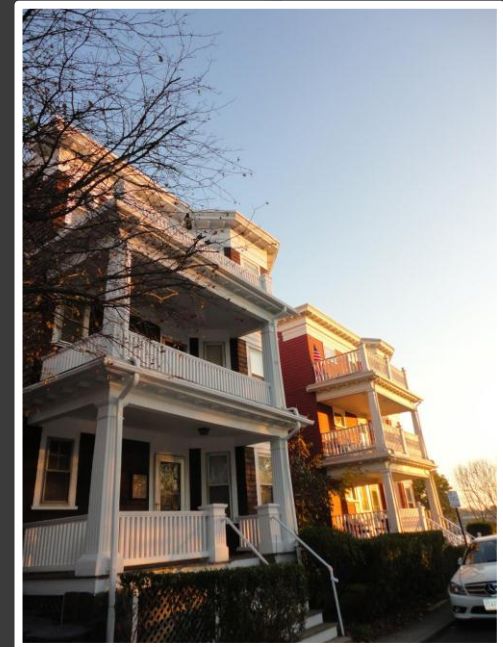
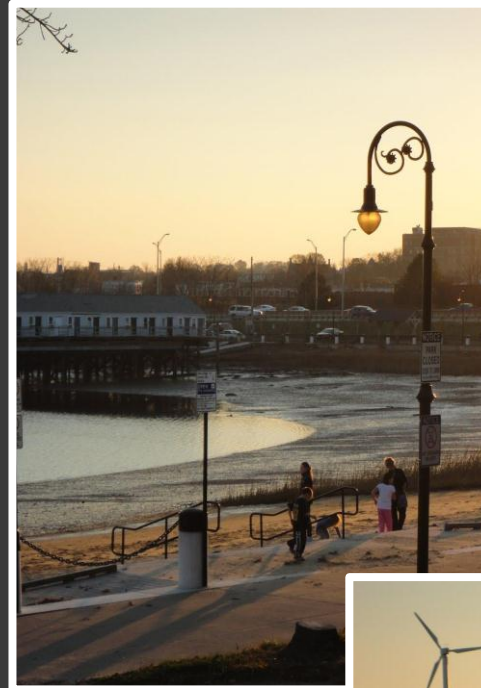
## Savin Hill

### *Overall*

- Median Income: \$45,000 to 50,000
- However, this is likely higher in the Over-the-Bridge area that juts out into the sea
- Highly Vietnamese and white

### *Observations in Over-the-Bridge:*

- Looks much more like traditional conception of 'Boston'
- Residents even differed in body type from those in other sub-neighborhoods
- Greenspaces reminiscent of the Emerald Necklace; joggers
- Pristine white sail boats, glittering water
- Far fewer people of color than Fields Corner and other parts of Dorchester visited

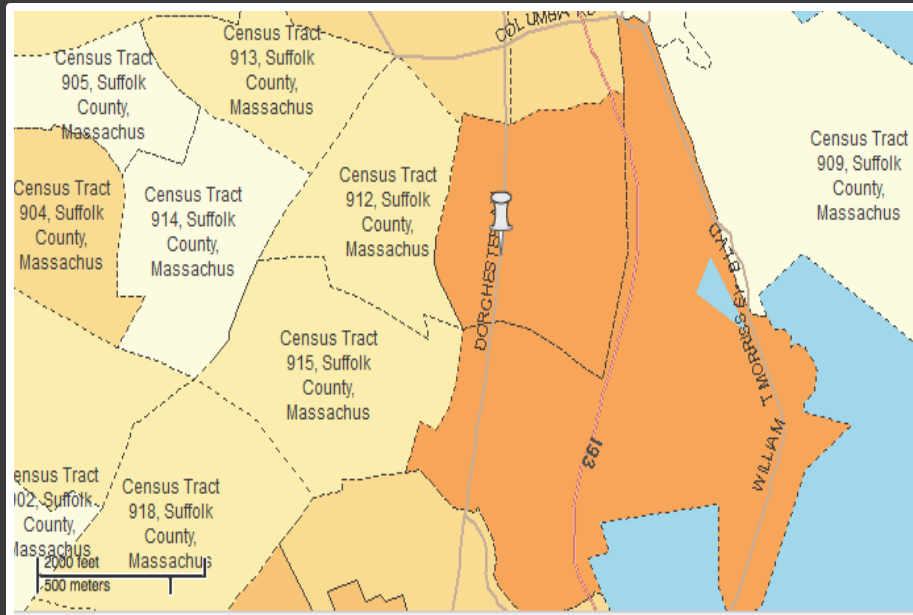




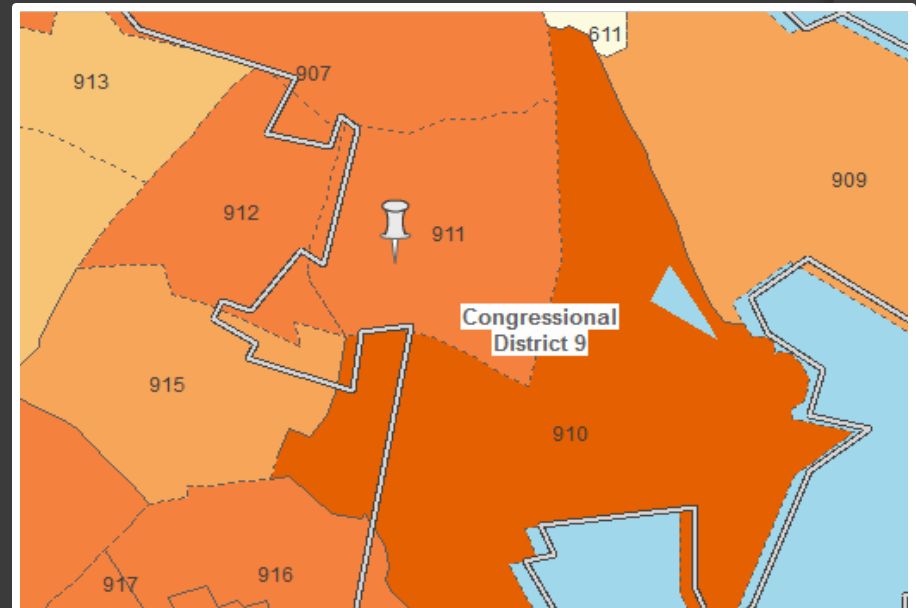
# Gentrification in Savin Hill

Income Levels (in 2000 dollars)

1980



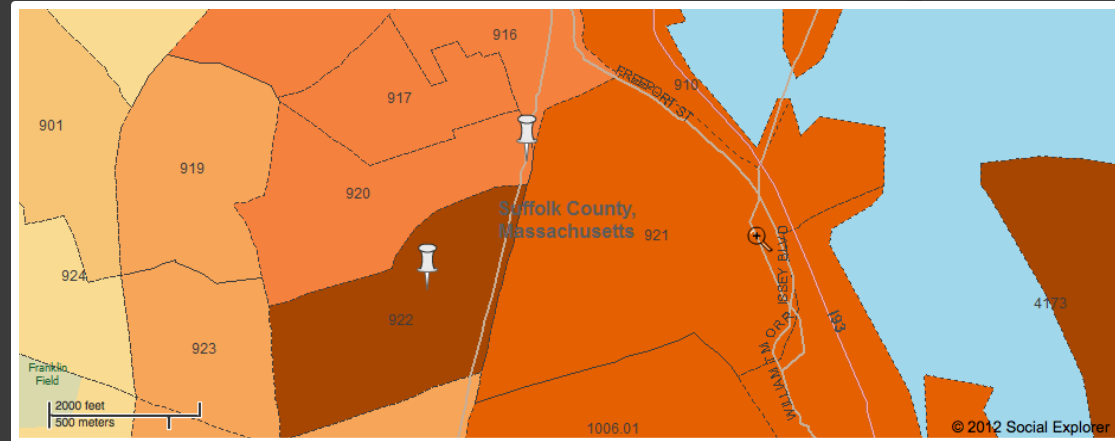
2000



# Spotlight on Sub-Neighborhoods

## Fields Corner

- Surprising amount of SES diversity--around 3 income zones
- Falls along specific boundary, Dorchester Avenue
- Southwest side: \$75k-\$100k
- East side: \$40k-\$45k
- Northwest side: \$35k-\$40k



\*Photos from Google Maps StreetView

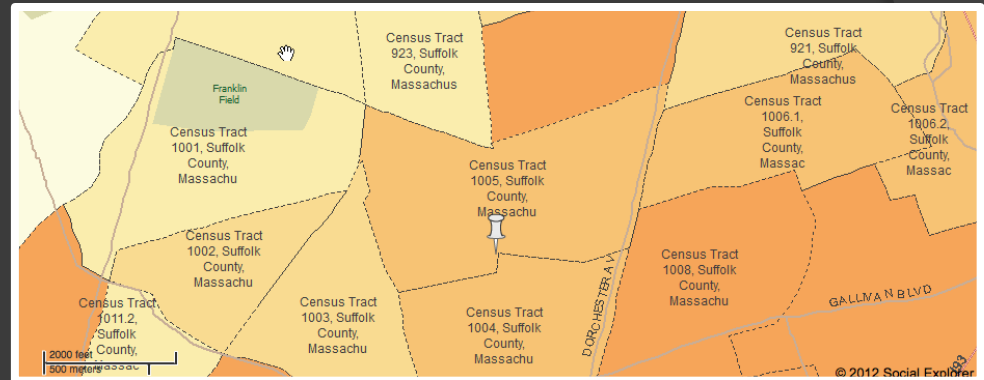
# Spotlight on Sub-Neighborhoods

## Ashmont

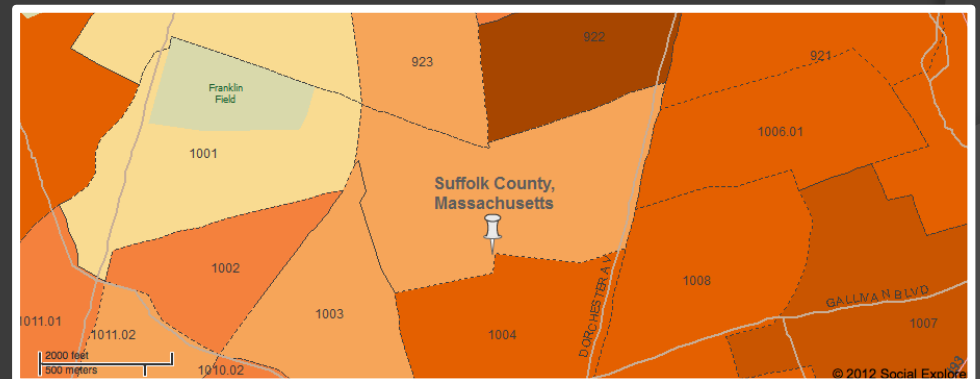
### *Interviewee Responses:*

- "Houses going like wildfire, prices have really gone up"
- Predominantly white neighborhood
- Quiet
- Convenient T-Stop
- "Don't often talk to neighbors"
- Residents mostly professionals-- mentions being a psychiatric nurse, neighbor is a Harvard professor

1980



2000



\*Maps are from Social Explorer;  
Interviews conducted on 11/11/12 by Esther Moon and Nima Hassan

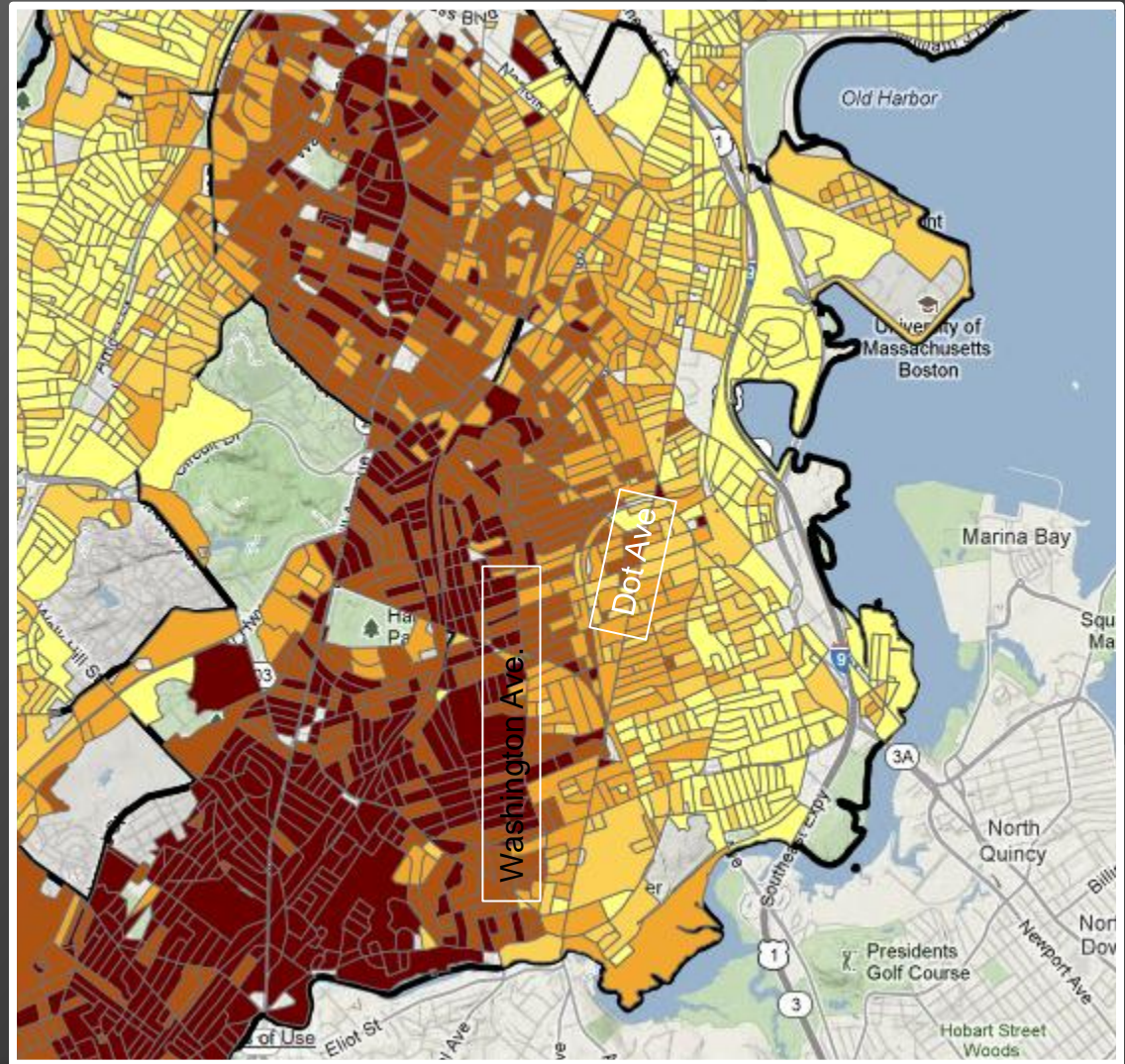


# Racial Boundaries



# Black Population

- Darker reddish/brown areas represent higher concentrations of the Black population
- Note that the black population is concentrated towards the west of Dorchester.
- Washington Avenue forms a clear physical boundary to the West of which there is a dense black population.



\*Maps from the Boston Research Map project of WorldMap

# Closer look at the distribution of black population

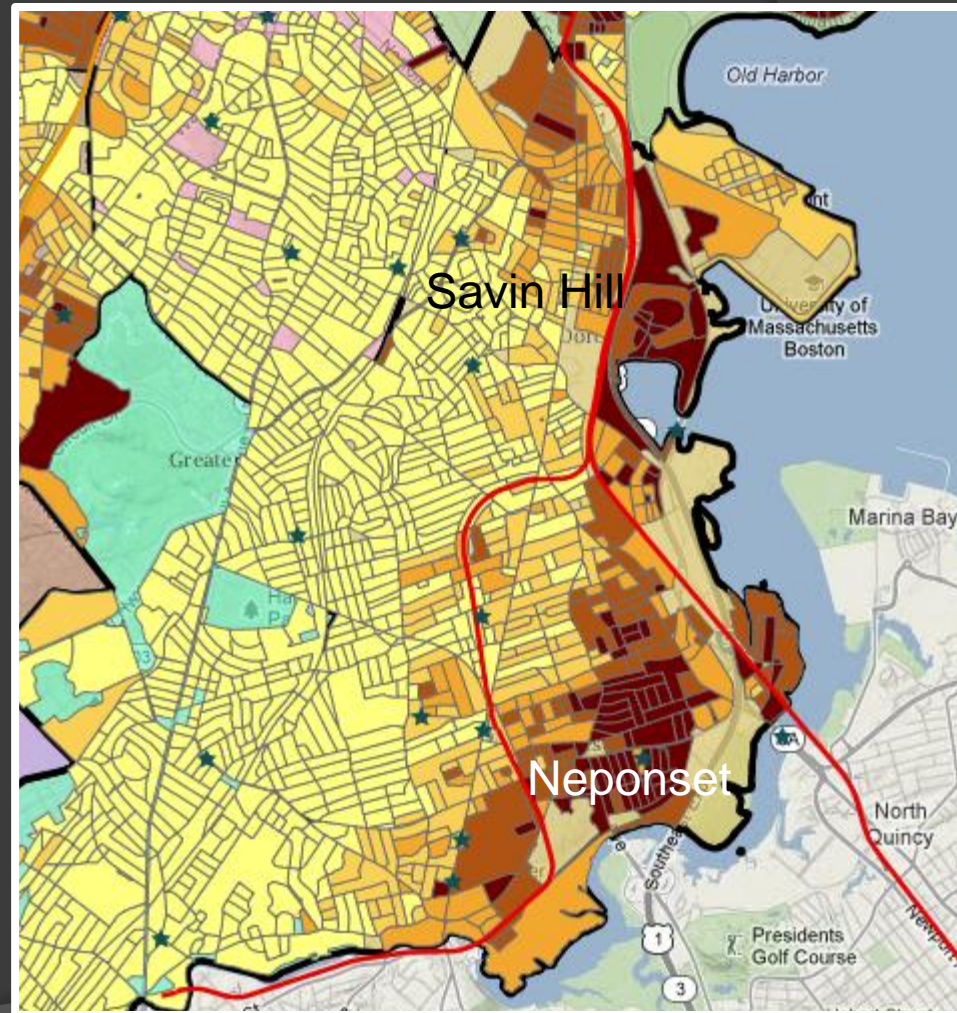


The thin red lines show evacuation routes. An evacuation route runs along Washington Ave., and another runs along Blue Hill Ave. Black population is most heavily concentrated between these two routes/ streets.



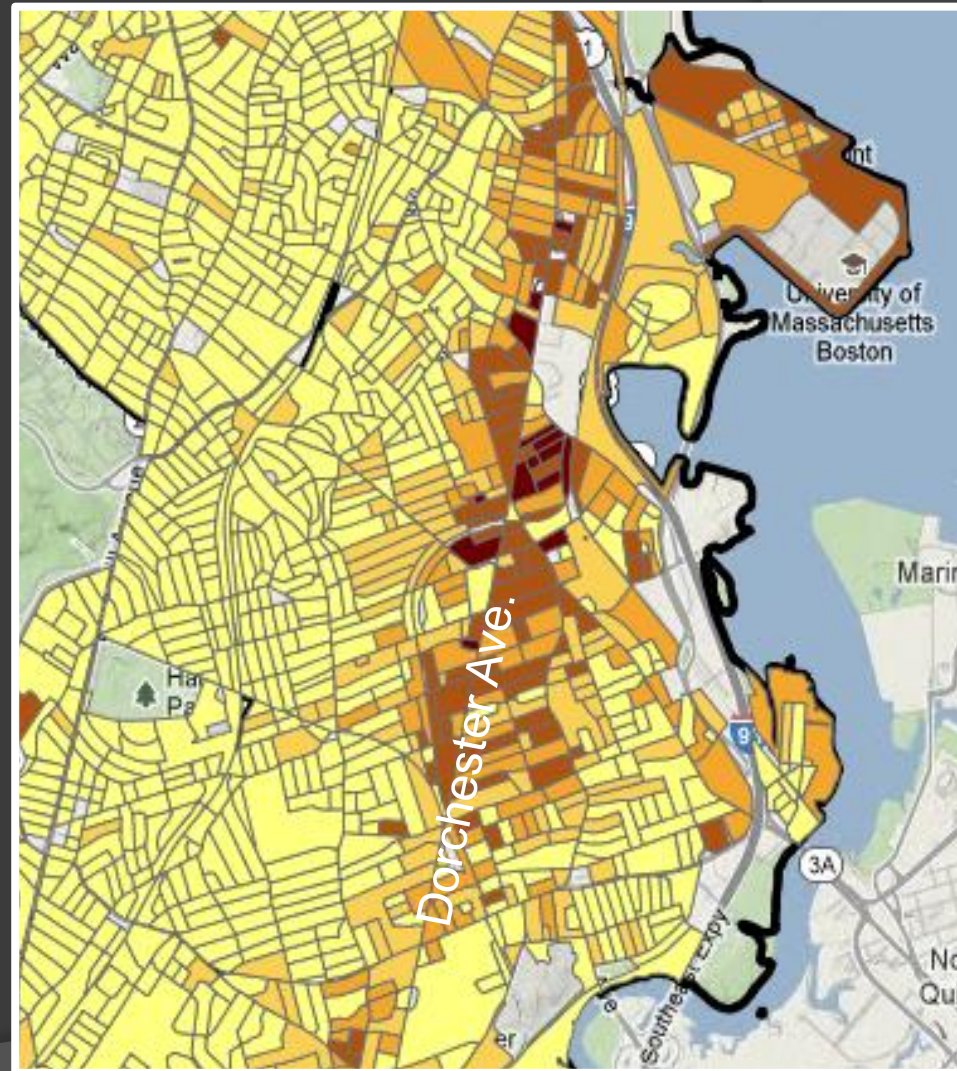
# White Population

- Here, the darker colors represent areas with higher concentrations of Whites.
- Note that the white population is concentrated towards the East of Dorchester.
- The MBTA track (marked in red) forms a clear physical boundary in the Savil Hill area (top right of map). There is high conc. of white population to the East of the track.
- There is a high concentration of whites in the south east of Dorchester in the sub-neighborhood Neponset.



# Asian Population

- Darker Colors now represent areas of high Asian concentration.
- Note that the Asian population is concentrated around Dorchester Avenue. The avenue does not form a boundary for the Asian population because there is substantial Asian concentration on both sides, but the population is tightly concentrated to within two census tracts of either side of it. Additionally, while the avenue is not a boundary for Asians, it does act a boundary between primarily Black areas and primarily White areas.

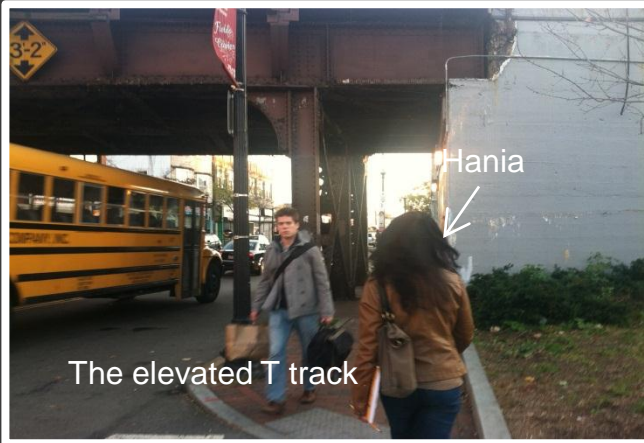




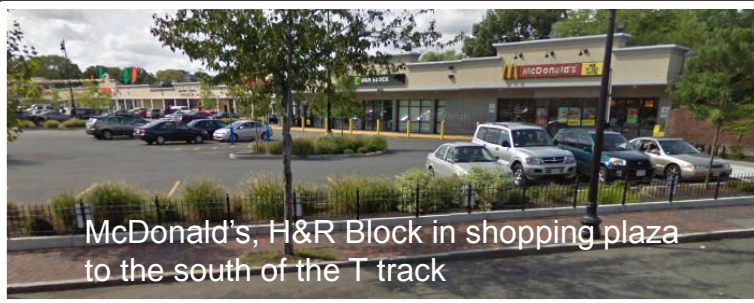
# Closer look at Asian pop.



Some of the many ubiquitous Vietnamese businesses north of the T track



The elevated T track



McDonald's, H&R Block in shopping plaza to the south of the T track



On closer look we see that the MBTA tracks form a physical boundary here. Asian population is concentrated primarily to the North of the track. Our observations confirmed this, as the propensity of Asian businesses declined sharply after crossing this line heading South.

\*top two photos taken by Jack Smith on 11/11/12

\*bottom photo from Google Maps StreetView

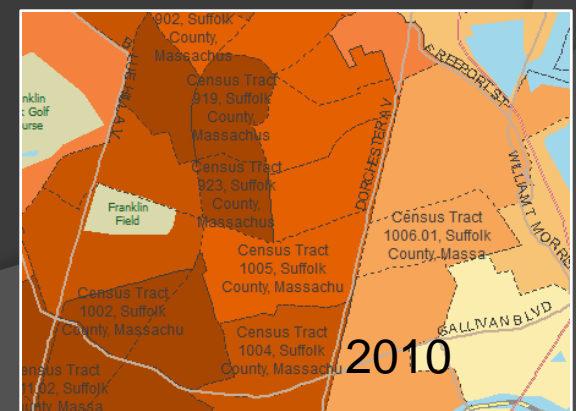
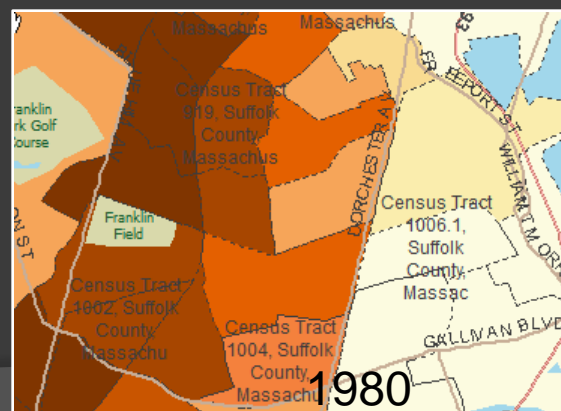
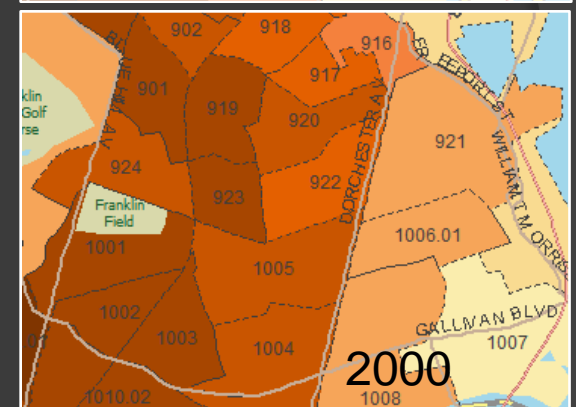
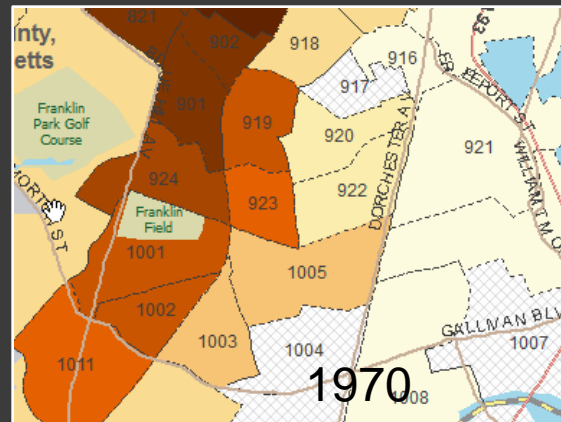
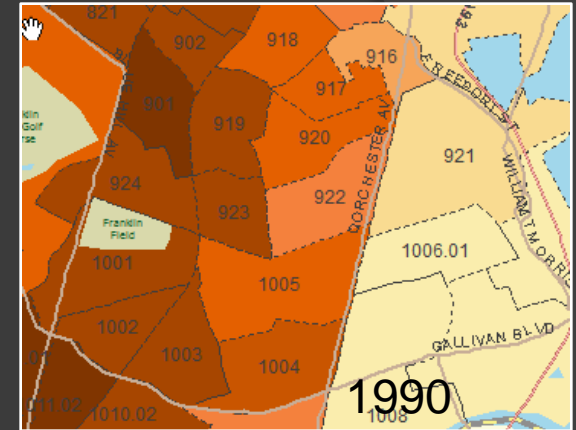
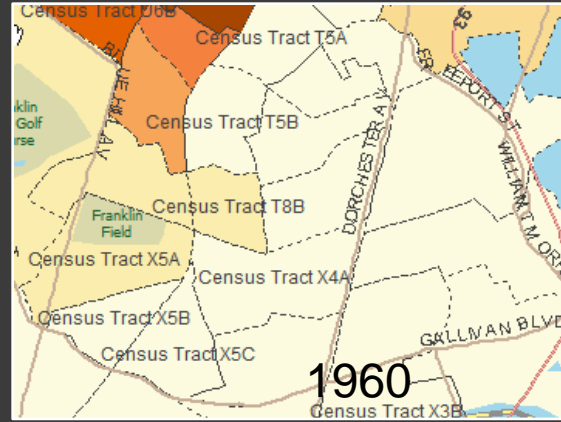


# Racial Boundaries' Change Over Time

- Using Social Explorer, we can clearly see the Eastward expansion of the Black population over time. This reflects the oft-noted phenomenon of “White flight”, in which Whites left the city for the suburbs in large numbers from the 60s-90s.

- Darker areas indicate a higher concentration of Black population.

- The boundary dividing the Black and White populations shifts Eastward from Washington Ave. in the 60's all the way to Dot Ave and beyond today.



# Racial vs. SES Boundaries

In discussing cleavages within Dorchester, those interviewed tended to be more comfortable discussing the former, frequently using the language of diversity rather than exclusion.

Most residents were not explicit about socio-economic variation within the neighborhood, although describing the occupation (and to some extent, the race) of neighbors served as a proxy

Out of those interviewed, only the upwardly mobile-middle class Caribbean interviewee was comfortable discussing the class characteristics of her neighborhood, as opposed to her low SES Caribbean or white middle class counterparts

Reluctance to talk about class, in comparison to race, reveals the importance Americans place on the latter as a category to describe the social world

# Demography vs. Ethnography

*While in many circumstances, our observations and interviews confirmed the patterns generated with large-scale demographic data, the exercise drove home how different research methods shed light on different aspects of sociological reality.*

- Demographic information was invaluable for:
  - Determining the distribution of people/characteristics across large areas/a population
- Ethnographic data was ideal for:
  - Investigating some aspects of sociological reality

*The experience demonstrated that how people **interpret** their world is as important as—and can be vastly different from—that world's objective or factual nature.*

- Example:
  - Demographic data revealed SES cleavages.
  - Interviews revealed that such boundaries were downplayed and viewed as less salient than the racial ones.
  - Such beliefs about one's community and the boundaries between groups directly relates to competition for resources (e.g. politics)

*Given how much interpretations of the world drive human action, it is a worthy topic of sociological study—one ethnography is uniquely suited to exploring.*



# Conclusion

- The racial boundaries and socio-economic boundaries can be described using physical boundaries (major streets, the Red line of the T, highways, and bodies of water).
- Dorchester Ave. is the most visible boundary both in terms of economic division and racial division, although this line was once farther west along Washington Ave.
- *Over time*, Dorchester has become both more diverse and more segregated. As the makeup of the immigrant population changes, new neighborhoods form their own boundaries to reflect the inwardly-focused immigrant communities.

# Work Cited

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