

A sunburst background with yellow and orange rays radiating from the center.

40

2021 and Beyond

RECOVERY, HOPE, INSPIRATION



Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation

Annual Report 2020–2021

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CO-CHAIRS AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Coleen K. Walker
Co-Chair



Rudy Russell
Co-Chair



Gail Latimore
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

40 years ago, a few concerned and proactive citizens declared “WE CAN” in response to a scourge of arson for profit, block busting, and white flight in the Codman Square neighborhood. Their efforts have now blossomed into a steadfast community resource responsible for improving the lives of countless residents over four decades.

Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation has risen above many challenges in our 40 years, and we look forward to continuing to have a positive impact on the lives of our residents for many years to come.

The past year-and-a-half has been among the most challenging of all, as the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the underlying racial inequities in our society, caused hardship and tragedy for many in our community, and forced our agency to reshuffle our priorities and we adapted to the realities of a socially-distanced world.

We are so proud of how our staff and Board remained focused during this challenging time. Casting aside all obstacles, our staff efficiently and effectively went about their work, helping local residents, businesses, and organizations foster a healthy, thriving and equitable community by promoting affordable and safe housing, economic opportunity, community engagement, and sustainable infrastructure.

Meanwhile, our Board has been busy evaluating the best ways that CSNDC can help in the future, resulting in a new strategic plan and an upcoming pivot to a more focused direction for the agency going forward.

Through it all, our mission of developing affordable housing and commercial spaces that are safe and sustainable, maximizing civic engagement, and promoting economic stability for low- and moderate-income residents of all ages, remains unchanged.

We are grateful to so many who share this mission. We thank you for your support over these past 40 years and look forward to amazing accomplishments as we enter the next chapter of CSNDC’s history.

With warm regards,

Coleen K. Walker
Co-Chair

Rudy Russell
Co-Chair

Gail Latimore
Executive Director

WE CAN. WE DID. WE DO.

1970–1989

- Community leaders created WECAN, a local initiative to renovate blighted properties and sell them to low- and moderate-income first-time home buyers.
- WECAN became Codman Square Housing Development Corporation (CSHDC), incorporated as a 501c3 nonprofit agency on September 18, 1981.
- CSHDC completed its first large-scale rental housing developments, with about 120 units of housing developed, including 80 units of distressed, scattered-site housing via the Boston Housing Partnership 1.
- The Lithgow Commercial Building and block were renovated, bringing major commercial activity into the heart of Codman Square, along with 31 new units of affordable housing.

1990–1999

- Leadership changed the agency's name to the Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation (CSNDC).
- 325 units were renovated through BHP2 at Washington Columbia 1 and 2.
- The Four Corners Action Coalition won State legislative support to install four new stops on the Fairmount Commuter Line, including two in CSNDC's service area.

2000–2009

- Elmhurst Playground was completed after CSNDC supported a local effort to place the Elmhurst vacant lot into the City's capital budget.
- The Millennium Planning process was launched, a "ground-up" community vision plan with input from hundreds of community residents.
- The Fairmount/Indigo Community Development Corporation Collaborative was formed and pushed for release of state funding for Fairmount/Indigo rail line improvements.

2010–2015

- In response to rising crime, foreclosures and wide-scale unemployment, CSNDC convened the Millennium Ten initiative to take a fresh look at community planning and action.
- CSNDC launched Keeping Codman Square Affordable, an anti-displacement strategy to address early signs of displacement in the neighborhood.
- CSNDC launched the Talbot-Norfolk-Triangle Eco-Innovation District (EID) focused on local energy generation, green infrastructure, and transit-oriented development.
- CSNDC launched the OASIS on Ballou Urban Agriculture project on a once vacant lot.

2016–2021

- Four real estate development projects totaling 231 units of affordable housing were launched, including the 16-unit New England Heritage Homes homeownership development.
- CSNDC launched the Green Infrastructure Certification Training Program focused on preparing low-to moderate-income people for jobs in the thousands of public capital projects.
- CSNDC launched its Anti-Racism Academy focused on effecting system change around issues such as police brutality, negative health and life mortality.
- CSNDC supported local residents and businesses during the COVID-19 crisis.
- CSNDC's Board of Directors completed a strategic planning process recommending a shift towards scaling real estate.

[For more detailed history of CSNDC, go to \[www.csndc.com/about/history\]\(http://www.csndc.com/about/history\).](http://www.csndc.com/about/history)

COMMUNITY LEADERS RISING UP...

Four decades ago, the Codman Square community was experiencing rapid decline. Hundreds of homes were abandoned. Vacant lots and home fires were common. Conditions in the neighborhood were bad and getting worse.

That's when our founders decided to take matters into their own hands. Community leaders created WECAN, an initiative to renovate rundown properties and sell them to low- and moderate-income home buyers. This organization merged with the local Community Development Corporation to form a Housing Development Corporation, which eventually became Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation.

We would like to recognize the invaluable contributions of the many dedicated individuals who led the effort in our early days – among them, Arthur Young, Cynthia Younger, Jim Keefe, Ada Focer, Bill Jones, Tim Clegg, and Bob Gittens. Now forty years later, here are some brief reflections from four of these individuals to whom we owe so much.



Ada Focer, Director of the Community Development Corporation

"The founding phase of the Codman Square NDC was really one of halting the free fall and creating some confidence that things were going to get better. Ending the fires, organizing neighbors for block clubs and vacant lot reuse, reselling vacant houses to new owners, giving people a new way of understanding the chaos around them and a plan to move forward they could believe in all helped that effort. My heart, then and now, remains in Codman Square.

I thank God for all the devoted people who worked with me and those who followed after me and the other founders and who have, with persistence, rebuilt a healthy community that nourishes the lives of the people who live there."



Cynthia Younger, Treasurer of the First Board of Directors

"I got involved because I was committed to my community. I think it's just what a responsible person who cares about their community does. There was not much in place in the beginning. We were all trying to figure it out. We were mostly focused on getting some funding and building partnerships with the city. I think we helped stabilize the community by rehabbing abandoned properties and providing affordable homes for people to live in. In fact, I eventually became one

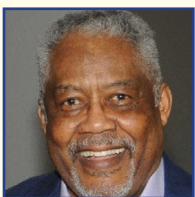
of those people. A few years after I left the Board, I was lucky enough to win the lottery drawing for a home that the agency had renovated. And I've lived here for 21 years."



Jim Keefe, Chairman of the First Board of Directors

"For me personally, it all began with the blizzard of '78. There was a lot of looting in the major stores in Codman Square. It forced people in the neighborhood to try to figure out what to do. A long glidepath of decay had suddenly taken a much steeper turn. So, these ad hoc meetings began popping up around the neighborhood and finally we got together and started organizing. Our aspirations were modest – one step at a time, one building, one lot at a time. And now,

these years later, it's so gratifying to see that legacy continue, and it burns as bright now as it did back in the early 80s when we formed it."



Bill Jones, First Executive Director

"We brought people together around the one thing they didn't want and that was racial violence in the neighborhood. People of good will came together and said, 'What do we do and how do we do it?' Then we turned our attention to housing development, recognizing that we needed to create safe places for people to live. But the progress we made on housing never would have happened if it was in a violent neighborhood. Overall, I think we developed a reputation for

getting things done and for integrity. And that built a strong foundation for everyone in the cycle as it went forward."

[For more in-depth stories, go to \[www.csndc.com/reflections-from-our-founders-40-years-later\]\(http://www.csndc.com/reflections-from-our-founders-40-years-later\).](http://www.csndc.com/reflections-from-our-founders-40-years-later)

...LED TO 40 YEARS OF IMPACTING LIVES...



Reggie Stewart

Reggie Stewart Finds His Voice with CSNDC's Help

As a real estate broker for almost ten years, Reggie Stewart, a 42-year-old social justice activist and father of five who lives in Codman Square, is keenly aware of the impact of the racial wealth gap and how that plays out in terms of gentrification and displacement. Reggie's passion for social justice is obvious, but his efforts lacked structure and focus – that is, until he met Jason Boyd, director of CSNDC's Community Organizing & Resident Resources Department (CORR). Since getting involved with CSNDC, Reggie has significantly expanded his leadership contribution to the community. "Without CSNDC, I'd kind of be out there just by myself, making my argument," Reggie reflects. "But they have connections and community to other like-minded advocates so I'm not over in the corner with a bull horn by myself. Thanks to CSNDC, I have a family of activists I can add my voice to."



Demetres Rush

Demetres Rush Focuses on Financial Fitness

"My goal is to be a millionaire one day," says Demetres Rush. It's an inspiring statement, given that Demetres spent 20 of his 42 years in an Illinois prison. When he was done serving his time in February 2019, Demetres moved in with his brother in Dedham who suggested he look into the STRIVE program in Codman Square. That's where he met Keyna Samuel, CSNDC's financial specialist who helps teach the RI\$E program, a comprehensive course designed to help low- and moderate-income residents take control of their financial future. It is exactly what Demetres needed to take his emerging passion for financial literacy to the next level and begin to get his finances on solid footing. With that guidance, he raised his credit score, built equity through investment, and transformed himself through education. But Demetres seems to take it all in stride. "I'm happy to do anything to help or inspire others," he says.



Michelle White

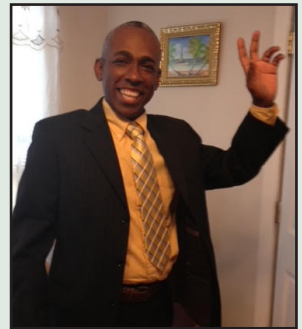
Michelle White Serves Up Soul Food

"Without them, I would have gone down so many rabbit holes," laughs Michelle White, owner of the Next Step Soul Food Café in Codman Square. Charlie Vlahakis and others at CSNDC helped Michelle realize her dream of opening the restaurant in 2017. She was developing a loyal following when, in the summer of 2019, the façade of her storefront collapsed and she was forced to close for six weeks. She had just reopened when COVID-19 struck. Since her only "employee," her mother, has underlying health conditions and feared contracting COVID, Michelle decided to temporarily shutter the restaurant. In the months since, she has worked with CSNDC staff to acquire some relief grants which, along with help from a marketing consultant who set up a website and an online platform for her business, have allowed her to pivot from a standard restaurant to a supplier of meals to-go. Michelle is now finalizing her new business model and is excited to re-open the revamped cafe this fall. "I wouldn't be here without them," she says.

...LED TO 40 YEARS OF IMPACTING LIVES...

Luis Castillo Goes Solar!

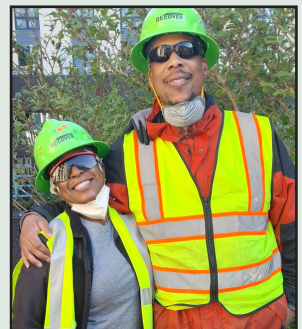
"It's the best decision I ever made," says Luis Castillo about his decision to install a new 22-panel solar photovoltaic system on the roof of his home on Colonial Avenue in Codman Square in March 2020. He hadn't even been thinking about adding solar to his home when CSNDC's Danilo Morales approached him and asked him if he would be interested in special programs to save energy and money while helping the environment. CSNDC put Luis in touch with the folks at Resonant Energy, CSNDC's solar partner, who explained that he could qualify for a Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (CEC) Solar Loan. He also received a discount on the equipment through the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Program and a \$5,000 recoverable grant from CSNDC, which will be forgiven as Luis engages civically in the community. Given his penchant for community service, this will be a win-win for Luis and the community he serves.



Luis Castillo

Mujihad Muhammad and Juliette Reid Unleash a Passion for Green Infrastructure

"There's no way I would have gotten this job without this program," says Juliette Reid. "It's the best thing I've ever done and I love it." She's speaking about the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program course taught by CSNDC's David Queeley and Danilo Morales. Juliette was joined in the class by Mujihad Muhammad, and, thanks to CSNDC's support and advocacy, they were both recently hired by Recover Green Roofs, a Somerville-based company specializing in the design, installation, and maintenance of dynamic rooftop green spaces. It's all part of an effort to develop a workforce trained to build, inspect and maintain the multitude of green infrastructure projects expected to be initiated in Boston in the next decade. "I wouldn't say it's easy work," says Mujihad, "but it's definitely something I'm passionate about – how we can be more conscious of what we build and how this can help the environment and help us at the same time."



Mujihad Muhammad and Juliette Reid

Ann Marie Kennedy Becomes a Homeowner at Last

"It was always my dream to own my own home and have independence, but I needed some help to know what to do," recalls Ann Marie Kennedy-Horton. At the time, she and her husband Karl were renting a two-bedroom apartment in Codman Square. Then one day, she saw a flyer at the CSNDC office advertising the First-Time Homebuyer's Program. "I decided to go in and that's when I met Carolyn McGee," Ann Marie remembers. Carolyn explained that a new class was starting soon, and Ann Marie decided to join. With McGee's guidance, Ann Marie and her husband made changes to improve their credit scores and initiated a lengthy search for a home they could afford. They eventually purchased their dream home in Mattapan. "I couldn't have done it without CSNDC," Ann Marie says. "They educated me throughout the process and if I hadn't been anticipating all these steps, it would have been overwhelming to purchase a house."



Ann Marie Kennedy

...AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR OUR FUTURE

For 40 years, CSNDC has been working with local residents, businesses, and organizations to foster a healthy, thriving and equitable community in Codman Square and South Dorchester. In the past two decades, we have grown from a small agency focused on affordable housing to a comprehensive community development agency providing a wide ranging set of services to our community, as demonstrated on the previous two pages.

But the social unrest and systemic injustices laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic have given us pause and an opportunity to reflect on our impact. Are our efforts resulting in the change we seek in the underlying socio-economic conditions of our community? How can we optimize our future impact on the lives of our residents?

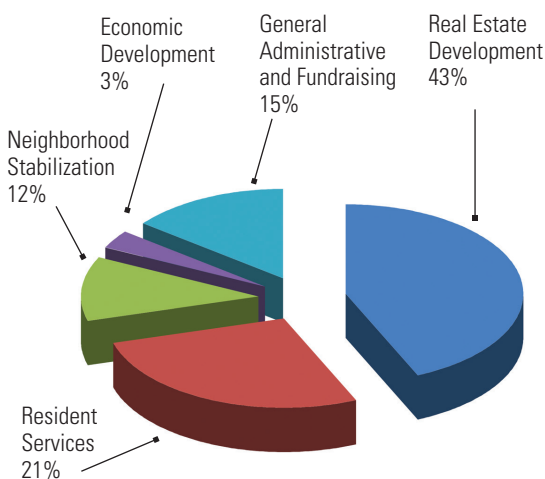
These are the questions CSNDC’s Board of Directors has asked itself during a two-year strategic planning process. The result of this reflection is a sharpened focus for the agency going forward around two high-leverage **“North Star” priorities:**

1. **Turbo-charge our community organizing and base-building.** We need to aggressively take aim at the systems and policies which perpetuate the wealth gap and other inequities that disproportionately impact people of color. So, we’re building an “Equity Army,” a ground-up movement of activated and engaged citizens to advocate for and drive the systemic change required to fundamentally alter the socio-economic conditions of our residents.
2. **Significantly scale-up our real estate development efforts.** Gentrification and displacement are ongoing concerns in our community, and our current pace of affordable housing development isn’t keeping up. So, we are rededicating ourselves to find and implement new, innovative strategies that will enable us to double or triple the number of units we are producing over the next few years – and then continue to grow from there.

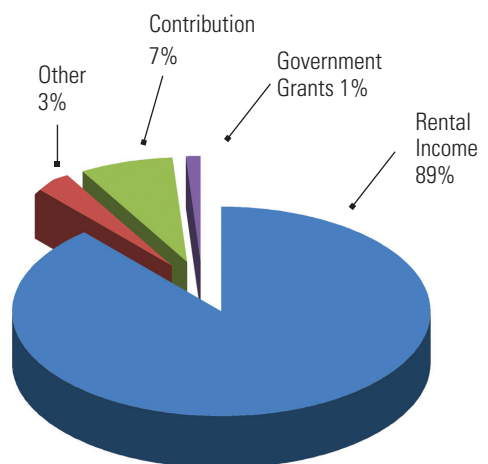
This shift may require some tough choices in the days ahead. But we believe it is an important pivot to from offering a broad set of services to being laser-focused on what it will take to transform our community into a place where the residents are no longer reliant on those services.

FINANCIALS 2020

EXPENSES \$20,296,812



REVENUE \$18,936,235



THANK YOU TO OUR STAFF, BOARD, AND SUPPORTERS

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Design: JGJDesigns.com