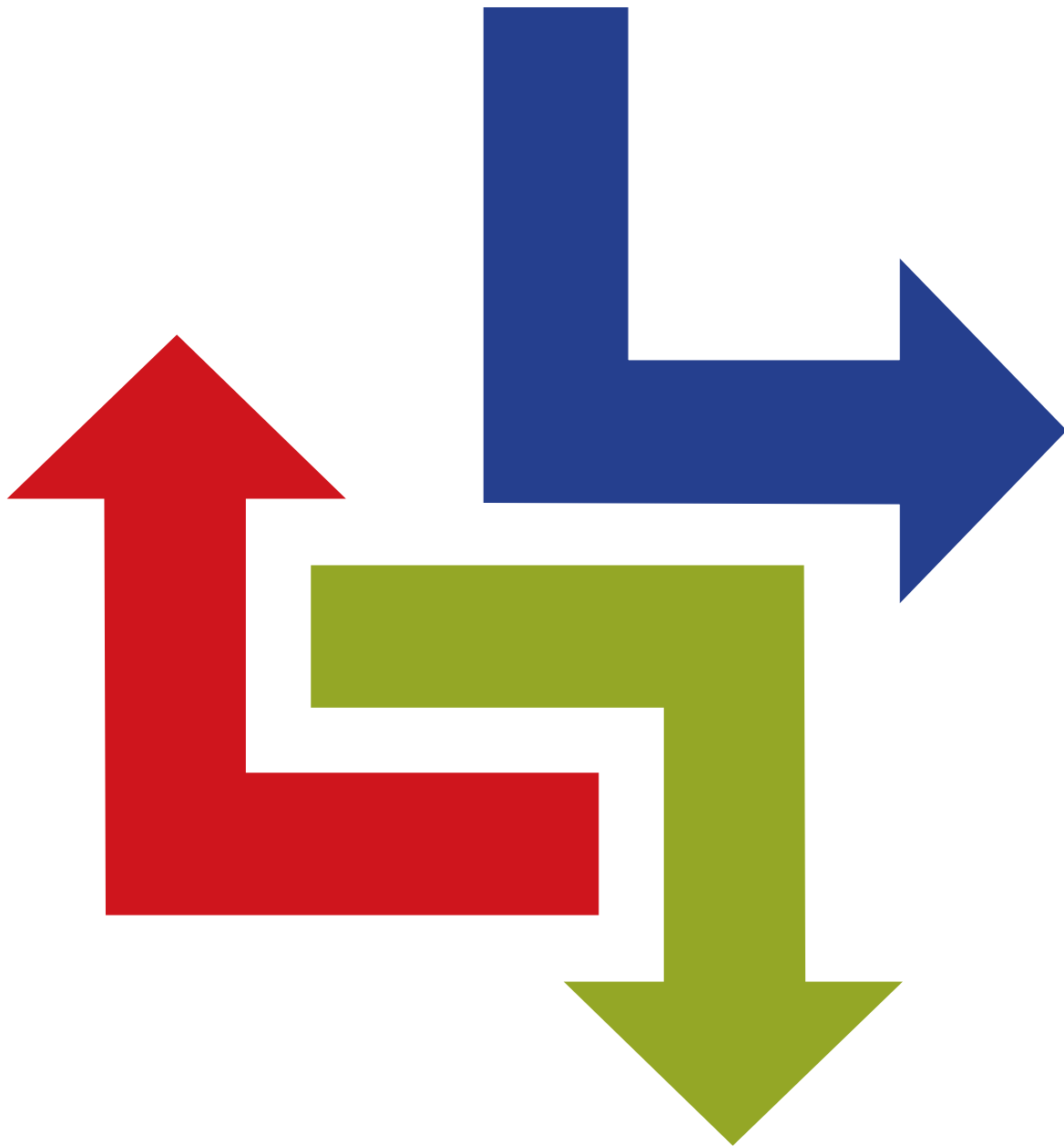


Understanding BROOKLINE

Emerging Trends and Changing Needs



A REPORT FROM THE
Brookline Community Foundation



The Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) exists to promote a strong, engaged, and inclusive community. We envision a diverse and vibrant Brookline, where an ethic of philanthropy, equity, volunteerism and civic engagement ensures that everyone's basic needs for social services, education and housing are met, the arts flourish, and the environment thrives.

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DEAR FRIENDS,

We are pleased to share with you a first-of-its-kind report from the Brookline Community Foundation (BCF), part of our effort to inform residents about emerging trends and to engage the community in addressing the town's most pressing needs.

Brookline in 2013 is a strong, thriving community, graced with many resources. Demographically, our town is changing, presenting new opportunities and questions for the future. As our country and community emerge from a recession, there are areas of need that could be better understood and addressed. Longstanding issues of equity and sustainability also need attention if Brookline is to live up to its potential.

As the only community foundation for the Town of Brookline, BCF is committed to building public understanding about community needs and to engaging residents in finding solutions to our shared challenges. Through our local leadership and grantmaking, we seek to alleviate the struggles of Brookline's most vulnerable residents and to improve the quality of life for all community members.

This report combines the results of two BCF research efforts: a comprehensive analysis of U.S. Census and other data that offers insight into the changing demographic and socioeconomic profile of our town, and a compilation of interviews with community and nonprofit leaders that, together, identify the greatest needs facing our community. We've summarized the most important findings from both projects, with these goals:

- ① *Provide Brookline leaders and community members with an accurate, up-to-date picture of our community, highlighting trends that are not readily apparent.*
- ② *Identify important topics for further analysis and broader public engagement.*
- ③ *Inform the foundation's strategy for fundraising and future grantmaking.*

We hope that the information we present here will inspire and inform local dialogue about what it will take to maintain a vibrant, equitable, and sustainable Brookline. We invite you to add your voice to the conversation as we explore these topics in greater depth and pursue new research on important topics to Brookline. Together, we can craft strategies that strengthen our community.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny Amory".

JENNY AMORY
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith Kidd".

JUDITH H. KIDD
President, Board of Trustees

UNDERSTANDING BROOKLINE

The Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) launched the Understanding Brookline Initiative to put a spotlight on current trends and needs in our community. The data from the U.S. Census and other sources confirm what many of us know: Brookline is a growing, thriving community in many ways. Our analysis also reveals important needs in some subgroups and significant demographic changes that deserve attention as we plan for our community's future.

In a second, related research effort, BCF trustees met with more than 30 community leaders to discuss what they identify as the most pressing needs in our community. The interviewees touched on many topics. Two major themes are presented in part two of this report.

Since **2000**
the number of children 9
and younger increased by

21%

and the number of 55-64
year olds increased by

40%

The number of 25-54 year
olds decreased by

10%

in the same period.

PART 1 EMERGING TRENDS

BROOKLINE IS CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICALLY

A younger—and older—community • While overall population growth has been relatively low, Brookline's growth has been concentrated on both ends of the age spectrum.

Increasing racial and ethnic diversity • Brookline is more racially diverse than it was a decade ago, with the fastest growth in the Asian population.

A strong female skew • Brookline is proportionally more female than the state or its neighbors, with girls and women outnumbering boys and men in nearly every age group.

A large and growing professional class • More than three quarters of Brookline's workforce is in the professional sectors, and that percentage is growing.

HOUSING IS HIGHLY SOUGHT AFTER BUT INCREASINGLY COST PROHIBITIVE

A desirable place to live • Brookline has an extremely low housing vacancy rate, increasing rental rates, and resilient residential property values.

More people living in the same space • Since 2000, Brookline has seen an increase in the number and size of family households and a decrease in single-person households.

Family growth concentrated in some neighborhoods • The number of families with children has increased, with a few neighborhoods absorbing the majority of this growth.

Larger share of income spent on housing • Brookline residents—owners and renters—are paying more of their income for housing than they did in the past.

ECONOMIC DISPARITIES ARE GROWING

More residents are living below poverty • Brookline's poverty rate rose from 9.3% in 2000 to 13.1% in 2010.

Many more residents are financially vulnerable • A significant number of households earned far below Brookline's true cost of living and yet were ineligible for public assistance.

Income disparity is growing • Since 2000, Brookline saw a dramatic increase in the number of households in the highest and lowest income categories, and a decrease in the number of households in the middle.

PART 2 CHANGING NEEDS

RESIDENTS NEED HELP ADDRESSING BASIC NEEDS

Brookline is experiencing a marked increase in people struggling to cover their basic needs, including food, housing, utilities, and healthcare. Elderly residents are among those requiring more emergency financial assistance than in the past. Many residents who are above poverty by federal standards are struggling nonetheless. Brookline's public agencies and emergency relief organizations face more requests for support than they can accommodate.

OUR SCHOOL-AGE POPULATION FACES BROAD RESOURCE AND EQUITY CONCERNS

Brookline's public schools are bursting at the seams, especially in the younger grades. Population trends show continued growth in the near future, which will make classroom space an increasingly urgent issue to address. At the same time, academic performance gaps between low-income students and their peers remain large across grade levels. Many students could benefit from more holistic supports, including more out-of-school-time opportunities, counseling and mentoring services, and resources to help their families support learning at home.

HOW can we nurture the diversity and vibrancy of our community in a time of rising costs and income disparity?

HOW do we increase the capacity of our most in-demand resources and extend benefits to those who need them, whatever their level of financial need?

HOW do we build on the strengths of Brookline's civic infrastructure to address the most persistent and newly emerging needs of Brookline residents?

WHAT creative solutions and new or strengthened collaborations can help us ensure Brookline is a great place to live for all residents?

JOIN THE
CONVERSATION

Since **2000**
the town's average house-
hold income rose to

\$154,537

Brookline's poverty rate
also rose, from

9%

to

13%

of all households.

We hope the information in this report—and the questions we pose—will inspire conversations at all levels in our community. Please join us at BCF as we investigate these topics in more depth and explore other important topics, like the role of arts and environmental stewardship in our community. With your input and support, we can work together to build a better Brookline.

The Brookline Community Foundation launched the Understanding Brookline Initiative in 2012 to inform itself and the public about current trends and needs in our community. Our phase one report, prepared by researcher Linda Olson Pehlke, presents a comprehensive analysis of Brookline's demographic, socioeconomic, and other data, gathered from the U.S. Census and other sources.

The data confirm what many of us know: Brookline is a growing, thriving community in many ways. But our analysis also reveals needs in some subgroups and significant demographic changes that deserve attention as we plan for our community's future.

In the following pages, we summarize the key findings from phase one of our Understanding Brookline research and raise questions for further exploration.



THE CHANGING FACE OF BROOKLINE

BROOKLINE TODAY

- ❶ **Brookline is changing demographically**, presenting new opportunities and challenges for town departments, service providers, and the community as a whole.
- ❷ Rising costs of living, plus overly restrictive definitions of need, have created a **financial squeeze for many** individuals and families.
- ❸ **Economic disparities are growing**, with a greater concentration of income in upper tiers and more residents living near or below poverty.

The 2010 U.S. Census reports that Brookline's population is 58,732—a 2.8% increase since 2000. This rate of growth is slower than the previous decade and below national and regional rates for the same period. What is most striking about Brookline's population growth is its concentration in particular subgroups, contributing to a changing demographic profile of the town as a whole.

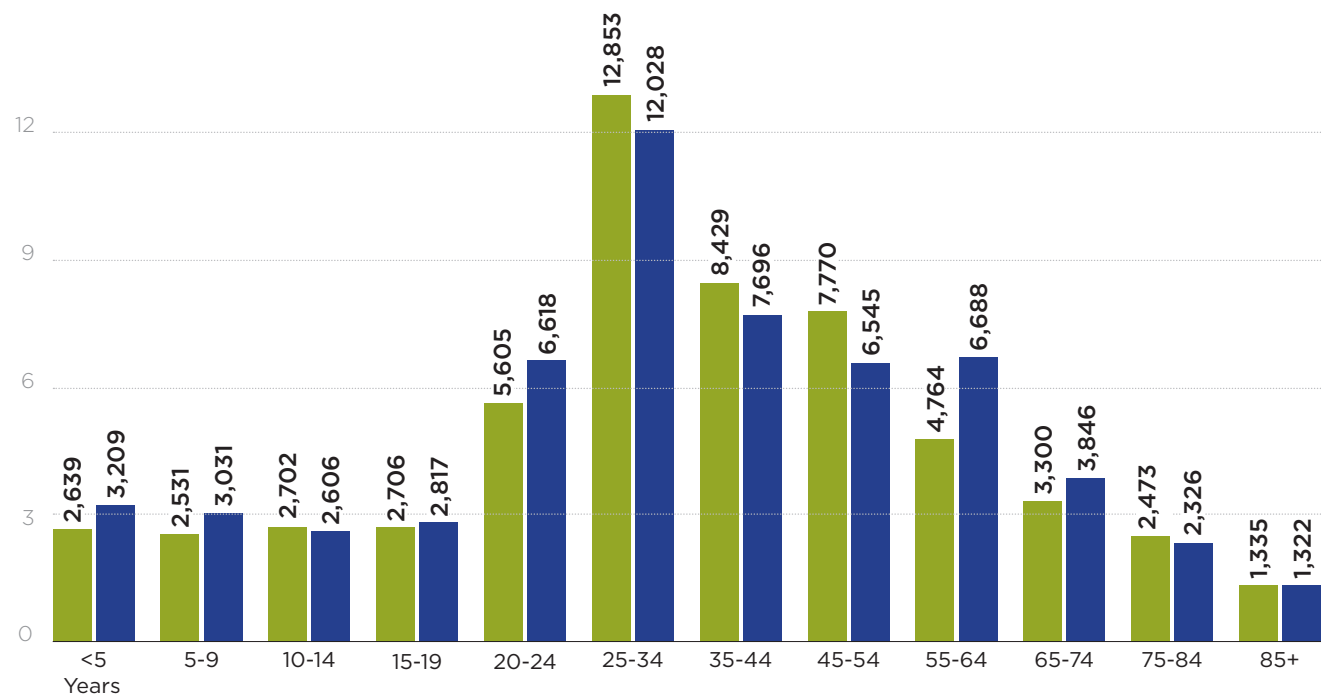
A younger—and older—community • Brookline's population growth has been heavily concentrated on both ends of the age spectrum, with a 21% increase, since 2000, in the number of children aged 9 and younger, and a 40% increase in the number of 55 to 64 year olds, who are part of the baby boom generation. The town's adult population, ages 25-54, declined by 10% in the same period.

Brookline continues to have a high concentration of 20-34 years olds, including college students and young professionals, who make up 32% of the total population.

Increasing racial and ethnic diversity • Brookline is more racially diverse than it was ten years ago, with 23% of residents identifying as a race other than white in 2010, compared with 19% in 2000. According to Census categories, 3.4% of Brookline residents identify as Black, 15.6% as Asian, 5% as Hispanic, 3% as two or more races, and 1.2% as "other". The most notable change in Brookline's racial make-up is the growth of the Asian population, which increased from 12.8% to 15.6% of the total population from 2000 to 2010.

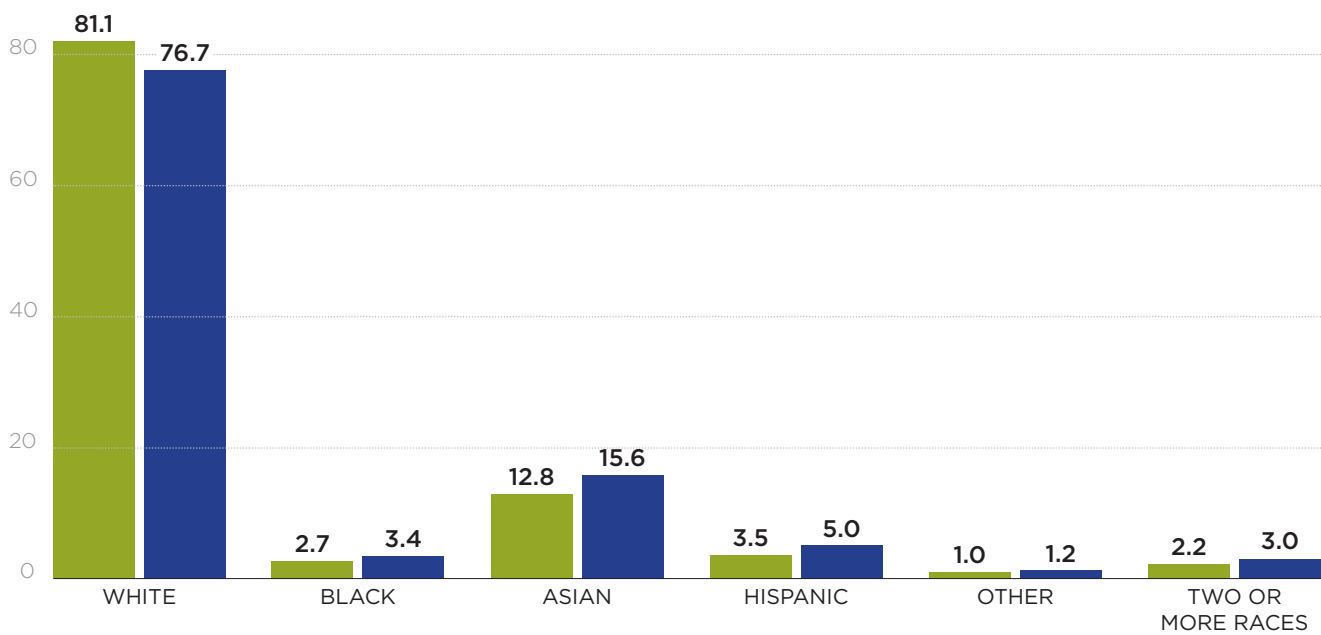
A large internationally born population adds another layer of diversity to our community; 26% of Brookline residents were born outside the United States. Of these, about half have gained citizenship.

BROOKLINE POPULATION | In thousands



Source U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

BROOKLINE RACIAL DISTRIBUTION | In percent



Source U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

To read *Understanding Brookline: Phase One*, with detailed analyses of U.S. Census and other data, visit: www.brooklinecommunity.org/understanding-brookline.

AGING AT HOME

A growing senior population, coupled with rising housing costs, raises concerns about the ability of seniors to find affordable housing. Of particular concern is the ability of retired people with moderate incomes and insufficient home equity to find affordable rental options in Brookline. Also of concern is the ability of seniors to downsize from single-family homes to multi-family residential units. As the baby boom generation reaches retirement, the demand for senior-accessible, multi-family residences is expected to grow.

According to Frank Caro, co-founder of **Brookline Community Aging Network**, meeting the needs of Brookline's elders will require development of more high-density housing in prime locations, such as the Beacon Street corridor. Proximity to public transportation, shopping, parks, and cultural opportunities allow seniors to live more independently and remain part of an integrated community.

A strong female skew • Brookline is 55% female, with females outnumbering males in every age group except the 5-14 age band. This gender skew is unique to Brookline; compared with neighboring communities, the state, and the nation, Brookline is significantly more female. Brookline's gender gap is most significant for 20-29 year olds, who are 62% female.

A large and growing professional class • Brookline's adult workforce is primarily made up of professionals, those whom the Census categorizes as working in management, business, science, and the arts. Since 2000, the percentage of individuals in professional occupations increased from 73% to 77% of the total Brookline workforce. Statewide, only 43% of workers are in this category. Brookline has a particularly high concentration of professionals in the education, health, and social service sectors; they make up 42% of Brookline's total workforce.

HOW can our community accommodate significant, and continued, growth in our school-age population? (See more on this topic on p. 18.)

HOW can we develop the right mix of services to meet the needs of growing youth and elder populations?

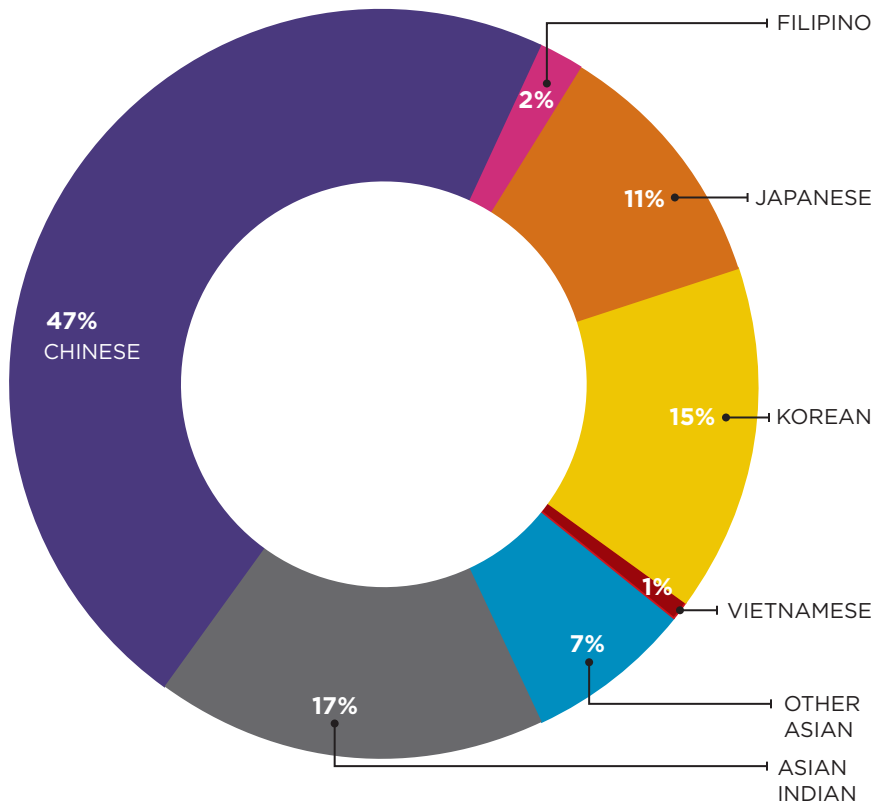
HOW can our town best engage and support the full range of residents, across age, gender, household make-up, and professional and ethnic categories?

JOIN THE
CONVERSATION



How can we develop the right mix of services to

BROOKLINE'S ASIAN SUB-GROUPS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



Source U.S. Census 2010

“ We focus on educational issues affecting Asian and Asian-American children and families, working in close collaboration with the Brookline Public Schools. We are working to debunk the myth of the ‘model minority.’ Our Asian and Asian-American students have a broad range of strengths and needs.”

—STEERING COMMITTEE, Brookline Asian American Family Network

The broad racial categories of the U.S. Census mask the ethnic and linguistic diversity of Brookline’s residents. Within every Census-defined subgroup—Black, Asian, Hispanic, White, and “other”—are individuals with a range of cultural and personal identities. For example, the town’s fastest-growing subgroup, its Asian population, includes significant numbers of residents with roots in China, India, Korea, and Japan. Brookline’s Asian residents include American-born individuals, recent immigrants, and adopted children. The majority of Asian adults were born outside the United States (74%), while the majority of Asian residents under 18 were born in the U.S (64%).

The **Brookline Asian American Family Network** is working to meet the needs of this diverse group, with a specific mission to support Asian and Asian-American students in Brookline schools.

DIVERSITY WITHIN

meet the needs of growing youth and elder populations?

In 2010

49%

of renters paid more than

30%

of their income on housing, and

34.5%

of homeowners paid more than

30%

of their income on a mortgage.

LIVING IN BROOKLINE

Brookline's residential profile is unusual, almost equally split between renter-occupied (51%) and owner-occupied (49%) housing. In contrast, Boston and Cambridge are 66% and 65% renter-occupied, and Newton is 69% owner-occupied. The total number of housing units in Brookline has been stable since 2000, with a slight increase in the proportion of owner-occupied units.

Like its urban neighbors, Brookline has a large number of multi-family units; 77% of all households are within multi-family buildings, which include condominium conversions. Brookline also has areas, however, that are made up of predominantly single-family homes.

A desirable place to live • Brookline has an extremely low housing vacancy rate; just 3.8% of rental units and 1.3% of owner-occupied units were vacant in 2010. Residential property values have been relatively resilient through the recession, rising at a rate slightly below inflation, while rental rates increased well above the rate of inflation. Together, these figures indicate continued high demand for Brookline housing.

More people living in the same space • Since 2000, Brookline has seen a 4% increase in number of family households, and an 11% decrease in single-person households. With an increase in the number of families, a growing average family household size, and fewer singles opting to live alone, the overall average household size grew from 2.18 to 2.27 individuals over the decade, counter to a prevailing trend of shrinking households in the region, state, and nation.

Brookline's average household size is still smaller than the state and national averages.

Family growth concentrated in some neighborhoods • Half of all Brookline households are families (defined as two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption). The majority of Brookline family households do not have children living at home (53%), but since 2000, the number of families with children increased by 273. This increase was concentrated in certain Census tracts, particularly South Brookline, Chestnut Hill, Coolidge Corner, Cypress/Washington, and Lawrence.

Larger share of income spent on housing • Brookline residents—owners and renters—are paying more of their income on housing than they did a decade ago. Brookline has the highest median monthly rent among comparison communities; 49% of renters pay 30% or more of their income on rent, up from 41% in 2000. Meanwhile, 34.5% of Brookline homeowners spend 30% or more of their income on a mortgage, up from 29% in 2000.

WHAT are the long-term implications of Brookline's high cost of living?

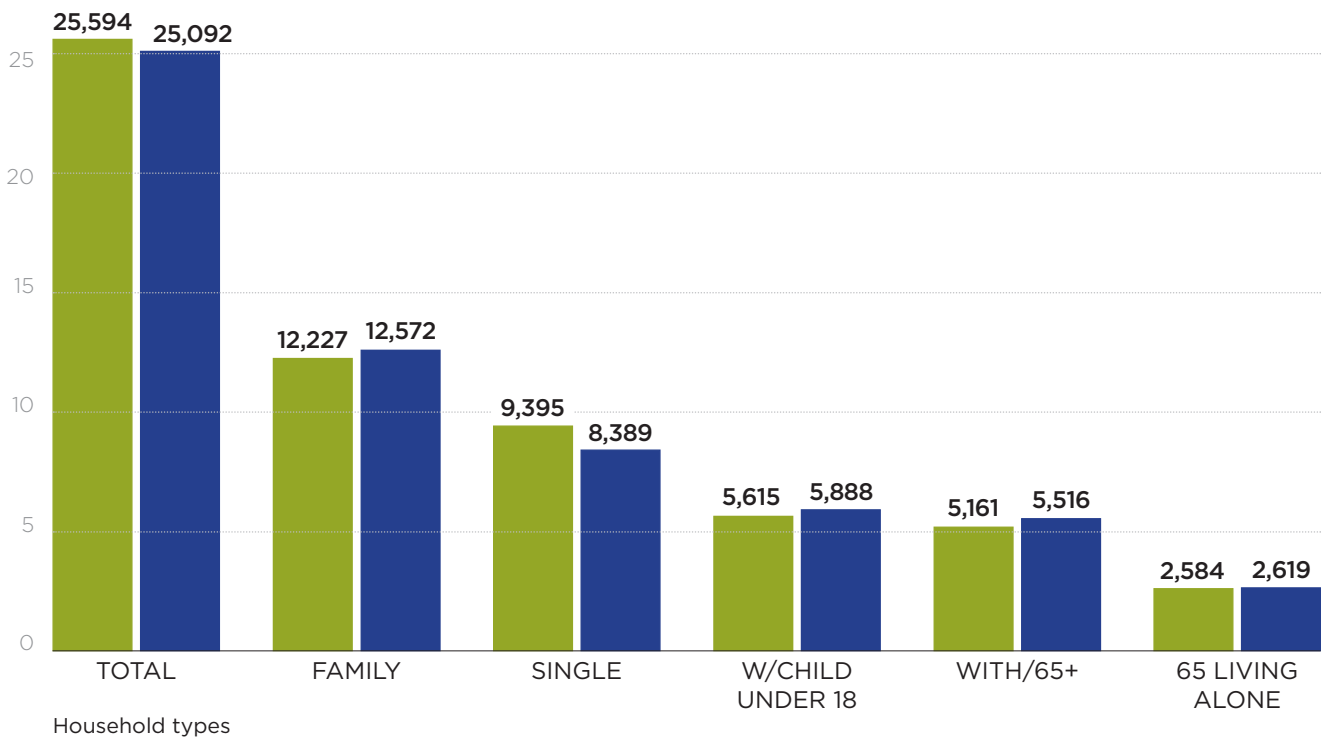
HOW can we maintain a mixed-income and multi-generational community in the face of such high demand for residential real estate?

HOW should we invest in and continue to develop vital residential and commercial neighborhoods and optimize use of our parks and natural resources in a changing community?

JOIN THE
CONVERSATION

How can we maintain a mixed-income and multi-generational

BROOKLINE HOUSEHOLDS | In thousands



Source U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

FAMILIES HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN BY TRACT

TRACT #	GEOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTION	2000	2010	CHANGE
4001	Saint Mary's	379	348	-31
4002	Coolidge Corner	494	549	55
4003	Devotion	428	387	-41
4004	Corey Hill	459	448	-11
4005	Washington Sq. South	436	443	7
4006	Fisher Hill	525	535	10
4007	Cypress/Washington	401	452	51
4008	Lawrence	471	510	39
4009	Brookline Village South	366	345	-21
4010	High St./The Point	443	416	-27
4011	Chestnut Hill	432	514	82
4012	South Brookline	781	941	160
Total		5,615	5,888	273

Source U.S. Census 2000 and 2010

community in the face of such high demand for residential real estate?

In 2010

3.8%

of rental housing units and

1.3%

of owner-occupied units
were vacant—an extremely
low vacancy rate.

“The demand for affordable housing in Brookline continues to grow as the cost of rent in Brookline and Greater Boston escalates. Homelessness is also increasing. Currently, there are hundreds and hundreds of families, senior citizens, and people with disabilities on the Brookline Housing Authority’s waiting lists. Lists for our family two and three bedroom apartments are so long that we cannot even accept new applications.”

—PATRICK DOBER, *Executive Director, Brookline Housing Authority*



BROOKLINE HOUSING COST, BURDEN AND VALUE

	2000	2000 INF. ADJ.	2010
Median Owner Costs (w/Mortgage)	\$2,634	\$3,335	\$3,027
Percent Owners w/Costs >30%	28.9%		34.5%
Median Rent	\$1,262	\$1,598	\$1,688
Percent Renters w/Costs >30%	40.6%		49.0%
Median Home Value	\$599,500	\$758,967	\$681,900

Sources U.S. Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2008 - 2010



SHARED SPACES

The growth in Brookline families means more people—and more pets—visiting the town's parks, playgrounds, and open spaces. Increased outdoor activity and use of common spaces are signs of a vibrant, healthy community, but they also pose challenges for safety and upkeep. As we plan for Brookline's future, we have an opportunity to get creative in developing a mix of shared spaces that meet the needs of all of our residents.

NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

A lack of moderately priced and affordable housing threatens Brookline's economic diversity. Currently, 349 Brookline households receive "Section 8" housing rent subsidies. Another 1,575 individuals (869 households) live in units operated by the **Brookline Housing Authority**. The typical wait time for a public housing apartment is several years.

Elevated home values make new home purchases impractical, if not impossible, for many existing and potential residents, and the capped subsidies provided through the town's Homebuyer Assistance Program are not sufficient to enable most income-eligible buyers to purchase a unit. At the same time, rising rents limit options for residents with low and moderate incomes. New, affordable rental properties are rare and in high demand.

Many Brookline families and individuals who are living above poverty by federal standards are struggling nonetheless. Their needs remain invisible by most measures and are largely going unmet.

Researcher Linda Olson Pehlke explains how several factors have produced a financial strain:

- Qualification guidelines for housing assistance, food stamps, and other safety net programs have not kept pace with inflation.
- Middle-income wages have remained stagnant or declined, while the costs of housing, transportation, health care, food, heat, childcare, and other necessities have increased.
- The cost of a college education continues to rise and places young adults under enormous debt burden.

The result? Many more residents are struggling to make ends meet, including those who might have been relatively comfortable in past decades.

A GROWING INCOME GAP

Many Brookline residents are still feeling the effects of the recession. The town's unemployment rate has increased in the past decade, from 3.5% to 4.4% (still well below the statewide rate of 10.2% when the Census was taken in 2010). Earnings have dropped or stagnated for middle and lower income households. Meanwhile, Brookline's top earners are doing better than ever, pushing the town's average household income up to \$154,537.

More residents are living below poverty • One of the most striking findings of our research is an increase in Brookline's poverty rate, from 9.3% to 13.1%, with increased poverty rates in all segments of the population. Especially striking is the growth in family poverty, with the number of people living in poverty in female-headed households and children under 18 experiencing particularly steep increases.

The highest overall poverty rate is among multi-adult, non-family households, a fact that has remained constant over the past decade. College and graduate school students with little to no income make up a sizable portion of the multi-adult households below poverty but account for less than half of Brookline's overall poverty rate.

Nine percent of Brookline households are in the lowest income category captured by the Census, earning less than \$10,000 a year; statewide, 7% of households are in this category.

Many more residents are financially vulnerable • In 2010, the federal poverty threshold was \$22,050 for a family of four. Crittendon Women's Union's Economic Independence Calculator, which tallies actual expenses for Massachusetts families, suggests that the true cost of living for a family of four in Norfolk County is \$75,347—nearly three and a half times the federal poverty threshold. Brookline's cost of living is likely on the upper end of the county average.

Most state and federal assistance programs, including food stamps, are available to households that earn less than 185% of the poverty rate; 18% of Brookline residents were below this threshold in 2010.

Additional households earned far below Brookline's true cost of living and yet were ineligible for public assistance. In 2010, more than 40% of Brookline's elderly residents earned less than 300% of the poverty rate, an indicator of significant financial vulnerability.

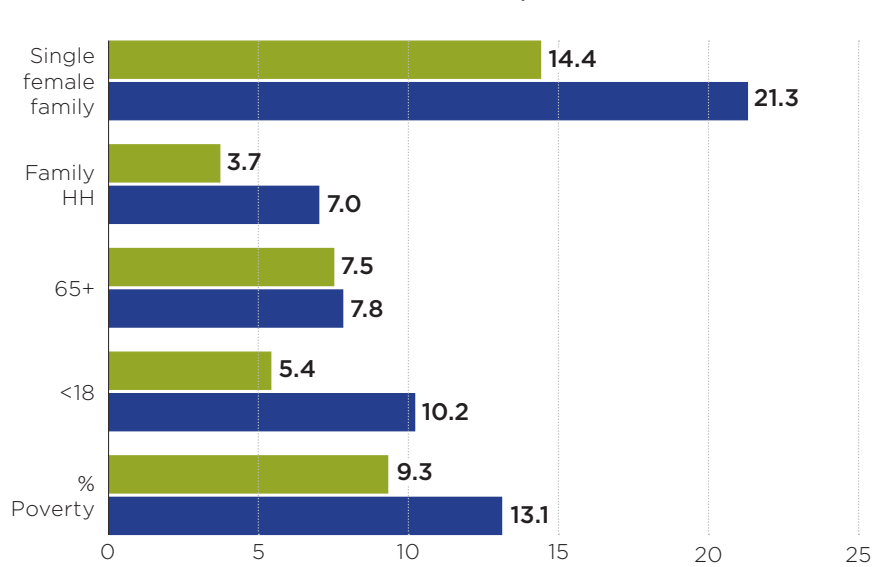
Residents who have been struggling financially are in a worse position than ever with recent reductions in state programs and the sunset of federal stimulus support for unemployment, food stamps, and other social welfare programs.

Income disparity is growing • In the past decade, Brookline saw a dramatic increase in the number of households earning over \$100,000 per year, an increase in the number of households in the two lowest-income categories, and a decrease in the number of households in the middle. The statewide pattern is nearly the opposite.

In 2010, the top 20% of Brookline households earned 58% of the town's total income, a significantly greater concentration of income than in comparison communities.

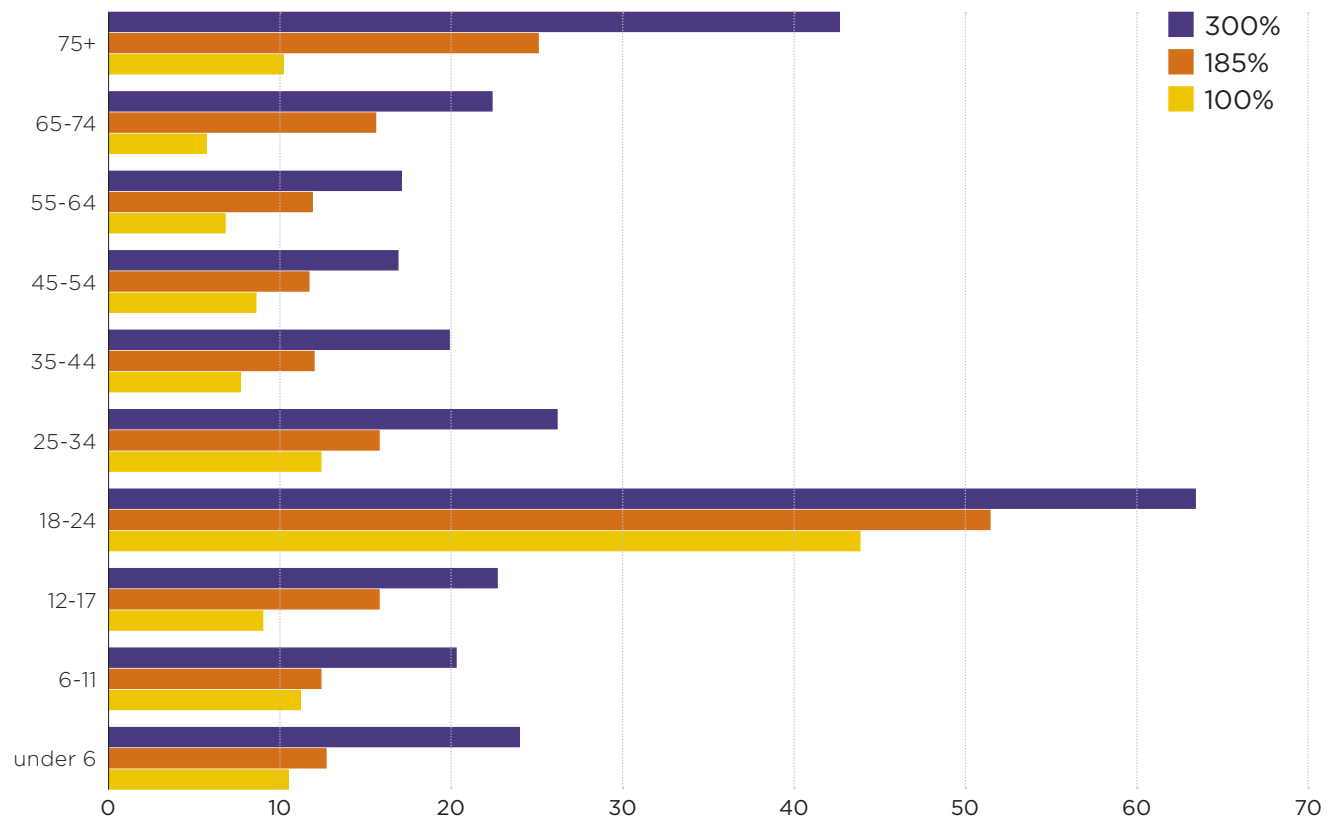
How can we increase community awareness and

BROOKLINE POVERTY RATES | In percent



Sources U.S. Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2006 - 2010

PERSONS BY AGE GROUP AT 100%, 185% AND 300% POVERTY

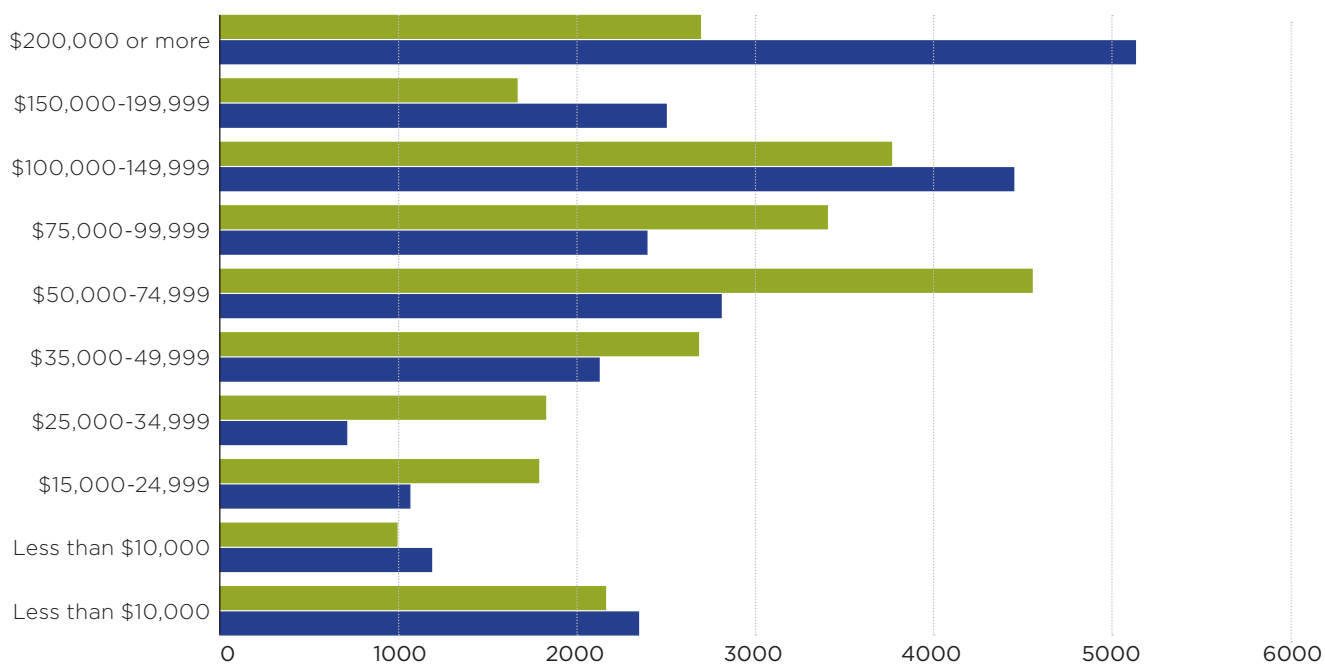


Source American Community Survey 2006 - 2010

support for those experiencing economic hardship?

BROOKLINE INCOME DISTRIBUTION | Number of households

■ 2000 ■ 2010



Sources U.S. Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2008 – 2010



How can a community of disparate incomes ensure all voices are heard

JOIN THE
CONVERSATION

HOW can we provide support and services to our neighbors who are struggling but are not eligible for public assistance?

HOW can we increase community awareness and support for those experiencing economic hardship?

HOW can we reach isolated individuals, including the elderly and those not connected to community through school or religious affiliations, to ensure they are well supported?

HOW can a community of disparate incomes ensure all voices are heard as the town considers its future?

“All too often, we hear about the impact that lack of access to mental health care has on children and adults—including the inability to perform at work or to keep a job, for youth to stay in school or graduate with classmates, or for families to cope with severe conflict and domestic violence. We know that when people have high quality mental health care, their lives are changed—both in the short term by being able to function more fully, and in the long term by becoming more resilient. Both of these outcomes have a profound influence on building a safer, stronger Brookline community for all of our residents.”

—CINDY PRICE, Executive Director, Brookline Community Mental Health Center

In recent years, Brookline has experienced a marked increase in the need for services for children and adults with serious mental illness. Some of this increase may be linked to reductions in mental health services from various agencies.

The **Brookline Community Mental Health Center (BCMHC)** addresses the needs of residents with limited resources who face a wide range of mental health challenges. The center also provides crisis intervention, conflict-resolution, and other therapeutic services. As the town's largest human services agency, the BCMHC is a unique resource, but even its capacity has been stretched.

In 2012, BCMHC saw a 10% increase in referrals (in 2010 and 2011, referrals increased by 8% each year), with notable increases in the number of children and adults struggling with depression, family tensions, and other emotional issues related to the economic downturn.

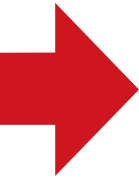
MENTAL HEALTH IN TOUGH TIMES

The Brookline Community Foundation (BCF) recently met with more than 30 community leaders through our Community Pulse Initiative. We spoke with individuals representing schools, faith organizations, and a variety of town departments and nonprofit organizations, asking what they see as the most pressing needs in our community.

Our interviewees touched on many topics, several of which are highlighted in part one of this report. Two major themes are presented in this section:

- 1 Brookline is experiencing a marked increase in people struggling to meet their basic needs.
- 2 Brookline's school-age population faces broad resource and equity challenges.

We present these topics as a starting place for further research and invite your input as we seek to better understand these needs and devise solutions to address them. Interviews were conducted by the members of BCF's Board of Trustees.



STRETCHING THE SAFETY NET

The Brookline Community Foundation's **Safety Net** provides financial relief to Brookline families for rent, food, utility bills, and other extraordinary expenses. In 2012, over 850 people were helped; 75% were single-parent families, and 30% were seniors.

Applications have increased in recent years. Applicants report that they are forced to make tough decisions between utility payments and food, and some face eviction. Others require assistance with one-time purchases, such as a refrigerator or bed, when transitioning from homeless shelters. There has been an increase in requests for medical and dental care as well.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS

With costs rising and wages stagnating for lower- and middle-income residents (see p. 12), Brookline has experienced a sharp increase in the number of people struggling to pay for food, housing, utilities, healthcare, and other necessities. Leaders from emergency assistance organizations shared observations about this rise in need.

More requests for food and emergency assistance • Between 2009 and 2012, the number of visits to the Brookline Emergency Food Pantry increased by 87%—from 2,650 to 4,900. The Food Pantry serves over 500 families and individuals from the Brookline community, up from 250 just a few years ago. Jewish Family and Children's Services, which operates the only kosher food pantry in the state, is serving 30% more households than in the recent past.

Acute need among seniors • Staff from Brookline's Senior Center and the Council on Aging report that, with the changing economic climate, they have had to shift their focus from combatting elder isolation and depression to addressing crisis issues, such as hunger, fuel assistance, and avoiding evictions and home foreclosures.

More need than meets the eye • As is evident in Brookline's income data (p. 13), the current financial squeeze extends beyond those who qualify for public assistance. However, some of Brookline's most important social services—including subsidized early education, health and wellness programs, food deliveries, and job training—are designed to reach those more identifiable groups of low-income residents. Other residents with less visible financial constraints remain unreached.



“I feel very blessed knowing that there are people and organizations out there to provide assistance to a family like mine. I cannot thank you enough and appreciate your kindness.”

—SAFETY NET RECIPIENT, received funds to purchase beds for her three young children.



COMMUNITY PULSE PARTICIPANTS

Baker School
Brookline Adult
& Community Education
Brookline Advisory
Committee
Brookline Board of
Selectmen
Brookline Community
Mental Health Center
Brookline Council on
Aging
Brookline Department
of Health
Brookline Department of
Planning and Community
Development
Brookline Department of
Recreation
Brookline Early Education
Program
Brookline Emergency
Food Pantry
Brookline High School
Brookline Housing
Authority
Brookline Parks and
Open Space Division
Brookline Police
Department
Brookline School
Committee
Brookline Senior Center
Brookline Teen Center
Driscoll School
Devotion School
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Jewish Family &
Children's Services
Lawrence School
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Church
Steps to Success
Temple Kehillath Israel
United Parish

Many Brookline residents who struggle financially lack the skills and information they need to find a sustainable job. The **Brookline Housing Authority's Next Steps** program is one of only two adult workforce development programs in Brookline and serves unemployed and underemployed adults who live in public housing. Next Steps offers English language classes, technology training, as well as employment counseling and referrals to job training programs.

In the past three years, as the unemployment rate of non-disabled adults in public housing reached an estimated 50%, Next Steps has seen a significant increase in referrals, exceeding its capacity. More workforce training resources are needed for those living in public housing and other areas of town.

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN

The growth and changes in Brookline's population are nowhere more evident than in its schools. Currently, the Brookline Public Schools serve 7,112 children in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. That population continues to grow. School leaders and leaders from other youth-serving agencies explained their top priorities as they seek to serve this growing youth cohort.

Need for space • Brookline's public schools are bursting at the seams. Right now, the pressure is greatest on elementary and early childhood programs. Before 2003-2004, Brookline typically enrolled 420 to 440 kindergarten students per year. In 2012, the schools enrolled 660 kindergarteners. The town has added 37 sections of elementary students in the last five years. As a temporary fix, some pre-kindergarten classes are now located at other sites, and more schools may have to move pre-K classes off campus in the coming years.

Brookline High School's enrollment had been declining in recent years, reaching a plateau of 1,750 students this year, but rapid growth is expected in the next few years. By 2022, enrollment is projected to reach 2,500. Accommodating such a large cohort of students in the existing space will be challenging.

With population trends showing continued growth in Brookline's youngest age bands (p. 4), we can expect school classroom capacity to become an even more urgent issue in the near future.

Equity gap • The performance gap between low-income students and their peers is large and persistent across grade levels. Students eligible for free and reduced lunch (a measure of economic need) make up 11.6% of the Brookline Public Schools population but account for the bulk of those students scoring in the "Warning" and "Needs Improvement" levels on the state's MCAS exams. In 2012, 39% of low-income students scored "Warning" or "Needs Improvement" in English language arts, compared with 12% of their peers; 53% of low-income students scored "Warning" or "Needs Improvement" in math, compared with 16% of their peers.

The causes of this achievement gap—and its solution—are complex. One factor of concern to school and community leaders is the limited availability of specialized support for low-income students. The Brookline Early Education Program offers need-based scholarships for its preschool, pre-kindergarten, and summer programs. Meanwhile, Steps to Success supports Brookline's public housing residents from 4th grade through their college years, with academic enrichment, advising, internships, and college-readiness activities. This type of targeted support is not in place for kindergarten through 3rd grade.

Social and emotional support • Brookline schools are experiencing an increased need for social workers and counseling services, well beyond what current staff can address in their limited hours. School leaders would like to see greater diversity among mental health counselors, as well, to match the increasingly diverse student population.

How can our community accommodate significant,



SPACE FOR TEENS

The **Brookline Teen Center**, slated to open this fall, will provide a safe place for teens to learn, connect, grow, and have fun. The 12,000-square-foot center will offer educational and extracurricular programming and open leisure space for teens to enjoy themselves and grow into the next generation of town leaders.

Currently, there is no other entity in Brookline that focuses on serving teens during out-of-school hours. The center's executive director, Matthew Cooney, explains that with a rapidly growing youth population, the need for a teen center could not be more critical.

We heard from several leaders that many students, especially those in transitional housing and other challenging living situations, could benefit from a more holistic support model that would include structured after-school opportunities, culturally appropriate mentoring, and resources to help families set up at-home reading and homework routines.

Out-of-school-time • A number of organizations offer out-of-school opportunities for Brookline students, but space and costs limit participation. Low-income students, who can benefit the most, participate in out-of-school-time programs at lower rates than their peers. Community leaders identified several gaps in services:

- While all schools have homework centers, they do not have enough qualified staff to meet all students' needs.
- After-school programs in the elementary schools cannot keep up with demand. Most programs have waiting lists.
- Many families cannot afford school-based, extended-day programs or quality summer programs, and scholarship support is limited.
- While Steps to Success provides free extended-day programming for public housing residents in grades 4 and up, no equivalent services exist for other low-income students.
- School leaders are particularly concerned about the lack of supervised out-of-school programming at the middle school level.

The Brookline School Committee's recent review of out-of-school time programming suggests a need for district-wide oversight, monitoring, and coordination of programs that use school space, as well as improved sharing of information across sites. With more support and coordination, providers could work together to solve capacity problems, share effective practices, and develop new programs.

“Now more than ever, Brookline needs a systematic approach to support the needs of low-income students—not just their academic needs but also their emotional and physical well-being. I keep as a guiding light the notion that societies should be judged by how they care for the least able among them.”

—KRISTEN HERBERT, *Principal, Lincoln School*

and continued, growth in our school-age population?



JOIN THE
CONVERSATION

HOW can we nurture the diversity and vibrancy of our community in a time of rising costs and income disparity?

HOW do we increase the capacity of our most in-demand resources and extend benefits to all those who need them?

HOW do we build on the strengths of Brookline's civic infrastructure to address the most persistent and newly emerging needs of Brookline residents?

WHAT creative solutions and new or strengthened collaborations can help us make Brookline a truly great place to live for all residents?

YOUR VOICE IS NEEDED

We hope the information in this report—and the questions we pose—will inspire conversations at all levels in our community. Please join us at the Brookline Community Foundation as we investigate these topics in more depth and explore other important topics, like the role of arts and environmental stewardship in our community. With your input and support, we can work together to build a better Brookline.

GIVE WHERE YOU LIVE

You can make a difference in keeping Brookline strong and vital. The **Brookline Community Foundation (BCF)** relies on donations to offer grants to programs such as the **Brookline Council on Aging**, the **Brookline Emergency Food Pantry**, and **Brookline Extended Day Advisory Council** that are meeting crucial needs in our community. With your support, we can do more to make Brookline a great place to live.

BCF also plays a role as a facilitator of **community-wide conversations** and seeks to engage all community members in our efforts through programs such as our **Brookline Teen Grantmakers Program**. Your generous support will mean more opportunities for Brookline residents to share their voices and expertise in shaping our future.

You can be a part of our efforts by **giving online at brooklinecommunity.org** or by sending a donation to:

Brookline Community Foundation
40 Webster Place
Brookline, MA 02445

The Brookline Community Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.



Working with the Brookline Community Foundation has really opened my eyes to the diverse needs in the Brookline community and also to the tremendous power that individuals have to make local change. —BENJAMIN DOUGHTY, *Teen Grantmaker*

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We have worked to ensure accuracy of the information contained in this report. All content is ultimately the responsibility of the Brookline Community Foundation. Feedback and responses are welcome. Please send them to Executive Director Jenny Amory at jamory@brooklinecommunity.org.

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