

CITY OF BOSTON – MASSACHUSETTS

**For Media Release**

I wanted first to take this time to thank you for all of your support throughout this year. Know that your service isn't going unnoticed. I am reminded that we do not do this work alone and could not be more grateful for partners like you.

Throughout the past several years, we all have been aware of the issues surrounding Melnea Cass Blvd. and Massachusetts Ave.  In Nubian Square, formerly known as Dudley Station, the local businesses, Boston Public School Students of all ages, and senior citizens that reside directly in the area have been held hostage by many influences that include open-air drug dealing and usage and a large underground market of illegal cigarette sales. There have also been concerns of prostitution and loitering with vagrant substance users defecating in public areas.  Unlike Melnea Cass, this area has dealt with the majority of these issues since the early '70s

After the community businesses led by Dunkin Doughnuts owner Clayton Turnball and Cheryl Straughter, owner of Soleil's Restaurant, were at the point of closing their doors and taking substantial financial losses, they reached out for support from Tracy Litthcut, Director Mayor's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives (MOFBI).  Nubian Square was under siege, and the general community searched for results to improve their quality of life.

For the past year, the Mayor’s Office of Faith Based Initiatives developed partnerships with organizations that could contribute to improving the Nubian Square area.  Partners at the table are BPD-B2, MBTA Police, Roxbury Main Streets, Central Boston Elder Services, Urbanica Development, Nubian Square Development L.L.C., and C.D.C. of Boston, The Boston Public Schools, StepRox, The Mayor's Office of Recovery Services and the Office of Neighborhood Services, Inspectional Services Department, Twelfth Baptist Church, Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Charles Street A.M.E. Church, Eliot Church, Roxbury Presbyterian Church, Grant A.M.E. Church, Lion of Judah Church, St. Anthony's Shrine with several community-based organizations and businesses in Nubian Square.  The strategy provided resources for those willing to change their lives and, unfortunately, law enforcement and arrest those who openly and blatantly commit acts of crime and violence.  The arrests made by law enforcement did not occur until after multiple warnings and resource availability made to them daily.  Most recently, law enforcement officials and the courts were not making arrests or prosecuting crimes believed to be lower-level crimes.  In doing so, they didn't realize its impact on the quality of life for hard-working individuals in Roxbury.

The Mayor's Office of Recovery Services, led by Jen Tracey, provided funding for our initiative to hire outreach workers to bring much-needed changes and resources to a population in need of service and a dose of reality from law enforcement.  The funding led us to the Nation of Islam.  Once again, I must mention that our efforts are guided by the Mayor's Office of Faith-Based Initiatives.  The Nubian Square Initiative eventually hired 5 Brothers from the Nation of Islam an independent woman from the community and member of the illegal street-level activity willing to take employment rather than sell illicit cigarettes.   The Nation of Islam was the logical choice considering the high levels of respect demanded and received from the community based on their success of cleaning up the Black community issues related to returning citizens and active substance abuse users.

The initiative has now been in place for 18 weeks. We've had a tremendous amount of success.  Our success is related to no longer having high levels of illegal activity in the area. We've placed many individuals in substantial resources and opportunities to change their lives in a positive direction.  With law enforcement feeling supported by the Nubian Square Initiative and the Black Community as a whole, they have felt supported to provide the necessary enforcement strategies to clean up the area.  A message was being sent that it is not alright to break the laws in the Nubian Square Area without the fear of arrest. Over this period, well over 200 law-breaking individuals did not venture to Nubian Square to violate laws and terrorize hard-working, law-abiding citizens in the area.

Over the past several months, we have also planned and organized specific events to support the community's most vulnerable populations.  Our first event was an evening outreach geared towards women involved in exploitation and prostitution.  Our second event was geared towards individuals in recovery and the third was a fishing trip to Falmouth with senior citizens in the area.

**On November 10th, from 11 pm-2 amour initiative** will conduct a nighttime outreach geared towards individuals that remain in the area because of homelessness.   We will be supported by our usual group of partners, including Pine Street Inn, that will register our homeless population as well as take them to Pine Street Inn for the night with the hopes of helping individuals off the streets.  We are asking individuals to meet inside of the the Bolling Building lobby at 11 pm.  We will walk together to outside in Nubian Square where faith-based leaders from Roxbury will begin our night with a blessing of prayer.  We will then walk to the Blair's Parking lot and different team leads will walk other volunteer groups through the neighborhood to identify homeless folks in need of services. We will encourage those homeless individuals to take refuge for the night at Pine Street Inn with the hopes of utilizing the services for future purposes.

Once again, this is an initiative led by community partners and organizations, law enforcement and religious institutions and organizations for the betterment of the Nubian Community. This strategy is completely different from the harm reduction strategy at Mass and Cass. Please come and join us for the evening to observe the tremendous success we’ve had in the area.