

THE BWH POST (DOC)

Contributions from the Communications PLC



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It is no secret that housing in the United States is currently difficult to come by and is often priced too far outside of the average American budget. Boston is not immune to the housing and rent crisis and seems to be, in fact, more affected than other major cities. From 2018-2022, the median gross rent in Boston (including utilities) was \$1,981. According to the Greater Boston Housing Report Card by the Boston Foundation and Boston University, 46.5% of people in Boston proper were spending 30% or more of their income on housing according to the 2020 census. For Brookline residents, this number was slightly lower at 45% of residents. (cont. pg 2)





PHOTO FROM 3D APARTMENT BLOG

Know the neighborhoods

The postdoc community at BWH is large and diverse, and everyone comes from different situations. What might work for some people, won't work for others. Everyone has different priorities. And while yes, the housing market in Boston is tough, all of us have found ways to make it work. If you have questions, the best starting place is to talk to people in your future lab about housing, where they live and what they like. While getting housing might be initially tricky, renters in Boston have a surprising amount of rights. Be sure to look at Massachusetts rental laws as you are in the process of moving, especially if you have small children. In this newsletter, we break down the common neighborhoods where BWH post docs live, as well as some fun landmarks that you can find in each neighborhood! (see page 6 for neighborhood descriptions)

(from pg 1) The cost burdens of rent have been increasing significantly for households making between \$35k and \$75k in a year, with the highest increase in burden occurring for those making between \$50-75k a year. Given that the average postdoc salary falls within this range, it is not surprising that housing is of major concern to the postdoc community. One of the unique parts of the rental market in Boston is that most rental companies go through a broker to post listings. Even though the renter may never interact with this individual, especially if they don't tour the apartment before signing the lease, the broker fee is passed onto them. These fees typically equate to a full month of rent, further increasing the start-up costs to move into the city. The question that many postdocs have is: why is this a problem specific to Boston, and how long will it last?



FROM BOSTON MAGAZINE

The problem with housing: An overview of Boston housing

The vacancy rates of both houses and rental units in Boston are well below the US average and what is considered healthy, which is one of the major issues contributing to the cost of housing. This indicates not only a lack of available affordable housing but of any housing, creating a highly competitive market. Housing affordability for postdoctoral researchers in Boston is a pressing concern. According to Rental Market Trends, the average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment is currently about \$2,971 per month. The scarcity of available properties affects not only the affordability of rental units and homes but also the ability of prospective residents to secure housing.

Lack of relocation support is another contributor to the housing problem in Boston. New postdocs often find themselves responsible for substantial initial payments, including the first and last month's rent, a security deposit, and a broker's fee. These upfront costs can total thousands of dollars, which can be a significant burden for those transitioning from the typically modest salaries of graduate students.

The average postdoc budget must accommodate high housing costs alongside basic living expenses, often making it impossible to afford to rent a unit independently. As a result, most single postdocs are forced to seek roommates, often random, to share costs. The prospect of having one's own space is nearly impossible on a postdoc salary. Inversely, the "two-body problem" poses a different housing challenge. Many postdocs relocate with a partner or family members, which generally requires larger and more expensive housing. In Massachusetts, housing occupancy is regulated by laws that limit the number of people allowed per bedroom. Finding housing that fits both budget constraints and the needs of a multi-person household can be difficult.

One of the hidden costs of living in Boston is utilities, which poses an additional expense for the majority of renters. There are only a few options for utility companies, and the company chosen is often dependent on geographical region and the property management company, which limits the renter's ability to seek out more affordable options. Many buildings in Boston are old, which usually means poor insulation and inefficient heating and cooling, which drives up the costs even more. Further, a lot of the infrastructure for these buildings require both oil and gas, along with electricity. WiFi is an additional cost to consider and similarly to utility companies, the options for internet providers are limited and can also be geographically dependent. (cont. next pg)

The problem with housing: An overview of Boston housing

The housing situation in Boston can seem grim, but there are steps that can be taken to work to make housing more affordable. Participating in local elections and town hall meetings is a great way to advocate for broader change, including accessible, affordable housing. Make your voice heard and let the city's decision-makers know that housing is urgently needed and that it could affect your vote. At an individual level, the local postdoc network can be a great resource to find and secure housing. Taking over someone else's lease also offers the potential of avoiding the need for a broker. A broker fee is usually equal to one month's rent, and removing a broker from the renting process can help mitigate the upfront costs associated with renting in Boston. Finally, social media can be a great tool to find housing; there are Facebook groups and forums dedicated to finding housing and/or roommates that can be used as resources.

Most of the housing in Boston is either really old, or really new. Old housing is required to have records of lead paint, and landlords are legally obligated to disclose if they have a record of lead in the unit. If there is lead in the paint and the renter has adequate justification, such as being pregnant or having small children present, the renter can request the landlord to de-lead the unit.

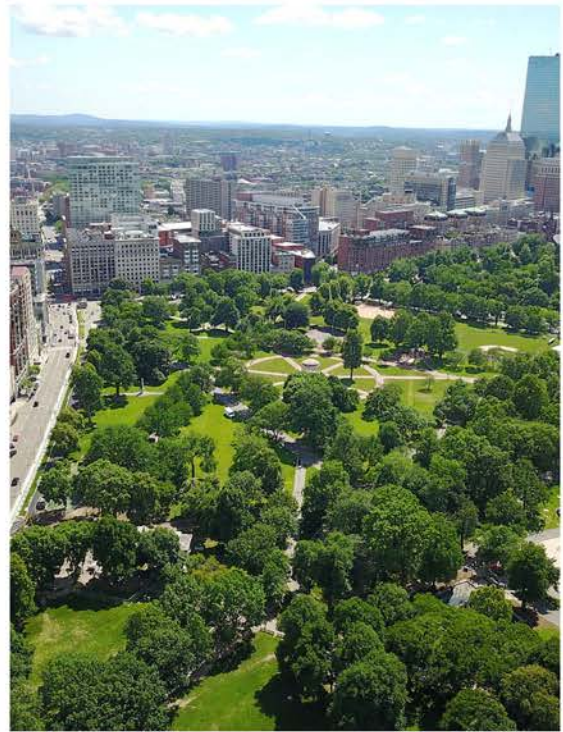
Boston was originally settled in the 1600s, and the city expanded quickly around that time. As a result, the roads were not designed for cars (or moving trucks). Keep this in mind when making the decision to hire professional movers or not. Parking can also be tricky and can be at a premium depending on the neighborhood. Many people manage to get around the city and grocery shop completely fine without a car. Most apartments do not guarantee parking, especially those closer to the city center, and parking availability and pricing can be heavily dependent on if there are garages available or if it is limited to street parking. A common note among people who live here is that the public transit is historically less reliable than desired. This is particularly true of the subway (known as the T), but can also apply to buses.

Boston boasts over 30 universities in the area, and so there is a large student population to take into account. Regions of Fenway and Mission Hill, as well as the Allston/Brighton and Cambridge neighborhoods have high densities of young college students. There are quiet regions of these neighborhoods, but the student population limits these options and it is something to keep in mind. (cont. next pg.)

The problem with housing: An overview of Boston housing

As mentioned previously, Boston housing typically requires first month's rent, last month's rent, a security deposit, and a broker fee, the latter two usually equal to one month's rent. This can be really expensive and can be upwards of \$12,000 to reserve housing. There are ways that the hospital can help, but this can limit your choices in housing to places that have an agreement with the hospital. If this is not feasible, the best solution is to take over a lease from someone or to move in with someone seeking a roommate, as these options can often decrease fees.

We conducted a small survey of postdocs at BWH to ask about where they live, how much they pay, and other basic questions about the environment of their neighborhoods. We have some example testimonials for select neighborhoods, as well as a general summary of the survey results. The postdoc community at BWH is large and diverse, and everyone comes from different situations. What might work for some people won't work for others. Everyone has different priorities. And while yes, the housing market in Boston is tough, all of us have found ways to make it work. If you have questions, the best starting place is to talk to people in your research group or the broader postdoc community about their experiences as renters and any insight or advice they might have.



FROM WIKIPEDIA: BOSTON COMMONS

Resources for housing

Link to the BWH post doc housing page
<https://www.discoverbrigham.org/new-postdocs/#housing>

Link to the housing resource from Partners office for International Professionals & students
<https://pips.partners.org/living-in-boston/finding-an-apartment/renting-an-apartment.aspx>

Homes posted for academics (across the world):
<https://www.academichomes.com/>



FROM BU TODAY: BRIGHTON MUSIC HALL

Know the neighborhoods: Allston/Brighton

With the proximity to both Boston University and Boston College, the Allston/Brighton area has a large student population, which contributes heavily to the young and vibrant energy of the neighborhood. The age demographic skews young, with most of the population landing between late teenage undergraduate students and young-to-mid 30s.

Allston/Brighton has one of the largest rental communities in the Boston area. It's worth noting that approximately 90% of the leases turn over on September 1st, and the turnover is just as chaotic as it sounds. If you're looking for free furniture, however, it comes with a plethora of furniture abandoned on the side of the road (keep in mind that most of it was previously owned by students, so don't expect to find anything too nice). There is also a turnover that happens in June, and there are units available every month if you plan on moving sometime outside of the September 1st window. If the Allston/Brighton neighborhood sounds appealing to you, be mindful of the rate of turnover and the large student population. Apartments are typically rented pretty fast, so if you find something that catches your eye, consider applying sooner rather than later.

Commute: In Allston/Brighton, the green line prevails. The B branch of the Green Line runs through Allston along Commonwealth Ave. If you're looking to go a little further than the Green Line can get you, the commuter rail now has a Boston Landing station in Allston. Several bus routes run through the Allston/Brighton area, along with a reasonable infrastructure for bicycles. Safety: Overall, the Allston/Brighton area of Boston is considered to be relatively safe. Total crime is approximately 40% less than the national average.

Culture and attractions: Brighton Avenue offers a lot of restaurants, along with bars and clubs that provide a vibrant nightlife scene. The neighborhood also boasts plenty of places to catch live music, including venues such as Brighton Music Hall. There are plenty of trendy retail options, outdoor markets during the warmer months, and pop-up events. Packard's Corner is one of the hearts of the neighborhood, with many shopping and retail options and easy access to public transportation.

Know the neighborhoods: Brookline

Welcome to Brookline, this charming yet slightly pricey neighborhood is the easiest commute to several of BWH labs.

If you're looking for a neighborhood that combines historic charm, safety, and a touch of sophistication (with a side of "ouch, my wallet"), then Brookline might just be the perfect fit for you.

Let's address the elephant in the room first: yes, Brookline is on the expensive side. But the good schools, safe neighborhood, easy commute and hence the time saved commuting might make it worth the rent.



FROM WIKIPEDIA: COOLEIDGE CORNER

Commute: Most Locations in Brookline frequently receive a "Walker's paradise" rating. The MBTA Green "T" (C,D and E lines) and several bus routes innervate the neighborhood.

Safety: Several statistics online reveal that Brookline has significantly lower crime rates than the national average. As per most recent stats released by the Brookline PD, total crime events were 452 in 2021 , down from 538 during the same period of 2020 (down 16% compared to 2020).

Culture and attractions: Brookline has around 30% Foreign Born population and a diverse demographic with the mean age at about 35 years (2022 American community survey). The median household income in Brookline stays at \$130,000, much higher than the national or state average!

Brookline has beautiful parks, a park for each day of the week, if you may! Larz Anderson Park; the usual beautiful diversity in terrain and then the Larz Anderson Auto Museum, which showcases a collection of vintage automobiles, Brookline Reservoir Park, Jamaica Way Park, Amory Playground, Griggs Park, Waldstein Playground, Warren Field. The food and restaurants are plentiful and diverse, however you will not necessarily find places open late. Great for you if you like a quiet early night in, unless you find yourself near the Fenway Park area (Be prepared for a lot of commotion during weekends and game nights here).



FROM HARVARD SQUARE: HARVARD NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Know the neighborhoods: Cambridge

Ahh, Cambridge! The harmony of the old world charm and the young undergrads from the campus! Based on data from the 2018-2022 American Community Survey, nearly a quarter of all adults aged 18 and over are enrolled in either full-time or part-time college or graduate school degree programs. I always assumed that the younger demographic (median age 30, compared to the state average of 39) would mean "affordable" housing. Well, according to Zillow rental data, the median rent for 1 bedroom properties in Cambridge, MA is \$2,950, and there has been a year-over-year increase of \$150. That is certainly not "affordable" with current postdoc salaries being what they are. However, Cambridge is big and there are pockets of 'less-expensive' neighborhoods.

Commute: As most Bostonians will ask me to educate the reader, "Cambridge is not Boston!" However, the two "cities" are fairly well connected via both bus and T, with an average travel time of around 35-55 mins. The popular M2 shuttle is another great way to commute on workdays (remember to keep your Harvard University IDs on you). Cambridge is a Walker's Paradise. Daily errands do not require a car.

Safety: Cambridge's crime rate matches the national average but is slightly higher than Massachusetts' average. Property theft is the major reported crime. Do not leave your bikes unattended! With no homicides reported in 2022, you can feel as safe here as anywhere else in the country.

Culture and attractions: Cambridge has a lot to offer! Explore Harvard Square's cobblestone walkways, which are lined with cafes, bookstores, and street performers that provide a bustling atmosphere. You can find great food, diverse cuisines, and cult favorites like Mike's right here! The Harvard and MIT museums and cultural events almost all year long can keep you entertained! There are several parks and very Bikeable routes! Alewife Brook Reservations is great for a weekend morning run and North Point Park, which is just across from the Museum of Science, offers an abundance of leisure possibilities! Cambridge is renowned for its progressive ideals, which are demonstrated by its active LGBTQ+ community and support for social justice causes.

Know the neighborhoods: Fenway

Fenway is home to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA), Northeastern, and the famed Fenway Field baseball stadium. Fenway also sits adjacent to the Longwood campus, making it a great location for a short commute.



FROM BOSTON MAGAZINE: FENWAY/CITGO SIGN

Commute: Most of Fenway is within easy walking or biking distance of the hospital, and also contains parts of the green line that get you close to Longwood. Parts of Fenway also have separate bike lanes to separate it from the road, providing a slightly more bike friendly commute than portions of Mission Hill. The 60 bus line also takes you the entire way from Fenway to Longwood.

Safety: Fenway has lower than the national average stats in all categories except robbery, which is only slightly above the national average. Overall, despite the high density of Fenway, is an incredibly safe region of the city.

Culture and attractions: Fenway has numerous attractions and things to do. Fenway has an amazing food scene including a BBQ place owned and run by a Top Chef contestant! Fenway is also home to both the MFA and the Isabella Stewart Art Museum, both of which have interesting artwork and have discounts provided by the hospital. Fenway also contains its namesake: the world famous Fenway Park: home of the Boston Red Sox. As a result this neighborhood can get loud and crowded during the summer months, but living here provides a front seat to all of the hustle and bustle of the area. Because of the high density of activities, proximity to transportation and new development happening in Fenway, rent tends to be higher than other neighborhoods discussed in this article. Average rent for a 1 bedroom apartment is almost \$3,000 which is high compared to other areas. Many of these apartments are new units in recently developed areas of Fenway, which can be a pro depending on what you are looking for. Fenway also leans more towards college age students due to the proximity to colleges. So this area is probably better for younger professionals without families (although you can definitely make a home anywhere)

Know the neighborhoods: Jamaica Plain (JP)

A diverse community within 2-4 miles of the hospital depending on which part of JP you consider home. It has its own libraries and historical society, providing unique character to the neighborhood. It is also home to the oldest community theater as well as an art school where you can take classes in activities like woodshop, painting, needle point, and more! It also has a whole foods and a stop and shop, and lots of unique and diverse food options.



FROM WIKIPEDIA: JAMAICA PLAIN POND

Commute: Jamaica Plain has several stops along the orange line including Green Street near the end. Jamaica Plain also has several stops along the 39 bus route, making commuting to the hospital very easy. If you prefer walking or biking, JP is also right along the Emerald Necklace which is a bike path that goes directly to the edge of Longwood Medical Area.

Safety: The proximity of Roxbury to JP does mean that the relative safety of JP from a statistics perspective is lower than other parts of the city. However, in my 1.5 years of living in JP, I have never experienced a safety issue. There is a police station close to the Green Street T stop, and a fire station right along Centre Street, meaning that the response can be quick if you ever have a problem. (See below for chart of crimes per 1000 residents in JP)

Culture and attractions: JP also has a higher number than average young professionals with 27% of the population falling between the ages of 25-34, with 63% of people holding at least a bachelor's degree. JP also has a large LGBTQIA+ community with events like book clubs and meetups happening regularly in the area. JP also has a lot of young families with activities for kids regularly in the neighborhood. JP is also home to the original Sam Adams Brewery. JP has SO MUCH GREEN SPACE. It is in close proximity to the Harvard Arboretum, as well as Jamaica Pond and Olmsted Park. Franklin Park and the Franklin Park zoo are also in close proximity to JP, leaving lots of nature based activities. JP also has a lot of cute stores and character with diverse restaurants. One thing that JP does lack is any kind of night life. Most things close early and there are not many bars in the area. My major comment is that most of the housing is more expensive and contains limited options for multi-bedrooms (more than 2) for rent. However, it has many converted 6 apartment units that have 2 bedrooms, making it perfect for you and a roommate or a smaller family to move in.

Know the neighborhoods: Mission Hill

This is one of the neighborhoods directly next to the hospital. This unique neighborhood goes right through the green line. Mission Hill has a large population of black and Hispanic people, making this one of the more diverse neighborhoods in the area. Mission Hill has one of the highest percentage of income controlled units in the city, meaning if you qualify for income restricted housing, this might be a good place to look. Because of that, rent can be particularly affordable here, but there are some tradeoffs for affordability and proximity to Longwood.

Safety: Mission Hill (similar to the rest of Boston) is statistically safer than most other major cities in the country. However, Mission Hill does have higher than average instances of robbery and assault, but much lower instances of burglary, theft, and auto theft.

Commute: You can't get any easier than walking down the street to Longwood. However, if you need transportation to other parts of the city, Mission Hill is not that far from the green line (contains part of the green line!), as well as contains part of the 66 bus route and is not too far from the 1 bus line. Mission Hill does not have nearly as many bike lanes as some other areas of the city, and given the "hilly" location, might be a little more difficult than other neighborhoods.

Attractions/culture: Mission Hill has a lot of really good restaurants, as well as a Stop and Shop grocery store, making food an easy find. Mission Hill due to its lower safety rating and louder noise pollution, as well as proximity to the hospital and lower rated schools has a cheaper average rent than many other areas. The average price for a 1 bedroom in Mission Hill is \$2600, which is slightly more expensive than JP, but is much much closer to the hospital. Several of the best public schools in Boston are found near Mission Hill



FROM BOSTON MAGAZINE: MISSION HILL

Know the neighborhoods: Newton

Newton, a vibrant suburb located just a few miles west of Boston, is renowned for its family-friendly atmosphere and excellent schools. Known as the "Garden City," Newton boasts tree-lined streets, beautiful parks, and a strong sense of community. The housing market here is diverse, ranging from historic Victorian homes to modern apartments, catering to a wide array of preferences and budgets. Newton's blend of suburban tranquility and urban accessibility makes it a highly desirable place to live.

Commute: Newton offers a convenient commute to Boston, making it an ideal location for professionals working in the city. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) provides efficient public transportation options, including the Green Line and several bus routes that connect Newton to downtown Boston. For those who prefer to drive, major highways like I-90 and I-95 are easily accessible, ensuring a smooth journey. Additionally, Newton's commuter rail services provide a quick and comfortable alternative for daily travel to Boston.



FROM MASS.GOV HAMMOND POND RESERVATION

Safety: Newton consistently ranks as one of the safest cities in Massachusetts, with low crime rates contributing to its reputation as a secure and welcoming community. The city's well-funded and proactive police department works diligently to maintain public safety and foster a sense of security among residents. Neighborhood watch programs and community engagement initiatives further enhance the overall safety and cohesiveness of the area. Families and individuals alike can feel at ease living in Newton, knowing that their well-being is a top priority.

Attractions/culture: Newton is rich in cultural and recreational attractions, offering something for everyone. The city is home to several museums, including the Newton History Museum and the McMullen Museum of Art, which provide insights into the local heritage and art scene. Outdoor enthusiasts can enjoy numerous parks and nature reserves, such as the picturesque Crystal Lake and the expansive Hemlock Gorge. Newton also hosts a variety of community events and festivals throughout the year, fostering a lively and inclusive atmosphere. The vibrant local dining scene, with its diverse culinary offerings, adds to the city's cultural appeal. In addition to that, Newton's public schools are highly rated, often receiving top marks in statewide assessments. The city is known for its excellent educational facilities, making it a prime location for families prioritizing education.

Know the neighborhoods: General report cards

Scores are out of 5 in each category. Overall, every neighborhood is unique. There are a few things not taken into account in these scores including rat populations, noise pollution, night life, LGBTQIA+ populations, and green space. These scores are objective and were determined by people who lived in or near each area.

	Rent	Safety	Schools	Demographic diversity	public transit	Prox. to BWH	Total score
Allston/Brighton	4	4	3	4	5	3	23
Brookline	4	3	4	3	4	5	23
Cambridge	4	3	3	4	4	3	21
Fenway	3	4	3	4	4	5	23
Jamaica Plain	4	4	3	3	4	4	22
Mission Hill	5	3	3	4	4	5	24
Newton	5	5	5	3	3	3	24