

back bay

population	gross area	population density	housing units	median income	median age
69,648	.94 sq.mi.	28,083 ppsm	17,663	\$66,427	32.8

Information from 2000 U.S. Census data

history

From 1857 until 1880, the Back Bay, the body of water separating Boston from Brookline, was filled, adding 450 acres of land to the city through its original Big Dig. Since its inception, the Back Bay has been a fashionable residential quarter with its distinctive Victorian townhouses. Few people know that this elegant district arose from a failed plan to build two dams along the Charles River Basin. The Great Dam became Beacon Street and the Short Dam became Hemenway Road. Before this, the land to the west of Boston Common was originally a beach; by the Civil War, the shoreline was filled in to Clarendon Street, and by 1882, to Kenmore Square.

Unlike Beacon Hill's residential squares, the Back Bay was modeled after the long Parisian boulevards and it is one of Boston's few neighborhoods where the streets are on a grid. The cross streets are named for English dukes, in alphabetical order from Arlington to Hereford.

today

The Back Bay remains one of the most coveted addresses in Boston. Residences on Beacon Street, Commonwealth Avenue, and Marlborough Street provide residents convenient access to the shopping at **Copley Place** and the **Prudential Center** as well as the destination nightlife and dining on **Newbury Street**. The Back Bay is also walking distance to the **Charles River Esplanade**, **Boston Common**, the **Charles River Esplanade**, **Fenway Park**, the **Public Garden**, and **Symphony Hall** (think First Night celebrations and ice skating on Frog Pond during winter).

location

The Back Bay is bounded by the Charles River on the north, the Public Garden to the east, Boylston Street to the south, and Fenway Park to the west. It also continues for four blocks along Bay State Road and, on its northeast corner, includes the Brimmer Street neighborhood.

housing stock

The Back Bay is known for its range of brownstone and townhouse mansions, many of which have been converted to luxury condominiums. The "water side" of Beacon Street is particularly desirable for its views of the Charles River. Other prestige addresses include **The Burrage House** (314 Commonwealth Ave.), **The Somerset** (416 Commonwealth Ave.), and **The Vendome** (160 Commonwealth Ave.). Copley Square boasts two of Boston's architectural masterpieces, H. H. Richardson's **Trinity Church** and McKim, Mead & White's **Boston Public Library**. Nearby, I. M. Pei's **John Hancock Towers** are the tallest building in New England.

famous residents

Phillips Brooks • Fannie Farmer • Isabella Stuart Gardner • John Holmes • Oliver Wendell Holmes • Julia Ward Howe • William Dean Howells • William Morris Hunt • H. H. Richardson • Robert Lowell Jr. • Ric Ocasek • Eugene O'Neill • Paulina Porizkova • George Santayana

movies & books

Esther Forbes' *Johnny Tremain* • Robert McCloskey's *Make Way for Ducklings* • Margret & H. A. Rey's *Curious George* • Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* • E. B. White's *The Trumpet of the Swan* • *Amistad* (1997) • *Beneath the Lines* (1977) • *Blown Away* (1994) • *The Bostonians* (1984) • *Charly* (1968) • *Coma* (1978) • *Friends of Eddie Coyle* (1973) • *Glory* (1989) • *Housesitter* (1992) • *The Last Detail* (1973) • *The Matchmaker* (1997) • *Mrs. Witherbourne* (1996) • *Once Around* (1998) • *The Out-of-Towners* (1970)

transportation

The Back Bay is conveniently located for both residents and commuters, and is well-served by public transportation and proximity to major transportation routes.

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Car: Route 93 to Storrow Drive, take Kenmore / Fenway exit. Bear left on Commonwealth Avenue. From Route 90 (Mass Pike), take the Prudential/ Copley exit.

T: Green Line to Copley or Hynes/ICA, or Orange Line to Back Bay Station.

shopping

AIX Armani Exchange • Burberrys • Betsey Johnson • Christian Dior • Cole-Haan • Barney's New York (coming spring 2006) • BCBG Max Mara • BOSS Hugo Boss • Crate & Barrel • DKNY • Gucci • Hermes • Kiehl's • La Perla • Louis Vuitton • Neiman Marcus • Polo Ralph Lauren • Pratesi • Restoration Hardware • Saks Fifth Ave • Tiffany & Co. • Williams-Sonoma

culture & amenities

Boston Athenaeum • Boston Center for Adult Education (5 Commonwealth Ave) • Boston Common • Charles River Esplanade • Gibson House Museum (137 Beacon St.) • University Club

local news sources

Back Bay Neighborhood Association

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