Would you think twice about renting on the 13th floor?

For high rises in the United States, skipping the number 13 was once a standard convention. Many taller structures referred to their 13th floor as 14 and renumbered the rest of the building accordingly. However, the unlucky number appears to be losing its infamy. Most of Boston’s 20 tallest buildings do not bother skipping the 13th floor, according to a

Continued on Page 2

Boston’s largest medical research district may eventually stretch to Kenmore Square. As hospitals jockey for space inside the Longwood Medical Area (LMA), some researchers and developers are looking beyond the neighborhood’s borders. Buildings are changing hands and new lab campuses are in the works, turning the streets near Fenway Park into the medical industry’s next frontier.

One real estate investor placed two large bets on the fringes of the LMA this year. California-based firm IQHQ is underwriting the long-delayed Fenway Center project, which would place a lab complex above the Mass Pike, and it plans to buy a nearby medical building on Brookline Avenue. The

Continued on Page 2

Less than ten percent of affordable housing units created in Boston last year were in the downtown neighborhoods, city data shows.

The Walsh administration released numbers last week meant to tout its success in creating affordable housing throughout Boston in 2019. Indeed, more than a quarter of new housing units permitted last year will only be made available to residents earning below certain income thresholds. The bump in income restricted housing comes largely as a result of the city’s Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP), which mandates that developers of large

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The Boston Police Department (BPD) has a new liaison to the Back Bay, South End and Fenway. Sergeant Paul DeLeo now leads the Community Service Office (CSO) for D4, a police precinct covering a wide swath of the downtown neighborhoods. He started in the role last Monday, after Sergeant James Freeman left the neighborhood to supervise a unit in East Boston.

DeLeo is a 15-year veteran with the department, working in precincts from Brighton to Roslindale. After becoming a sergeant in 2017, he worked as a D4 patrol supervisor before this latest assignment.

A team of six CSO officers will report to DeLeo. He said he is looking forward to working with this team, and with neighborhood residents and businesses, to solve quality of life issues across the district.

“I genuinely like helping people,” he said. “It’s going to be interesting not being tied to the radio.”
companies claims it is not currently planning to redevelop the site, but it is optimistic about the neighborhood’s potential.

“It has great tenants and it is an appealing location that is accessible by public transportation, and in a neighborhood with a history of full occupancy and a bright future,” IQHQ President Tracy A. Murphy said in a statement through a spokesperson.

“He has some of the world’s best scientists who are right there,” explained Argys, who also serves as Children’s Hospital’s chief administrative officer. “As people look to expand and create more wet lab space, it’s no surprise to me that there are folks interested in providing space.”

The LMA’s hospitals are not the only drivers of lab demand, though. Researchers are also drawn to the Fenway because of its transit links and newly vibrant restaurant scene, making it a strong alternative to Kendall Square, explained Frank Nelson, executive managing director of real estate firm Newmark Knight Frank. IQHQ’s moves in the neighborhood affirm this nascent popularity, Nelson added.

As a result, some researchers may move to bordering areas along Brookline Avenue, Argys said. He believes investors like IQHQ are attracted to the edges of the LMA because of that unending demand.

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“A new commercial real estate project in Kendall Square, which is right on the border of the LMA, is the site of a new IQHQ lab,” Argys said. “It’s a great example of how the Fenway has become a hotbed for innovation.”

The area’s institutions haul in billions of dollars in federal research grants, driving an insatiable need for new labs. But the LMA is already so densely packed that expansion is a pricey and sometimes impossible proposition, explained Dick Argys, the chair of LMA cooperative group MASCO.

Affordable Housing

Continued from Page 1

residential projects also create a certain number of affordable units.

Yet an analysis of the city’s data shows that precious few of those income restricted residences are being built in the Downtown neighborhoods. Of the 830 affordable units permitted in Boston last year, only 64 were in the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown or Fenway. That’s less than 9%, despite those neighborhoods hosting nearly 23% of the city’s new residential development.

This geographical disparity reflects a choice by developers of condo and apartment complexes in the Downtown neighborhoods to build the affordable units mandated by IDP elsewhere in the city. IDP gives developers the option of including income restricted units in their building, or paying to build a greater number of offsite units.

But, while developers and city officials argue that pushing IDP units offsite to less expensive areas is a more efficient way of creating affordable housing, there are concerns that the dearth of income restricted units in Boston’s wealthiest central areas will further entrench the geographical boundaries between Boston’s haves and have nots.

“Especially in Boston, a city with such a segregated housing history, it’s so important that we have mixed income housing across all neighborhoods,” said City Councilor Kenzie Bok, who prior to taking office served as a senior policy official at the Boston Housing Authority. “To me, that’s a very important policy goal, and why you’ll see me sticking in favor of on-site IDP.” Bok says that while offsite IDP has historically provided more bang for the buck, the changing economics of the construction industry in Boston have significantly closed that gap.

“That tradeoff is a lot less dramatic than it used to be,” she said. “Right now construction costs are so expensive across the board that it doesn’t always cost a ton less to build in the non-Downtown neighborhoods than in the Downtown neighborhoods.”

Ensuring that the Downtown neighborhoods are accessible to residents across a range of income levels requires more than just IDP, Bok says, citing a new state program that makes it easier for families to use housing vouchers in high income areas. On the city level, Bok says she is encouraged by recent creative efforts to leverage city owned parcels into the creation of affordable housing. She points to a proposed Chinatown tower on a former city parking lot that will include 171 income restricted units and a branch of the public library.

“IDP serves an important function, but we have to really ratchet up the tools that we have,” she said. “That the only way we’re going to tackle the problem at this scale and achieve the kind if integration necessary for the Downtown neighborhoods and the city as a whole to be a more vibrant and just community.”

13th Floor

Continued from Page 1

review by The Boston Guardian. Almost all of the city’s office skyscrapers bravely lease out space on floor number 13, and some newer residential high rises and hotels have also thrown away the practice.

Hotels may be the city’s last bastion of construction superstition. Spots like the Park Plaza Hotel, the Custom House Tower and the new Newbury Hotel still go directly from floors 12 to 14, a comfort to triskaidekaphobic guests. It is unclear whether these hotels also ban black cats, broken mirrors or towering ladders.

Prospective hotel guests rarely fret about floor 13, noted Suzanne Wenz, director of marketing for the Park Plaza Hotel and the Newbury. The practice probably endures in older hotels because of tradition, she said.

“It’s just traditionally been that way,” Wenz said. “I personally have not heard of anyone complaining about being on the 13th floor.”

On the residential side, most recent developments are fearless, offering 13th floor apartments and condos with apparent impunity. Still, a few new buildings remain holdouts. The Viridian in the Fenway skips the number, and the Millennium Tower downtown cautiously avoids both 13th and 44, an unlucky number in East and Southeast Asian cultures. The developers did not respond to requests for comment.

Local real estate brokers say 13 is rarely a dealbreaker for condo owners. Most clients do not worry about the number, and 13th floor condos are unfortunately not available at a discounted rate for daring buyers willing to try their luck. That being said, some condo owners are in favor of skipping floor 13 in order to accommodate the small percentage of people who hold this superstition thinking they may as well not miss the sale.

“If you don’t have to put it in, and you can take it out because it’s your choice, why even deal with it?” said residential broker Kevin Ahern. “It’s just a judicious thing to do.”

The practice appears to be waning. The Moby, a downtown hotel aimed at millennials, does not skip 13, even though its older corporate siblings like the Park Plaza still follow the longstanding tradition.

For hotels and residential buildings, this change may be driven partly by consumers. Superstition is not unheard of nowadays, but few people will go out of their way to avoid an unlucky number.

“I don’t know that people give it a lot of thought these days,” said Wenz.

Medical Research

Continued from Page 1

According to Institute of Medicine leaders, there is little need for new labs. But the LMA is still an appealing location to researchers, with apparent impunity.

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We’re scouring almost on a daily basis for what may become available.

If institutions and researchers are willing to extend their reach beyond the LMA, developers could follow. The newly renovations 401 Park already leases space to several medical institutions. Plus, the ambitious Fenway Center project is focusing on biolabs because the complex lies in the LMA’s shadow, propping up rents and helping to underwrite the cost of building atop the Mass Pike, according to developers.

Proximity to nearby teaching hospitals is key for researchers, LMA leaders note. And as demand for space continues to soar, the neighborhood could support a research boom just beyond its borders.

“The researchers want to be close to the hospitals. The physicians want to be close to the researchers,” Argys said. “People want to be close to the action and where their colleagues are.”

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James Livingstone’s Office Hours – Counselor at Employee Rights Group

Beacon Hill, 2/22, 10 am, Panificio, 144 Charles St.
Back Bay, 2/24, 5:30 pm, Thinking Cup, 85 Newbury St
West End, 2/27, 9 am, J. Pace, 7 Blossom Ct
The Boston Guardian

February 21, 2020 | 3

Downtown Boston

Four Legs Helping People With Two

By Dan Rabb

A Downtown doggy daycare is helping some of the city's most vulnerable residents get back on their feet.

With crystal chandeliers, air sweetened with aromatherapy and walls painted floor to ceiling with tranquil scenery, the Urban Hound on Boylston Street seems designed for Boston's most pampered pooches. But the upscale dog care center has a mission beyond giving Fido a five star place to romp. A joint venture with homeless social service organization St. Francis House, the heart of the Urban Hound is its Pet Care Academy, an intensive six month job training program for men and women experiencing homelessness.

The idea of Pet Care Academy grew from St. Francis House's redevelopment of the Boston Young Men's Christian Union building into affordable housing. The building had a single retail space, and St. Francis House CEO Karen LaFrazia hoped to bring in a business that could double as a job training program for her organization's clients while also filling a need in the increasingly residential Downtown neighborhood.

"We wanted to add some skill based training to our existing workforce programming," she said. "It's always been one of our strongest program areas, but we didn't do anything where we actually taught someone a marketable skill."

LaFrazia identified dog care as an ideal industry for the nascent social enterprise, with a variety of stable career paths and few educational requirements but specific skillsets that put experience at a premium for employers. And through a chance encounter she found a willing partner in Rebecca Wilson, owner of the Urban Hound dog care center in the South End.

The Urban Hound's Downtown location opened its doors in October, with the first cohort of Pet Care Academy "interns" starting in January. Interns, all currently staying at shelters, are selected after an extensive screening process.

A paid six month program, Pet Care Academy interns spend fifteen hours each week getting on the job experience and training at the Boylston Street daycare and the more full service Urban Hound location in the South End. Five hours each week are spent in lectures or career development training at St. Francis.

"They're touching all of my business lines: daycare, grooming, training, walking and eventually they'll get to the front of the house," said Wilson. "They're involved in every part of the business that we do."

While the Urban Hound and St. Francis have hired a full time employee to develop and manage the Pet Care Academy curriculum, most of the workplace training is carried out by the store's regular staff. And although stable employment remains the program's primary goal, both LaFrazia and Wilson say seeing these relationships grow has been one of the most rewarding aspects of the program so far. For the staff members, they're shedding preconceived notions about what it means to be homeless. For the interns, they're finding professional peers.

"Homelessness is an experience, it's not an identity; but when your day to day experience is surrounded by people who are struggling and without a permanent place to live, you do take on that identity," said LaFrazia. "For the interns, their peer group is now the employees of the Urban Hound, who they interact with as equals and mentors, and that's really helping folks see themselves in a different way."

New Lighting For Chin Park

By Dan Rabb

New lighting is coming to the Chinatown section of the Greenway, a project that park officials hope will both give the area a more dramatic nighttime presence and make the park safer for families after dark.

The Greenway Conservancy is in the final phases of a year long study of how to use lighting to address nighttime problems that have long plagued the southernmost edge of the park.

Stretching from Essex Street past the Chinatown Gate to Mary Soo Hoo Park, the narrow strip of the Greenway is largely unlit and abandoned after dark, causing visitors and residents to steer clear but attracting open drug use.

Now, a commercial design firm hired by the Conservancy has unveiled a series of dramatic lighting changes they say will allow the park to be a destination after dark. After collecting feedback on the design options from residents and neighborhood stakeholders over the next two months, park officials hope to finalize a plan that can be implemented by 2021.

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City Hall Renovation Community Meeting

Monday, March 9
6:00 PM
Boston City Hall, 3rd Floor Mezzanine
1 City Hall Square, Boston, MA 02201

Project Proponent:
The Boston Planning and Development Agency

Project Description:
The Boston Planning and Development Agency invites the surrounding community to hear updates regarding the City Hall Plaza Renovation and to discuss a Minor Modification to the Government Center Urban Renewal Plan Mass No. R-35 allowing for "community space" to be added as Land Use and Building Requirements for parcel 11.

mail to: Christopher Breen
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02011
phone: 617.918.4202
email: chris.breen@boston.gov

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Four Legs Helping People With Two
Hypocrisy at the Safe House
On February 10, around 10 am, an officer took a call from a tenant at Our Lady's Guild House, a safe house for women located at 20 Charlestown West requesting an investigation.

She stated that an earlier report made by the building administrator accusing her of threatening other residents was incorrect. In her opinion, his report was an intimidation tactic intended to curtail her efforts at tenant activism, specifically her assisting of Attorney General in an investigation for discrimination. Results as to who wins the title of resident drama queen are unclear. There could even be two crowns this year.

Mountains out of Molehills
Around 9:30 am on February 10, two officers followed up on a radio call about a disturbance at Pine Street Inn, 459 Park Drive.

After arriving at the homeless shelter, the police realized they’d been summoned for a petty dispute between neighbors. Well, it beats sitting in an office munching on stale doughnuts, right? The victim, a resident at the shelter, was talking on the telephone when another resident came barreling in causing a disruption. The victim asked him to quiet down. The suspect threatened to physically assault him, puffing out his chest in an attempt to look menacing. But, his tough guy act did not last long. He quickly retreated back to his room.

Upon knocking on the suspect’s door, the officers received no answer and evidence suggested that he had left the property before the officers’ arrival. Police forces later learned that this suspect had instigated similar incidents with other residents in the past and had been advised to contact the police if they continued.

Lettuce In
At 3:26 am, two officers responded to a break in at the 800 Boylston St. location of trendy salad chain Sweetgreen.

The officers discovered a broken glass door on the Belvidere Street side of the building. Clearly the intruder had failed his lock picking class. After doing a thorough investigation of the shop, the officers found two broken cash boxes and cabinets in the rear office but were left to scratch their heads about what was taken from the business. Security camera footage showed a man in a white sweatshirt and red backpack leaving the business and walking towards Belvidere Street and Huntington Avenue.

Prepster on the Loose
Around 10:51 am on February 12, an officer responded to a radio call for a robbery at J. Crew’s Huntington Street location.

After arriving at this overpriced yuppy haven, the officer was informed by the store manager that just twenty minutes earlier a tall, muscular man with a clean shaven bald head robbed the store. He stole about ten cashmere sweaters all navy in color amounting to a total of $980. Apparently, Mr. Clean doesn’t want to be cold while golfing. No one caught which direction Mr. Clean walked off to, but he is well known to the mall security as he has stolen from various other stores as well.

Bad Case of the Mondays
While working the front desk of District 4 on January 10, an officer received a report for a stolen vehicle at 650 Harrison Avenue.

The victim explained that he parked his car during the early morning hours in a metered spot at 1341 Boylston Street on February 8 since he had to be at work at 6 am. At 12 pm when he returned to his car to feed the meter, he was shocked to find it missing. Upon calling Boston’s Transportation Department he found himself in a strange predicament. The BTD told him that his car had not been towed, but was given a ticket. Faced with a double whammy on what he thought was probably just going to be an average Monday, the victim could only assume his car had been stolen.

Fry Owe You
On February 12 around 4:50 pm, two officers responded to a radio call about a man using counterfeit money at the McDonald’s on 540 Commonwealth Ave.

At 4:36 pm, an anonymous man slid the cashier $20 as payment for his meal. After the sale was made, while the suspect was sitting at his table eating, the manager realized the bill was counterfeit. He approached the man at his table, asking him to pay for his meal with real legal tender. The suspect shirked him off saying that he would “pay back the money later,” and made a run for it down Commonwealth Ave. Officers searched the surrounding area for him, but were unable to find this curious character who went to all the trouble of acquiring counterfeit bills only to spend them on greasy fries and an Egg McMuffin.

Arsonist, Dumpster Diver or Both?
Around 9:53 pm on February 12, two officers responded to a radio call regarding an arson incident at 1 Public Alley No. 432.

This incident was the most recent of a series of fires set in the alleyway being investigated by the Boston Fire Department Arson Unit. The only person the Arson Unit found in the alley way after the fires was a man looking through trash barrels and dumpsters. Suspiciously enough, the man ran off to his car when the officers approached him for questioning.

The officers followed the man to his car where he explained to them that he was simply making his rounds of the area, dumpster diving for valuables. He then subtly accused a “Red Truck” of starting the fires.

After conducting a thorough investigation of Back Bay’s Public Alleys, officers found two extinguished trash fires, and a singed porta potty, but have not yet been able to pin down a perpetrator.

Boozy Brunch
Around 12:06 pm on February 15, two officers patrolling the area of the Boston Public Library noticed suspects pouring alcohol into a coffee mug. Simply a laid back, weekend brunch sans the eggs, toast and access to a restaurant.

Upon seeing the police, one of the suspects urgently fled the scene. He dashed into the Huntington Hotel, the police chasing him in hot pursuit. He cleverly snuck down an escalator far away from the officers, but they broadcasted a description of his clothing to two other officers working in the area of Stuart St. and Dartmouth St. who were able to locate him and tackle him from behind. The suspect put up a worthy fight against him, but they were eventually able to restrain him and put him in handcuffs. When will our country let go of this puritanical law and allow police to focus on real issues? Such as the suspect’s long list of past crimes…

Hungry for More
On February 16 around 4:30 pm, an officer responded to a radio call for a personal theft from the Georgetown Cupcakes at 83 Newbury St.

Earlier that day, at 11:45 am, an unknown person walked into the cute, pink accented bakery wanting more than cupcakes. He snuck into the employee locker room and stole cash totaling $200 from two employees bags. Unbeknownst to him, it was all caught on the shop’s surveillance video cameras. Officers were able to gather from the footage that he was wearing a black leather jacket, a black hat and glasses and was 35-50 years old. Quite a large age range… fuzzy cameras?

Polo Shirts as Valentines Day Gift?
Around 4:06 pm on February 14, two officers received a call about a man shoplifting from the Polo store at 93 Newbury Street as it was happening.

Once the officers had arrived on the scene, the manger stated that the suspect had strategically lingered around a certain area of the store, pretending to browse while waiting for the sales associates to move to a different area. Once they were out of sight, he grabbed a navy sweater, three green polo shirts and ran out the doors towards Back Bay station. Apparently, the manager noticed the shoplifter as he was stealing, yet did not do anything about it himself, relying fully on the police for help.
One island. Fourteen homes. Infinite memories.

From Desolation To Green Space

By Joe Walsh

A Hill resident hopes to transform a desolate concrete patch into a tiny neighborhood green space.

Sandwiched between Ashburton Park's ornate gardens and Beacon Hill's historic architecture, the decrepit traffic island on Derne Street sticks out like a sore thumb. The structure is covered in spray paint and visibly crumbling, the result of drivers jumping over its curbs. But resident Nate Walton is aiming to rebuild the island and stop drivers from slamming into it, making the space less unsightly in the process.

“It's something that's always caught my eye,” Walton said. “It's definitely an eyesore.”

First, Walton is encouraging the city to rebuild the island's cracked masonry. He suggested raising the structure's curbs, making it harder to miss as drivers turn onto Bowdoin Street or speed toward Ashburton Place. A Public Works Department spokesperson confirmed that Walton reached out...Continued on Page 8

Book Stores Just May Not Be Dead

By Joe Walsh

Print is not dead, apparently.

Beacon Hill resident Melissa Fetter plans to open a bookstore and café on Charles Street by early 2021, bringing a bookseller back to the Hill for the first time in years. Even though “Beacon Hill Books” will go up against an army of cheap digital sellers like Amazon, Fetter is confident that the store will work as both a source of literature and a community gathering space.

The shop will fill three stories of the building previously occupied by the Hungry I restaurant, a historic structure that Fetter hopes will make the business aesthetically pleasing. A café will serve coffee, tea and meals on the ground floor and in a small garden, and the rest of the space will feature bookshelves punctuated by fireplaces and seats. At the top floor, Fetter plans to build out a robust children's section.

Beyond selling books, Fetter is aiming to use the store as an anchor for community programs. She envisions hosting author talks, speaking engagements and other events that feed the neighborhood's needs. And the kids' section could play host to story...Continued on Page 8
Phil Cresta Was A Prolific Mobster

By Joe Walsh

For much of the 1960s, Phil Cresta was the Fenway’s most prolific mobster. But the average resident might not have known it.

Cresta was allegedly at the center of the neighborhood’s underworld, launching a brazen series of robberies and jewelry heists from his home at the Fenway Motor Inn. However, unlike made for Hollywood gangsters like Whitey Bulger, Cresta’s story has remained largely untold. That enduring ability to stay under the radar may have been the secret to Cresta’s success.

The clearest portrait of Cresta’s life comes from Final Confession, a 2000 true crime book written by locals Brian Wallace and Bill Crowley. The book’s stories are largely gleaned from interviews with Cresta, so some may be half truth, half self-aggrandizing tall tale.

According to the authors, Cresta settled in the Fenway by around 1963 following a stint in prison. The North End native chose the area because it was far away from the Boston mob’s seat of operations, and he lived in the Motor Inn on Boylston Street, a spot owned by gangster Harry “Doc” Sagansky.

Cresta allegedly spent his time stealing cars and armored trucks, robbing private by gangster Harry “Doc” Sagansky.

Motor Inn on Boylston Street, a spot owned by the mafia’s seat of operations, and he lived in the area because it was far away from the Boston area. He pulled off this spree, the authors explain, because he avoided gangster bragging, ostentatious displays of wealth or any other behaviors that could draw the wrong kind of attention. Plus, he was a thorough planner, spending hours studying his targets and devising airtight plots. Even relatively low key crimes like thefts from neighborhood parking meters were the result of weeks of preparation.

“In today’s jargon, Phil would be called a control freak,” wrote Wallace and Crowley.

Continued on Page 9

Skating Thru The Winter

By Joe Walsh

The Fenway’s newest winter attraction earned a warm welcome this season. The newly renovated 401 Park building hosted an outdoor winter skating rink, giving neighborhood residents and visitors access to a seasonal New England staple over the last few months. 401 Park owner Samuels & Associates plans to melt the ice within a few weeks, but the rink is still open for this month.

“Thanks to a cooperative and mild winter, visitors have really been able to enjoy The Rink,” company Principal Peter Sougarides told The Boston Guardian in an emailed statement. “We originally planned on closing out the season at the end of February, though nothing is completely set in stone.”

A robust weekly event schedule drove scores of residents and nearby employees to the rink. Organizers opened the season with a winter carnival, performing artists stopped by the rink to entertain visitors throughout the winter, and several DJs hosted Friday night themed skates. The special programming continues Friday night, with a performance featuring Olympic figure skater Ashley Wagner.

In between those events, the rink remains open for skating on weekday afternoons and evenings, and for much of the day on weekends. Plus, skating lessons are offered on Saturday mornings.

The rink also brought new cold weather foot traffic to 401 Park. The building’s ground floor contains the Time Out food hall, and the Trillium Brewing taproom serves beer next to the rink.

Residents can expect another full slate of special events next season, according to Samuels & Associates. Company staff say they are happy with the nascent neighborhood rink’s popularity, and they look forward to further wintry programming before it is turned back into a grassy park this spring.

“It was great to see Fenway residents, office workers, and people of all ages from around the city enjoying themselves,” Sougarides wrote. “Our creative team is constantly hard at work to conceptualize unique, engaging programming that sets The Fenway apart.”

This flurry of activity is a striking transformation for 401 Park, a 92-year-old building that sat abandoned until two decades ago. Sears, Roebuck and Company originally constructed the building to operate as a store and a warehouse for the company’s popular mail order catalog business. The building served a generation of Bostonians, until a suburban exodus and a changing retail landscape drew customers away.

Sears finally shuttered the site in the 1980s, foreshadowing strong headwinds that led to the once dominant megaretailer’s decline and eventual bankruptcy last year. Meanwhile, twelve years of graffiti and neighborhood irritation followed the store’s closure, as a succession of developers tried and failed at turning an inflexible, cantankerous old building into a viable mixed use campus.

The Abbey Group eventually bought the property in the 1990s and named it the Landmark Center, filling its ground floor with big box stores. But when developer Samuels & Associates acquired the building, the company chose to overhaul it yet again. The building was rechristened as 401 Park, and it now hosts a food hall and modern office spaces alongside historic Sears artifacts and an original brick façade.

Samuels & Associates has characterized 401 Park as a centerpiece of the Fenway, bookended by new residential high rises built by Samuels and other developers. The ice rink is key to that mission, company staffers explained, driving residents and office workers out of their winter morass.

“401 Park was developed to be an all-seasons destination and gathering space for residents and visitors alike,” Sougarides said. The Rink gives us the opportunity to celebrate New England winters with a quintessential activity everyone can enjoy.”
The Boston Guardian in The South End

By Dan Rabb

Mayor Marty Walsh has appointed former Inspectional Services Department (ISD) Assistant Commissioner Kim Thai to oversee Mass and Cass 2.0, the city's strategy to address the enduring impact of the opioid crisis in Newmarket and throughout the South End.

Thai, whose formal title will be Special Assistant to the Mayor, will serve as the focal point of communication for the tangle of city agencies, non-profits and neighborhood stakeholders involved in the plan. Health and Human Services Chief Marty Martinez has unofficially handled these coordination duties since the strategy's much-hyped rollout in October.

Developed last summer in the aftermath of the controversial “Operation Clean Sweep” law enforcement crackdown, the Mass and Cass 2.0 aims to take a more coordinated and data driven approach to tackling the rampant homelessness, drug use and criminal activity in the areas surrounding Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard. The plan focuses on creating closer collaboration between city departments and developing metrics to measure the effectiveness of certain programs.

The idea of creating a czar position for Mass and Cass is not a new one. Former ISD Chief William “Buddy” Christopher was given a similar role in June prior to the creation of Mass and Cass 2.0, but the long time Walsh confidant stepped down from the position in September in the wake of a City Hall bribery investigation.

Although the Walsh administration has not officially announced her appointment, Thai appeared Tuesday at the South End Forum’s Working Group on Addiction, Recovery and Homelessness. She told the group that the city is making progress on a long-awaited public information and data website promised as part of the administration’s plan.

But she acknowledged that certain statistics demanded by South End neighborhood groups, such as EMS data, will likely not be included at first.

“We’re looking at crime stats, looking at needle pickups, looking at all the different facets of data that we have access to and funneling it into one place that makes it open and transparent for everyone to see,” Thai said. “One of the big questions that came up was, who is our target audience for this platform, and what are the types of resources and information that people want to see?”

A mandated Mass and Cass 2.0 progress report is due out next month. Yet the first real test of the plans impact will come this spring with the annual uptick in activity around Mass and Cass that comes with the warmer months.

Another Old Church May Sell Its Building

By Dan Rabb

An historic black church in the South End is up for sale, sources tell The Boston Guardian.

Founded by freed slaves shortly after the Civil War, the Ebenezer Baptist Church is one of the city’s most historically significant black congregations, a surviving landmark of what was once the hub of black Boston.

Yet, it now appears the church is looking to leave the West Springfield Street building it has called home since 1887. While church leaders did not respond to requests for comment on Ebenezer Baptist’s future, the property’s sale to a commercial developer could spark heated opposition.

Ebenezer Baptist’s roots trace back to the 19th century, when it was founded by a group of freed slaves who had escaped from slavery in the South. The church quickly became a central hub of the black community in Boston, providing not only religious services but also educational and social services.

Over the years, Ebenezer Baptist has played a key role in the city’s black community, hosting events andiniatives aimed at improving the lives of African Americans. The church has also been a hotbed of political activism, with many of its members involved in the fight for civil rights.

In recent years, the church has faced financial challenges, and it appears that it is now looking to sell its property to a commercial developer. While the sale is still in the early stages, it has already sparked concerns among some in the community, who fear that the church may be lost forever.

The fate of Ebenezer Baptist remains to be seen, but one thing is certain: it is a symbol of the rich history and culture of Boston’s black community, and it will be sorely missed if it is lost to the city.
The Boston Guardian

Chin Park Lighting

Continued from Page 3

“This is in a rather schematic phase right now,” said Greenway Conservancy Executive Director Jesse Bradenbury. “We’ll eventually be able to drill down deeper on the ideas that have resonance to people.”

Among the proposed lighting installations presented to Chinatown residents were directional plantings so as you pass by at night during the daytime that looks like bamboo or grass during the nighttime that looks like bamboo or grass, giving it an otherworldly nighttime ambiance.

“We could introduce some sort of a lighting element at night that you don’t necessarily see during the daytime that looks like bamboo or grass during the day but at night transforms the area and makes a lot of sense for that area to look a little more professional.”

Book Stores

Continued from Page 5

readings and other interactive offerings.

“The programming will be something that evolves over time,” Fetter said. “We’ll try lots of things, and we’ll see what sticks and what doesn’t.”

In an age of online sales, opening a brick and mortar bookstore may seem like a quaint utopian battle. Amazon now controls more than 46% of print book sales according to some industry researchers, and large chains like Barnes & Noble have faced years of pressure from the online juggernaut.

However, the business model for independent bookellers is surprisingly solid, Fetter notes. Hundreds of new shops opened nationwide over the last decade, and experts claim that sales figures have grown modestly in recent years, buoyed by stores’ efforts to rebrand themselves as local gathering spots.

As a result, Fetter is optimistic that a bookstore can survive on the Hill. “The café will draw in neighborhood parents. “Chinatown residents rely heavily on this park, especially during the summertime, because a lot of us don’t have living rooms or space for our kids to play,” she said. “On any given night of the summer it’s probably five or six kids out on the Plaza, so that’s where the most activity happens. There’s stuff we can’t see or know we don’t want our kids near in the other parts of the park.”

Yet not all the proposed lighting changes were strictly about security. Some of the ideas floated to residents were purely aesthetic, intended to give the Chinatown section of the Greenway unique landmarks at night. Designers suggested placing glowing sculptures in the shape of plants and boulders in the park’s Viewing Garden, giving it an otherworldly nighttime ambiance.

“Some of the proposals include the introduction of a lighting element at night that you don’t necessarily see during the daytime that looks like bamboo or grass during the day but at night transforms the area and gives it visual interest,” explained Lukas Sturm, Principal at Lumen Studios, which de-signed the new lighting proposal. “You could also light some of the beautiful plantings so you pass by at night they catch your interest.”

profit margins for book sales, events will build neighborhood support, and the store will stock up on unique titles and help residents curate their choices, she said.

“It’s not just about selling products. It’s about matching individuals to books, and a website cannot do that,” she said. “The customer is relying on the bookstore to introduce them to new genres.”

Meanwhile, the bookstore will rely on the loyalty of its customers, Fetter added. If Beacon Hill Books is successful, she said will view the shop as a community forum worth supporting.

And that formula is especially promising on the Hill, Fetter argued. The neighborhood has young families, avid readers and a tradition of supporting local businesses. With a strong local customer base, Fetter said a small shop like Beacon Hill Books could thrive in the commerce era.

“It’s a well educated group of people who are interested in reading,” she said. “I’m moving forward with this project with the conviction that Beacon Hill and the environs will support this bookstore.”

Chosen for their goals are twofold: aesthetic and functional. On the aesthetic side, it would add bright plantings to the middle of the street, improving a barren slice of cement. The neighborhood made a similar choice more than 30 years ago when it added trees and bushes to Codman Island, an accident prone median at the intersection of Beacon and Charles Streets.

The plantings would also make the island easier for drivers to spot, Walton said. The structure is almost invisible on snowy winter days, he noted, and a planter would be more visible than a non-descript slab.

“It doesn’t have a high profile,” he said. “Trucks just drive up over it and crush the stone.”

Neighborhood leaders are eager to see the traffic island upgraded, improving the road’s safety and the area’s appearance. BHCA could underwrite the cost of planters, and nearby neighbors and other Hill civic groups may also assist with upkeep, according to BHCA Streets and Sidewalks Chair Rajan Nanda.

Nanda hopes to support other beautifica-tion projects in the future, especially in visible corners of the Hill.

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Choosing to sell off their historic homes, with gentrification and demographic change at its root. As the neighborhood becomes less black, membership at legacy churches like Concord Street Baptist declines. With fewer parishioners, the cost of maintaining a historic structure becomes less and less tenable.

“Keeping up a historic building is really complicated and expensive, and these congregations are dwindling,” said South End development consultant Randi Lathrop. “To be successful and survive, they probably have to sell it.”

According to Lathrop, the South End is also particularly inconvenient for church-es where the majority of parishioners no longer live nearby and have to commute by car.

“T he congregation used to live in the neighborhood and walk there, but now when they come to church they need to park,” she said. “Obviously parking is difficult in the South End.”

Should Ebenezer Baptist decide to sell to a commercial developer, the loss of a historic black institution to luxury development could become a political flashpoint. A sense that the legacy of the South End’s black community is being erased by development came to a head in recent months as activists and protestors attempted to block the redevelopment of a 40 year old community center named after Harriet Tubman. The sale of a century old organization founded by former slaves could spark similar sentiment.
ON THE TOWN

Thursdays
Free Chair Yoga. Gentle form of yoga while sitting in a chair or using a chair for support, a part of The Boston Parks Winter Fitness Series. Morielle House at Symphony Park, 100 Norway St. 10 am.

Friday, February 21-Saturday, February 22.

Friday, February 21-Sunday, February 23.
Boston Ballet's rEVOLUTION show. Choreographed by Balanchine, Robbins and Forsythe, this ballet immerses viewers in an illusory rendering of metropolitan life intended to unearth deeper truths about reality. $37-$159. Citizen's Bank Opera House, 539 Washington St. Feb. 27-29, 7:30 pm, March 1, 1:30 pm, March 5, 6, 7, 30 pm, March 7, 1:30, 3:30, March 8, 1:30 pm.

Boston Ballet's Bloodlust: Mysteries of Victorian Boston. Retrospective display of the artist’s various series that conveys Barrett’s development as she progresses from collage to reaching further into her imagination through eerie portraits. Free, Childs Gallery, 169 Newbury St. Tuesday-Friday 9 am-6 pm, Saturday-Sunday, 11 am-5 pm.

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Now-March 8
Hannah Barrett: Transitions. Retrospective display of the artist’s various series that conveys Barrett’s development as she progresses from collage to reaching further into her imagination through eerie portraits. Free, Childs Gallery, 169 Newbury St. Tuesday-Friday 9 am-6 pm, Saturday-Sunday, 11 am-5 pm.

Sunday, February 23
Winter Wellness Talk. Just because it's winter doesn’t mean that you can't enjoy a brisk walk through the Arnold Arboretum, taking in the striking views of sparse trees against a pale sky while also getting in some exercise. Free. Arnold Arboretum, Arborway Gate 125 Arborway. 1:45 pm.

Monday, February 24
Chestnuts Day Book Group. Informal discussion of The Lost Girls of Paris by Pam Jenoff, a historical fiction mystery novel about female spies during World War I. Free. Pat Carucci’s home, 236 Beacon St. #3C Buzzer 24, 3:30 pm. Register online at Beaconhillwomen'sforum.org.

Tuesday, February 25
Harriet Joos, Newcomb Pottery and the Arts & Crafts Movement Lecture. This lecture will explore the legacy of the Newcomb enterprise through the lens of one of its artists, Harriet Coulter Joos. Led by Maggie Dimock. $10-$20. Grogan & Co. Auction House, 20 Charles St. 6-7:30 pm.

Monday, February 24

Phil Cresta
Continued from Page 6

“Back then he was often called a taskmaster,” Cresta maintained the same level of control over the neighborhood, buying the loyalty of local spots like McGrail’s, a shady Kilmarnock Street dive where he regularly took meetings with his associates. Loyal businesses like McGrail’s, known as “ears” in mob parlance, were useful allies because they fed Cresta information about his targets. He hatched at least one burglary plot because of details leaked by a Kenmore Square barber, according to Wallace and Forsythe.

Wednesday, February 26
Reimagining Historic House Museums Book Talk by Ken Turino. Kenneth C. Turino will deliver a fascinating lecture on the architectural techniques historic house museums are using to engage on a deeper level with their communities. $15, online pre-registration required. 137 Beacon St. Reception at 6 pm, Program at 6:30 pm.

“A Lover of the Beautiful”; Harriet Joos, Newcomb Pottery, and the Arts & Crafts Movement. A lecture by Maggie Dimock on Newcomb Pottery’s distinctive ceramic wares which gained international recognition because of their impressionistic painted decorations of floral and botanical specimens. $10-$20. Grogan & Company 20 Charles Street. 6:7:30 pm.

Vision 2020 Talk. Adult geriatric nurse practitioner Kate Sciacca will lead a discussion group to share concerns, experiences, tips, and workarounds to improve your eye’s focus. Currently a dedicated employee of Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Sciacca is prepared to give advice concerning cataract surgery, severe vision impairments and more. Free. Mezzanine Conference Room #3, Boston Public Library, Copley Square, 700 Boylston St. 5:30-6:30 pm.

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Continued from Page 6

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“A friendly bartender or barber was one of the best kind of ears,” the duo wrote. “People told them things without being aware they were doing so.” These businesses also stayed quiet about Cresta’s plans, a key asset for a discreet and mercurial mobster. As a result, Cresta doled out payments to most of the neighborhood’s barbershops and bars, which secured their silence and enlisted them as sources of intelligence.

“The bartender and barber who worked in Kenmore Square was on our payroll,” Cresta told the authors.

This scheme reached its zenith in 1968, when Cresta robbed a Brink’s armored truck. He quickly fled to Chicago and lived as “Tony Zito,” a workable disguise until the police arrested him five years later. With his career decisively over, he headed to federal prison and was eventually released, dying in 1995.

Since then, Cresta has drawn little attention, aside from a few shuttered attempts to turn his life into a movie. For most residents, he remains the most successful gangster they’ve never heard of.
With its tree-lined streets, lush shrubbery and easy access to the city’s booming center, the Back Bay is the perfect blend of urban and natural oasis. 274 Beacon Street is located right on the Esplanade, a picturesque park filled with lively activity such as jogging, biking, yoga and even kayaking on the Charles River. The building is conveniently located just a short walk away from some of Boston's most popular restaurants as well as Newbury Street's famous shops.

This desirable cooperative building is just a stroll away from the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, an arboreal walkway stretching from Fenway to the Public Gardens which serves as a popular spot for dog-walking and relaxing in nature. Speckled with monuments of notable figures, the street is also full of history. The mall is home to eight statues, commemorating American heroes ranging from the well-known champions of women’s rights Abigail Adams, Phillis Wheatley and Lucy Stone to maritime historian Samuel Eliot Morison.

Through old-world wrought iron gates affixed with a lantern you’ll find the elegant, white brick building adorned with black shutters that is 274 Beacon Street. Situated within a meticulously maintained, owner-occupied building are five sophisticated, expansive rooms. The entrance of the unit leads into an airy living room offering spectacular views of the Charles River and the lagoon through its dramatic French doors. Majestic white wainscoting wraps around the entire room, neatly tying together any color scheme one chooses for the room’s furnishings. Handsome hardwood flooring, beautiful custom millwork and a fireplace complete this room.

The state of the art kitchen is a home chef’s dream come true with its stainless steel appliances including a six burner stove, sleek vent hood and a SubZero refrigerator. The room also features luminescent white cabinetry, green stone countertops and a hardwood floor. Leading out from the kitchen through one entryway is a cozy dining nook ideal for casual meals. Custom crackle tile backsplash lines the wall above the oven, while the doors of the glass cabinets showcase your fine china. Through the opposite entryway lies the formal dining room containing a second fireplace, wall sconces and a matching chandelier. This an ideal space for entertaining guests. Alternatively, it could be used as a study, den or family room since the main room is large enough for both living and dining. The unit contains two spacious bedrooms, a luxurious master bedroom leading into a sumptuous master bath complimented by modern tilework. The second is a nicely sized room with another gorgeous bathroom nearby.

274 Beacon Street is 1,780 square feet and priced at $2,095,000. Residency comes with amenities including a doorman, elevator, parking (please inquire), in-unit laundry, snow removal, landscaping, an extra storage space, etc. The condo is located within walking distance of public transportation and medical facilities. Contact Rebecca Davis Tulman of Coldwell Banker at (617)-510-5050 for more information.
### Beacon Hill Open Houses

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**76 Charles Street**

Retail Rental

Unique opportunity to rent a small, charming Dickensian retail space on one of Charles Street’s best blocks. Currently used as an antiquarian book/print/curiosity shop for more than 40 years. Heavy foot traffic. Surrounded by bustling retail stores and restaurants. Sidewalk level with easy access. Magnificent display window. Lofty 14’ ceilings. Small storage loft. Owner would consider offering a turnkey business opportunity to purchase the current print/book/curiosity inventory and rent the shop.

Joe Govern: 857-222-5235
joe@streetandcompany.com

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**Beacon Hill Condominium - 9 Joy Street #3**

This two bedroom penthouse duplex is situated in a wonderful location. The light filled apartment features a private roof deck, an in-unit washer/dryer and ample basement storage.

$1,425,000

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**Coldwell Banker**

**Back Bay**

$2,595,000

410 Boylston Street - Unit 4

Welcome to 410 Boylston St. This stunning condo is located just one block from the Boston Public Garden. The home consists of 3 Bedrooms, 2.5 Bathrooms that spans its own private floor encompassing over 2,000 sq. ft. plus a large private terrace. Features of this professionally managed condo includes your own private keyed elevator, incredible oversized bay windows, gas fireplace, white oak floors and a truly immaculate kitchen and dining area. The living area, which is located just off the kitchen, is the perfect layout for entertaining. The master bedroom sits away from the living space and possesses a large walk-in closet and access to private balcony. Sophisticated living in the heart of Back Bay!

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O: 508.264.2000
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