

Before and After Photographs Mission Main & Orchard Housing Developments



Mission Main Housing Development, 1999

The trouble began in the 1970's. Residents Sandra and Maria remember being afraid of getting mugged or having their homes broken into.

“You could see them [drug dealers] coming down Smith Street, Whittier Street to Smith [was] the pathway to drugs. They came in any kind of car – they knew if you wanted some good drugs, come to Mission.”

-- Sandra, Mission Main Resident

According to Edna, a resident of Orchard since 1942, problems at the development began in the 1960's when one day the gardens and the playgrounds disappeared.

“[Before] we had a swimming pool and an apple orchard—that's how the project was named. Everyone walked everywhere. There were no cars—there were gardens with roses.”

“They came and took up all the dirt and put down the asphalt. Then the cars came.”

-- Edna, Orchard resident



Aerial photograph taken of the former Orchard Park Development, 1996.

“They [colleges and businesses] turned their backs on us. They wanted the [Boston] Housing Authority to put a fence around us to keep us inside and away from them.”

-- Sandra, Mission Main resident

“They [drug dealers] came into our territory, and we fought back. We told the police, ‘we don't need anymore Band-aids. We need to clean house.’”

--Maria, Mission Main resident



Part of Mission Main Development along Parker Street, 1998

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Part of the new Mission Main Development, 2002

“Oh this is nice. Oh this is so nice. It was like stepping out of the jungle onto a beautiful beach and seeing the ocean for the first time.”

-- Sandra, Mission Main resident

Today, Mission Main is comprised of 535 units, 445 of which are deemed affordable housing. Residents like Sandra and Maria now have their own townhouse entryways, bushes and trees, large windows, and gabled roofs.

The reconstruction of Orchard has led to exciting changes in the surrounding Dudley Square area. Businesses are moving their offices to the once vacated buildings.

Working with the BHA and Boston Public School Department, Orchard residents also fulfilled their vision of establishing a K-8 school in the neighborhood. Not only does the school serve educational purposes, it also provides space for much-needed community activities.



A view of the new Orchard development, 2003

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The new Mission Main Community Center, 2002

In addition to the structural transformations of the Orchard and Mission Main developments, more community services are being offered than ever before. At the Mission Main Community Center (shown, left) and the Orchard Family Center, residents are able to improve their computer skills; participate in ESOL classes and job skills workshops; obtain case management services; and socialize with their friends and neighbors.

“We met every Friday in the community room for a year with 50 to 100 residents to find out what services they wanted. We worked 6 days a week. Now I have everything I need right here.”

-- Maria, Mission Main resident