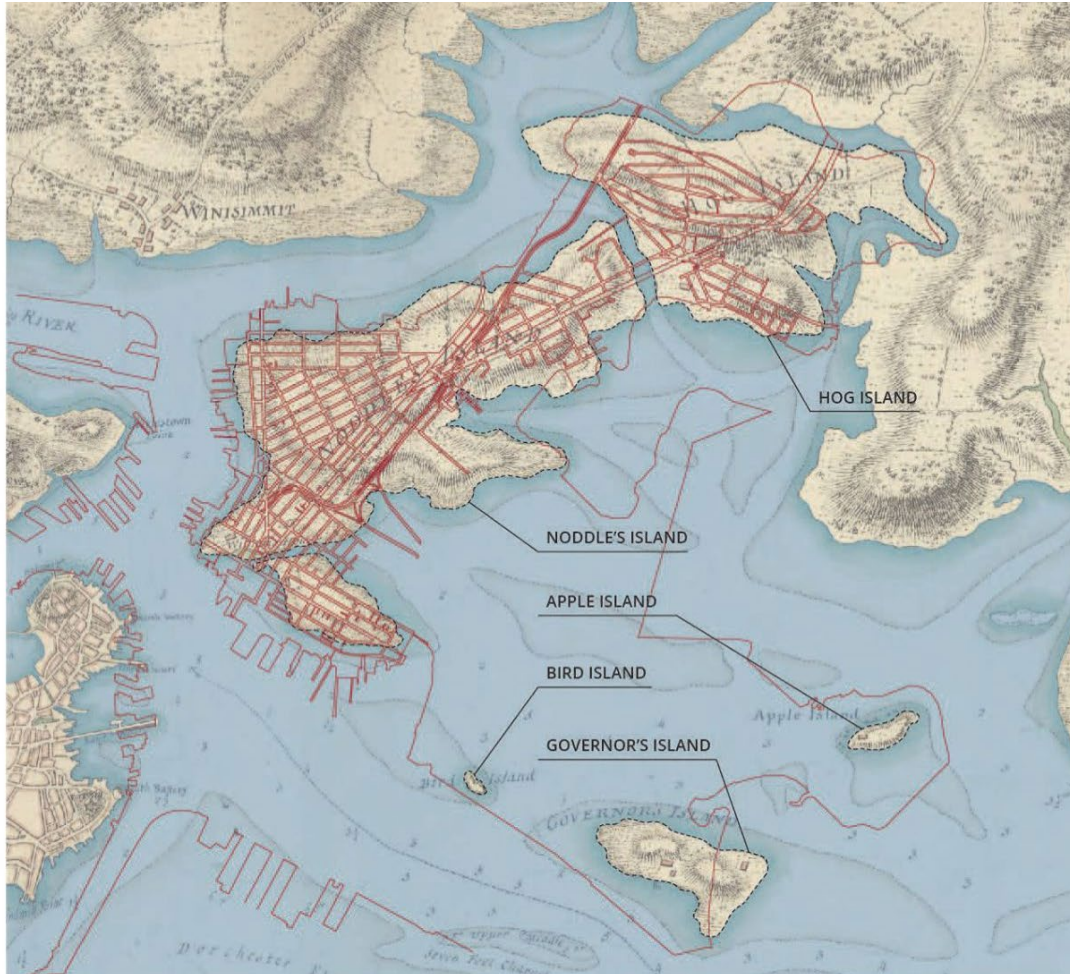


## DUSP PRACTICUM

# East Boston Practicum

## Climate, Environment & Community



Overlay of today's East Boston land area on historic 1630s map. Source: PLAN: East Boston

**Instructors:**

Mary Anne Ocampo, MIT DUSP, maocampo@mit.edu

TA: Flavio Vila Skrzypek, fvila@mit.edu

**Educational Collaborators:**

Miho Mazereeuw, Joint Urban Design Studio, MIT Department of Architecture

Lisbeth Shepherd, MIT DesignX

**Schedule:** Wednesday 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm, Friday 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

**Credits:** 15 units

**Canvas:** [11.304 Site & Environ System Planning \(mit.edu\)](https://canvas.libraries.mit.edu/courses/11.304j)

**Website:**

[DUSP MIT 2021 Site and Environmental Systems - Introduction to the Project | East Boston Practicum](https://dusp.mit.edu/2021-site-and-environmental-systems-introduction-to-the-project-east-boston-practicum)

## Project Background and Goals

The course addresses the range of practical approaches involved in evaluating and planning sites within the context of natural, cultural, social, and political systems. The course concentrates on developing the knowledge and skills for analyzing and planning a site for development through practical exercises and a major urban research project that focuses on environmental and economic justice in East Boston.

The practicum's main objectives will be to develop coherent waterfront plans and climate resiliency design strategies for our East Boston community clients: The East Boston Climate Coalition: Eastie Farm, GreenRoots, and Harborkeepers. We will also work in close cooperation with the City of Boston as well as with public agencies, non-profit organizations, and professional consultants such as Boston Planning and Development Agency, Buy-In, Environmental Services, East Boston CDC, and NOAA.

The project will address the following questions:

- **How might a mosaic of land uses, wetlands, programmed open space, and residential neighborhoods be configured and deployed to create a coherent, ecologically-based strategy for climate mitigation along the waterfront peninsula of East Boston?**
- **How are design strategies tied to economic opportunities for the people of East Boston?**

This workshop is envisioned as along-term collaboration between MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning, the City of Boston, and East Boston organizations. The workshop will be a continuation of the 2021 East Boston practicum and will leverage the past practicum's recommendations as part of the course.

## East Boston

East Boston has been a continuously evolving neighborhood since its founding in the 1830s. Its working waterfront contributed to the local and regional economy, and immigrants have called the neighborhood home for nearly two centuries. Residential and commercial areas have followed patterns of growth that were laid out in the original plan for the neighborhood. These trends highlight two major challenges facing East Boston's future:

- a growing population and
- increasing climate change threats

For example:

- **22% Population growth in East Boston from 2000**  
East Boston's annual population growth rate is 2 percent, which is twice as high as the citywide average.
- **42% Increase in Rent**  
Renting in East Boston has become increasingly expensive. Home sales prices have also risen in recent years: the median sales price for a unit in the neighborhood **rose 9 percent a year.**
- **58% of the land area is vulnerable to flooding by the 2070s**  
Today, 38 percent of the land area is vulnerable to flooding with a 1 percent annual chance event.
- **55% Spanish-speaking Population**  
The Hispanic or Latinx population has increased dramatically from 1 percent in 1970 to 57 percent in 2017. More than half of East Boston's residents were foreign born compared to 28 percent of Boston residents.
- **80% of the MBTA Blue Line stations will be at risk of flooding by the 2070s**  
55 percent of major roads will be vulnerable to flooding with a 1 percent annual chance event.

**Specific Project/Client Goals:**

The practicum will develop thematic frameworks for the whole waterfront to inform specific programmatic requirements leading to detailed site plans.

The themes may include:

- A. ecology and environmental systems (natural infrastructure)
- B. cultural narratives, neighborhood identity, and activation
- C. access, circulation and neighborhood connections
- D. adaptive infrastructure of a 'working' waterfront and
- E. economic opportunities

Focusing on:

- Leveraging different expertise that collectively contribute to a strategic plan that proposes sustainable design for the East Boston waterfront
- Understanding how industry and infrastructure have shaped the neighborhood of East Boston
- Understand how planning can center on the diverse immigrant population of residents through integrated environmental and economic strategies
- Exploring how a Climate Corps model and approach can help close the racial wealth gap and accelerate environmental justice

**Research Context**

Students in this practicum will take part in a joint approach with DUSP, East Boston community-based organizations, and national experts to launch a multi-year research project exploring the potential of “climate corps” to build equitable and resilient cities. Students will learn about the context of federal and local proposals for climate corps—including the Biden Administrations Civilian Climate Corps and the Boston Conservation Corps—existing and emerging models, and how they relate to imperatives of social, environmental, and economic justice. Building on the work of MIT SA+P alumni and faculty centering Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) young adults and communities, we will use the lens of climate corps to explore how the built environment, institutional and community-driven resiliency planning, green jobs, and service-learning intersect and how individual projects and needs at the neighborhood level relate to larger-scale urgency around racial equity and climate action in cities. The Climate Corps thread will include a speaker series exposing students to a range of multi-sector practitioners at the cutting edge of the topic.

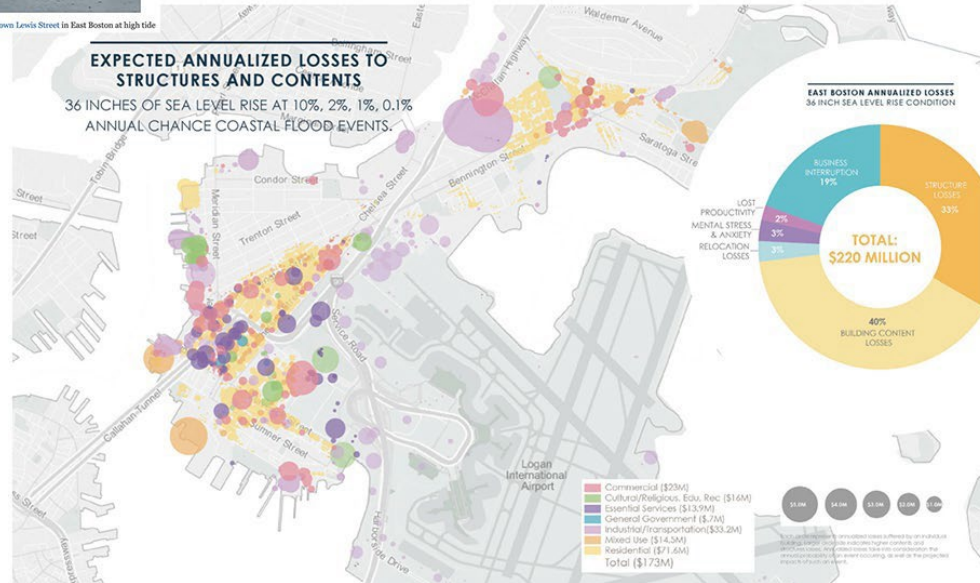
**Site**

The site of interest is the waterfront along Chelsea Creek and Condor Street. It was identified by the previous 2021 Site and Environmental Planning practicum (who worked with various community organizations and Boston Planning & Development Agency 2019 *East Boston Today*)



Steve Holt watched one of his neighbors kayak down Lewis Street in East Boston at high tide today.

East Boston has the most land area of all Boston neighborhoods exposed to coastal storms in the coming decades. The East Boston Greenway, Maverick Square, and the Sumner and Callahan Tunnels will be exposed the most.



**Community Client:**  
**East Boston Climate Coalition**

- Kannan Thiruvengadam
  - Community coordinator with the various organizations and contact person
  - [Community Preservation Committee Member](#), City of Boston
  - [Transition Advisor](#) for Mayor Wu
  - Director of [Eastie Farm](#)  
Host of [What's up Eastie?](#)
- John Walkey, Waterfront Coordinator at GreenRoots
- Heather O'Brien, Community Planner at Harborkeepers
- Chris Marchi, Vice President of Air Inc.
- Frank O'Brien, Allandale Coalition

**City Collaborators:**

- Jason Ruggiero, Community Engagement Manager at Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA)
- Kristina Ricco, Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA)
- Sanjay Seth, Climate Resilience Program Manager with the City of Boston Environment Department

**Community Collaborators:**

- Buy-In, Environmental Services <https://buy-in.org/>
- Latifa Zayad , Resiliency Planning Coordinator for East Boston's Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (NOAH) <https://noahcdc.org/>

## Proposed Cooperation and Schedule

Pending MIT COVID-19 policies, the proposed cooperation between MIT students and the client will be planned as a series of combined in-person and virtual meetings throughout the semester. Below is the proposed work plan:

### February

- Visit East Boston and engage with the client and potential partners
- Introductory Meetings
  - Introduce team
  - Listening session to learn about the history, community needs, and current planning initiatives for East Boston
  - Discussion of the needs and potential synergies between the MIT and East Boston partners
- Site Tours

### February

- Check-in with client
- The class will present research and analysis for feedback from the client and stakeholder representatives. Feedback and next steps will be discussed.

### March

- Mid-term Presentation to the client, stakeholder representatives, and community residents.

### April

- Check-in with the client and stakeholder representatives.
- The class will present their draft recommendations. Feedback and next steps will be discussed.

### May

- Final Presentation to the client, stakeholder representatives, and community residents.

### June

- Final pamphlet/report of recommendations (digital copy) sent to the client.

## Reflective Practice

Reflection will be a significant aspect of the workshop, with students understanding how they think and learn in the course of action and deepen their understanding of some of the core issues of planning practice today. The course offers an opportunity for students to engage with local institutions, city officials, and professionals to develop planning and design strategies for neighborhood planning. In this context, the course schedule will include sessions where students will collectively reflect on their roles as planners and designers and how they can serve their client and the local communities. Students will reflect prior to each meeting to ensure that they have an understanding of their goals and to remove any biases they may have. They will also record their thoughts in a journal (textually and graphically) that they will use for reflection individually and as a group, throughout the semester.

### Potential Impact

The potential impact of the workshop for SA+P and MIT is to actively showcase how important and interwoven planning, policy, and design of the built environment are for addressing some of the most significant challenges of our time: climate change and equity-driven planning. The workshop will highlight the importance of acknowledging both planning and design towards a nuanced approach to accommodating a growing population of minority residents, who are confronting climate change challenges with significant neighborhood flooding, among other major environmental factors (air quality, noise pollution from the airport, tree cover, etc.) that affect residents' health, quality of life, and economic opportunities. The workshop will be studying challenges for coastal communities that continue to rely on a working waterfront as part of an urban economy. This workshop investigates an equity-driven approach to planning for climate change and will continue to build partnerships between MIT DUSP, the City of Boston, and East Boston organizations.

The workshop will also be part of a larger research initiative for MIT's School of Architecture and Planning and the MIT Norman B. Leventhal Center for Advanced Urbanism focused on Policy Perspectives on Infrastructure and "Launching a Successful Civilian Climate Corps to Build Career Pathways and Resilient Urban Communities." The workshop will be centering on resilience planning that connects environmental strategies to economic opportunities.

### Social Justice

The pedagogy of the practicum workshop will focus on the residents of East Boston and understanding how their neighborhood is currently being planned by the City. Our pedagogical emphasis will center on social justice by:

1. **Understanding the potential disproportionate impacts of climate change on East Boston's residents.** As a neighborhood that is racially diverse, with people of color comprising 63 percent of residents (compared to the citywide share of 53 percent) and with 58 percent of East Boston anticipated to be at risk of flooding by 2070, there are significant investments for resiliency strategies to protect the neighborhood. How are residents affected by current flooding? Who is impacted the most? How are future resiliency strategies going to impact current residents?
2. **Understanding the socioeconomic realities of residents in East Boston.** According to PLAN: East Boston, the BPDA's current planning study, the neighborhood has a lower median household income (\$52,935) than Boston (\$62,200), where approximately 20 percent of households in East Boston earn incomes below the poverty threshold (similar to the citywide average). How are household incomes and access and affordability to housing and transportation exacerbating the residents' vulnerabilities with climate change? How can environmental strategies be created to build more equitable solutions?
3. Convening East Boston collaborators and residents in a practicum process that facilitates **active listening and discussion.**
4. Actively and continuously **reflecting** on our planning and design strategies and who they impact.

The workshop will be integrating social justice elements within the workshop's assignments, discussions, and reflection sessions throughout the semester. Readings, lectures, and project examples will be focused on social justice as it relates to environmental and economic justice and the conditions found within East Boston. The workshop will be studying how "environmental justice communities" are defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and President Biden's Justice40

Initiative. Reflection sessions will be a key time for assessing and discussing the social justice elements of the workshop.

### Deliverables

The expected deliverable for the workshop will be a pamphlet or report for the East Boston client as well as the City of Boston BPDA. The pamphlet or report will include research, analysis, and a framework that includes objectives, strategies that showcases a range of prototypes for design solutions and policy recommendations.

### Schedule\*

<b>WK 1</b>	Wed	2-Feb	No Class
	Fri	4-Feb	<b>First Day of Class: w/ Nicholas and Chris</b>
<b>WK 2</b>	Wed	9-Feb	Studio
	Fri	11-Feb	<b>Engagement 1: Kickoff with Site Visit and Meeting Kannan/Eastie Farms</b>
<b>WK 3</b>	Wed	16-Feb	Studio
	Fri	18-Feb	Studio - Presentation: Environmental Justice
<b>WK 4</b>	Wed	23-Feb	Studio
	Fri	25-Feb	Studio - Presentation: Examples of CCC Projects
<b>WK 5</b>	Wed	2-Mar	Studio
	Fri	4-Mar	<b>Engagement 2: Analysis Presentation with Client</b>
<b>WK 6</b>	Wed	9-Mar	Studio: Reflection
	Fri	11-Mar	Studio - Presentation: City of Boston + BPDA
<b>WK 7</b>	Wed	16-Mar	Studio
	Fri	18-Mar	<b>Engagement 3: Midterm Presentation with Client</b>
<b>WK 8</b>	Wed	23-Mar	<b>Spring Break</b>
	Fri	25-Mar	<b>Spring Break</b>
<b>WK 9</b>	Wed	30-Mar	Studio: Reflection

	Fri	1-Apr	Studio
<b>WK 10</b>	Wed	6-Apr	Studio
	Fri	8-Apr	Studio: Feedback from Kairos
<b>WK 11</b>	Wed	13-Apr	Studio
	Fri	15-Apr	<b>Engagement 4: Preliminary Framework Presentation with Client</b>
<b>WK 12</b>	Wed	20-Apr	Studio
	Fri	22-Apr	Studio
<b>WK 13</b>	Wed	27-Apr	Studio
	Fri	29-Apr	Studio: Feedback Nicholas and Chris
<b>WK 14</b>	Wed	4-May	Studio
	Fri	6-May	<b>Engagement 5: Final Presentation with Client</b>
			Final Exam Period (May 24-May 27)

**\*Schedule is subject to change**

## Resources

PLAN: East Boston

<http://www.bostonplans.org/planning/planning-initiatives/plan-east-boston>

- Interim Report
- Planning Efforts related to PLAN: East Boston

PLAN: East Boston Waterfront Industrial & Economic Development Areas

<http://www.bostonplans.org/news-calendar/calendar/2019/11/21/plan-east-boston-waterfront-industrial-economic>

- Document: PLAN: East Boston Workshop Toolkit

CLIMATE READY EAST BOSTON

<https://www.boston.gov/departments/environment/climate-ready-east-boston>

- 2017 Climate Ready Boston Phase I: Coastal Resilience Solutions for East Boston Report
- Ongoing Phase II planning information



**Anti-Racist Statement**

Urban design has long served as a tool of white supremacy, where oppressive policies, practices, and attitudes are manifested into the physical environment. This course is committed to identifying how systems of oppression have been instrumentalized through urban design, and seeking out examples of spatial practice that support liberation and environmental and economic justice.

**Land Acknowledgement Statement**

We acknowledge Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the land, and the enduring relationship that exists between them and their traditional territories. The lands which MIT occupies are the traditional unceded territories of the Wampanoag Nation and the Massachusett Peoples. We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of these territories, as well as the ongoing processes of colonialism and dispossession in which we and our institution are implicated. Beyond the stolen territory which we physically occupy, MIT has long profited from the sale of federal lands granted by the Morrill Act, territories stolen from 82 Tribes including the Greater and Little Osage, Chippewa, and Omaha Peoples.

As we honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous people connected to this land from time immemorial, we seek to Indigenize our institution and the field of planning, offer Space, and leave Indigenous peoples in more empowered positions.

**Inclusive Class and Classroom**

MIT values an inclusive environment. We hope to foster a sense of community in this classroom and consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect. We welcome individuals of all backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, national origins, gender identities, sexual orientations, religious and political affiliations – and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. If this standard is not being upheld, please feel free to speak with Mary Anne.

**Special Accommodations**

MIT is committed to the principle of equal access. Students who need disability accommodations are encouraged to speak with Disability and Access Services (DAS), prior to or early in the semester so that accommodation requests can be evaluated and addressed in a timely fashion. If you have a disability and are not planning to use accommodations, it is still recommended that you meet with DAS staff to familiarize yourself with their services and resources. Please visit the [DAS website](#) for contact information.

If you have already been approved for accommodations, class staff are ready to assist with implementation. Please inform Professor [fill in faculty name and email] AND [fill in the identified administrator/staff/TA name and email] who will oversee accommodation implementation for this course.

**Academic Integrity**

In this course, I will hold you to the high standard of academic integrity expected of all students at the Institute. I do this for two reasons. First, it is essential to the learning process that you are the one doing the work. I have structured the assignments in this course to enable you to gain a mastery of the course material. Failing to do the work yourself will result in a lesser understanding of the content, and therefore a less meaningful education for you. Second, it is important that there be a level playing field for all students in

this course and at the Institute so that the rigor and integrity of the Institute's educational program are maintained.

Violating the Academic Integrity policy in any way (e.g., plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, cheating, etc.) will result in official Institute sanction. Possible sanctions include receiving a failing grade on the assignment or exam, being assigned a failing grade in the course, having a formal notation of disciplinary action placed on your MIT record, suspension from the Institute, and expulsion from the Institute for very serious cases.

Please review MIT's [Academic Integrity](#) policy and related resources (e.g., working under pressure; how to paraphrase, summarize, and quote; etc.) and contact me if you have any questions about appropriate citation methods, the degree of collaboration that is permitted, or anything else related to the Academic Integrity of this course.

**Graduate Students: GradSupport**

As a graduate student, a variety of issues may impact your academic career including faculty/student relationships, funding, and interpersonal concerns. In the Office of Graduate Education (OGE), [GradSupport](#) provides consultation, coaching, and advocacy to graduate students on matters related to academic and life challenges. If you are dealing with an issue that is impacting your ability to attend class, complete work, or take an exam, you may contact GradSupport by email at [gradsupport@mit.edu](mailto:gradsupport@mit.edu) or via phone at (617) 253-4860.

*Website:* <https://oge.mit.edu/development/gradsupport/>