

tBf

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# NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE BOSTON FOUNDATION

A portrait of Jill Lepore, a woman with short, wavy blonde hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses with gold temples, a dark red turtleneck sweater, and a black cardigan. She is standing in front of a dark, ornate metal gate. The background is slightly blurred, showing green foliage.

## JILL LEPORE

A CONVERSATION WITH LEE PELTON

*ALSO...*

**EMPOWERING ASIAN BUSINESSES**

**HOUSING REPORT CARD**

**BOSTON CLIMATE PROGRESS**

# Jill Lepore on Democracy



Jill Lepore, the David Woods Kemper '41 Professor of American History at Harvard, has published numerous scholarly articles and essays, many in *The New Yorker*. Her books include the bestseller *These Truths: A History of the United States*. On October 25, Boston Foundation President and CEO Lee Pelton sat down for a virtual conversation with Lepore at a special event honoring donors to TBF's Annual Campaign for Civic Leadership. Using history as a way of discussing the "deep divide in our nation," Pelton asked Lepore to place our current politics in the context of other times.

**THIS WAS A SPECIAL EVENT OF THE ANNUAL CAMPAIGN FOR CIVIC LEADERSHIP, WHICH SUPPORTS OUR RESEARCH, FORUMS AND DEEP PUBLIC POLICY WORK WITH A FOCUS ON ACHIEVING EQUITY. VISIT [TBF.ORG/CIVICLEADERSHIP](https://www.tbf.org/civicleadership).**

"It's not that these are not difficult times," she answered. "But to me as a historian, there were centuries in our past when hundreds of thousands of people—by the end a million people—were held in chattel slavery. Those are dark times." She added, "Before 1920, women can't vote, right? So, if women have opinions and political views that ... in any significant way differ from the rest of the electorate, we can't see that before 1920. And they're not represented in Congress before the 1970s in any meaningful way. Black men and then Black women really can't vote until 1965 and the Voting Rights Act. So, you had huge portions of the population that were wholly or largely disenfranchised."

When asked by Pelton about the current Supreme Court, in which many have lost faith, she responded that she shared those concerns. She added that the reason the Court has such outsized power is that there hasn't been an amendment to the Constitution since the Equal Rights Amendment failed in the '70s. "At the base of the problem is that the only way to change the Constitution now, since [it] has become unamendable, is to convince five Supreme Court Justices to read it differently. And that's not how the Constitution was designed to work. That's judicial supremacy."

Other topics discussed were the "gamification of Twitter" and whether Marshall McLuhan's prophecy that the medium would control the message is happening now.

**GO TO [TBF.ORG/INTERVIEW](https://www.tbf.org/interview) FOR THE FULL TRANSCRIPT.**

Cover photo:  
Jill Lepore by  
Stephanie Mitchell,  
courtesy  
Harvard University

# VOTER ENGAGEMENT

Although the 2022 midterms are in the rear-view mirror, the Boston Foundation will continue its voter engagement efforts, launched this summer through a partnership with TurboVote, a national, nonpartisan project of the nonprofit Democracy Works. The TurboVote platform helps people register to vote, check their registration status, sign up for election alerts, and make their plan to vote.

“In partnering with TurboVote, we hope to empower individuals in Greater Boston and beyond to connect their vote to the issues that matter to them and provide them with the tools to make the process easier,” said Public Affairs Officer Julia Howard, who led TBF’s efforts on this issue. We will also continue our series of nonpartisan forums on voter engagement.

**GO TO [TBF.ORG](https://tbf.org) TO WATCH THE FIRST FORUM ON VOTER ENGAGEMENT.**



ILLUSTRATION: CAROLINE STJARNBORG,  
LEAD BRAND DESIGNER AT CITY OF BOSTON



# Championing Asian-Owned Businesses

## ASIAN BUSINESS EMPOWERMENT COUNCIL

with PHOTOS BY LEE-DANIEL TRAN

**C**helsea Curtis began her entrepreneurship as an independent contractor in software implementation services in 2016, specializing in the online software Salesforce. Eventually she had so many clients that it made sense to expand.

“It was a challenge to launch a business in a field where most people don’t look like me,” she says. “I’m unique in the technology world and even in the world of Salesforce implementation.” Gender and race were top of mind when she was starting the company. “Though I’ve never felt overt discrimination in my professional career, I have definitely experienced prejudice in Boston. Those instances are a constant reminder that as an Asian woman, I am made aware of my race and gender in a way that not all people might have to think about.”

Curtis is an enthusiastic participant in the Asian Business Empowerment Council: “The webinars have been fantastic and incredibly impactful—and it’s wonderful to meet other business owners and learn from them and network with them.”

Another participant, Thao Lam, primarily works with athletes and those with chronic muscular pain through her business Push Muscular Restoration in North Chelmsford. “One of the

**Chelsea Curtis (right) Founder and Managing Partner of Seaport Consulting, with Brandon Albrizio who joined the firm as a partner in April.**



**Thao Lam’s massage therapy business serves athletes and those with chronic muscular pain.**

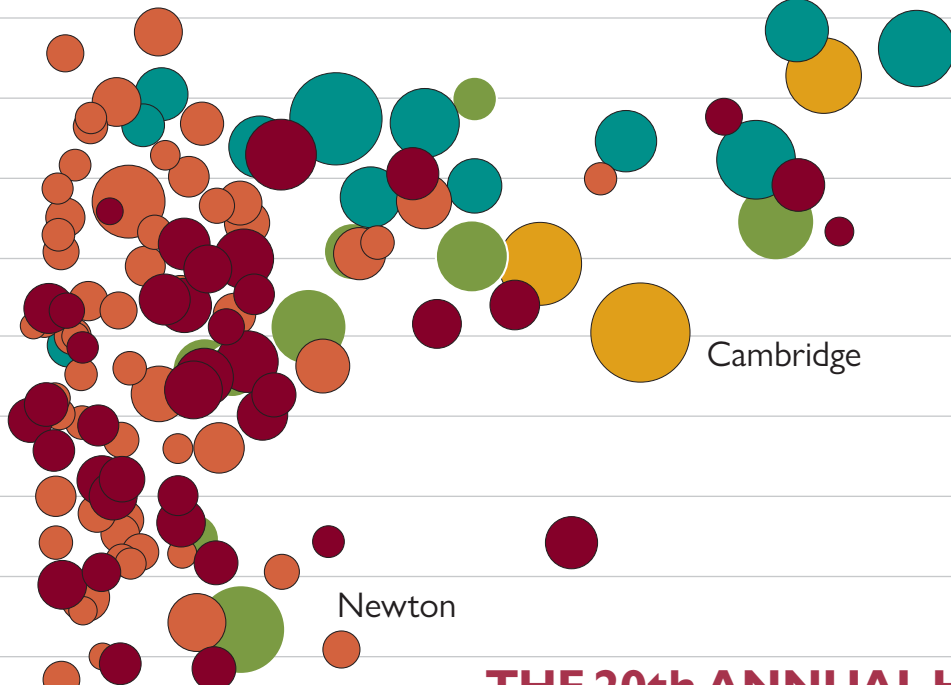
hardest things to overcome is the stereotype of an Asian woman masseuse,” she explains. “Mine wasn’t the first massage business in town, but because I’m an Asian female, I had to go to the town’s Zoning Board of Appeals. It didn’t matter what I’d studied or what my skills were. Because I was an Asian female, I had so many more obstacles to face.”

“The wide range of education, language skills and income levels within the AAPI community and the hurdles to business ownership, growth and sustainability for Asian entrepreneurs are extremely high,” says ABEC Director Qingjian (Q.J.) Shi.

Launched in 2022, the Asian Business Empowerment Council (ABEC) is being seeded and incubated by the Asian Community Fund at the Boston Foundation. ABEC aims to support Greater Boston’s Asian American businesses, particularly immigrant-owned businesses, to overcome historic inequities in access to capital and public contracting opportunities—and to increase opportunities for economic growth and success. It serves as a platform to strengthen economic power within the Asian American business community, by serving as an organizing force and central hub for entrepreneurs, business owners, advocates and service providers.

**Dudley Cafe, a popular Nubian Square meeting spot, is run by Biplaw Rai and Rokeya Chowdury. The cafe survived the pandemic by offering takeout food from Shanti, a series of Indian restaurants owned by Chowdury and her husband Solomon.**





Cambridge

Newton

## THE 20th ANNUAL HO

On October 26, the Boston Foundation held its first in-person forum in more than two and a half years. Some 100 people were present for the presentation and discussion of the 20th annual *Greater Boston Housing Report Card*, which explores barriers to accessing subsidized housing as well as current trends in housing supply and demand.

It was a particularly meaningful inaugural on-site event for the Foundation, which has recently redefined its mission to a focus on equity and affirmed its commitment to pursuing it through engagement, leadership and research.

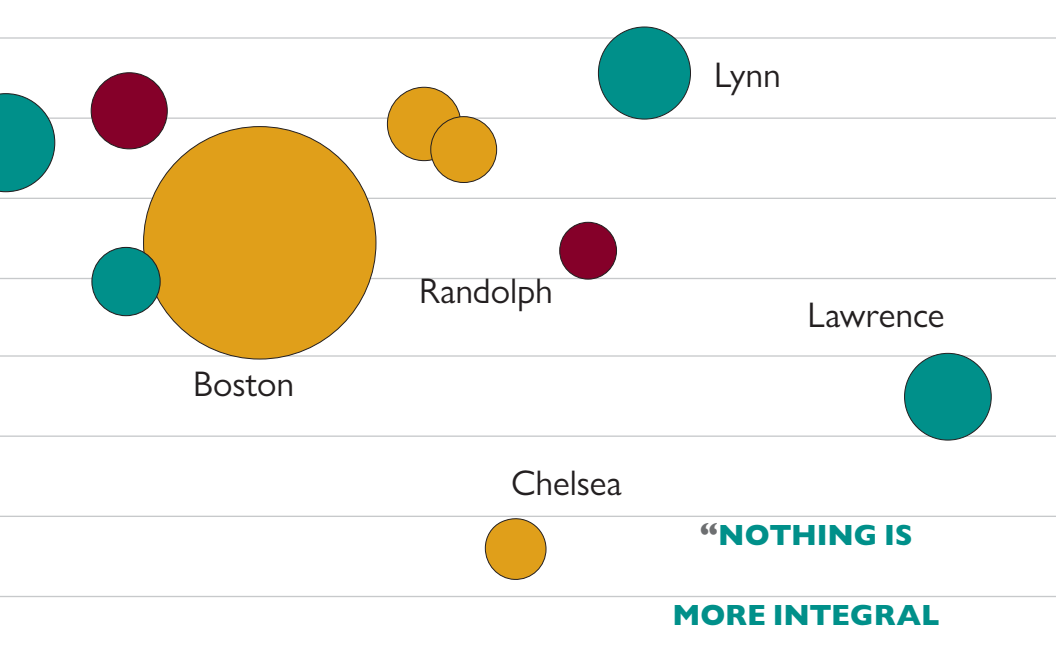
Greater Boston struggles mightily with the lack of affordable housing, as tight inventory and rising

Wellesley

Dover

**“EVEN WITH SUBSIDIZED HOUSING,  
TWO EARNERS MAKING MINIMUM WAGE  
WOULD BE EXTREMELY COST BURDENED,  
PAYING MORE THAN 50 PERCENT  
OF THEIR INCOME IN RENT.”**

LUC SCHUSTER,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BOSTON INDICATORS



## USING REPORT CARD

costs continue to place significant burdens on homebuyers and renters. At the same time, flaws in the systems around subsidized housing mean that thousands of people who qualify for subsidies are getting lost in a fragmented system that is difficult to navigate.

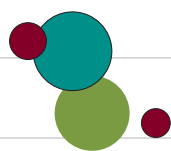
Those are the major conclusions in the 2022 Report Card. The focus has three parts: a look at the current state of the market by Luc Schuster and the team at Boston Indicators; a special analysis of equity in subsidized housing conducted by Katherine Levine Einstein and Maxwell Palmer of the Initiative on Cities at Boston University; and an accompanying series of interactive data and insights.

The 150-page report concludes with 10 policy recommendations to spark greater access and opportunity for home seekers, including the creation of a new Massachusetts Office of Fair Housing and better systems and oversight of housing data statewide—as well as improved enforcement of fair housing laws and regulations. It also recommends reducing restrictive covenants, such as age restrictions and local preferences, and reinforcing or encouraging regulations to allow for greater construction of all housing types.

**GO TO [TBF.ORG](https://www.tbf.org) FOR THE REPORT AND A VIDEO OF THE FORUM**

**“NOTHING IS MORE INTEGRAL TO EQUITY THAN HOUSING—PERHAPS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IN THE CITY AND SURROUNDING AREAS. WE ESPECIALLY VALUE DATA AND ANALYSIS TO DRIVE AND TRACK PROGRESS.”**

PRESIDENT AND CEO  
M. LEE PELTON,  
OPENING THE FORUM





**New development  
crowds traditional  
triple deckers in  
East Boston.**

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES/  
ISTOCKPHOTO

## **SEIZING THE DAY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

“**M**oments to convert Greater Boston’s critical stock of housing for long-term affordability don’t come along every day,” writes TBF Associate Vice President for Neighborhoods and Housing Soni Gupta in a recent blog post. “That realization inspired the Boston Foundation to create and seed a new fund in 2022—the Carpe Diem Fund.”

This fall, the Fund made its first significant investment. It partnered with the City of Boston, the East Boston Community Development Corporation and a number of nonprofits, lenders, funders and philanthropic organizations to convert a portfolio of 114 rental units in East Boston to the state’s first-ever Mixed Income Neighborhood Trust: the East Boston Neighborhood Trust.

TBF’s commitment totaled \$600,000—including a \$100,000 grant and a \$500,000 Program Related Investment at a 1% interest rate. The EBNT portfolio includes 36 separate buildings, creating a perpetual affordable local housing stock of triple-deckers suitable for families, with 3, 4, and even 5-bedroom units.

**GO TO [TBF.ORG/BLOG](https://www.tbf.org/blog) FOR A LIST  
OF ALL OF THE PARTNERS**



# The Food, Fuel and Shelter Fund



Rising inflation, skyrocketing food and fuel costs as well as record high rents for housing are placing an unsustainable and inequitable burden on individuals and families in our region. In response, the Boston Foundation is redoubling our annual effort to provide critical support and bolster the safety net for communities in Greater Boston during the winter.

Built on our decade of experience with the Food and Fuel Fund, and in recognition of the power and impact of proximate leaders and organizations on display during the pandemic, the Food, Fuel and Shelter Fund is a partnership between the Boston Foundation and our donors to meet the immediate and longer-term needs in our community. Here are the major elements:

- ✿ Immediately making resources available to our City of Boston partners and key organizations to address the needs of those residing in the area known as “Mass and Cass;”
- ✿ Supporting organizations that can provide direct cash to those in need of food, heating and housing;
- ✿ Identifying and supporting organizations that specialize in guiding people to local, state and federal resources; and
- ✿ Redoubling our legacy of donor partnerships to support nonprofits that provide critical access to food, utilities and secure shelter to Massachusetts families.

With \$1.2 million in seed funding, we hope to raise more funds for a need that is virtually infinite.

**GO TO [TBF.ORG/FOODFUELSHELTER](https://www.tbfo.org/foodfuelsHELTER) FOR MORE AND TO CONTRIBUTE**



KELLY SIKKEMA / UNSPLASH



PHOTO BY LANTLUM / UNSPLASH

## A Call for Action on Boston's Climate Goals

A first-of-its-kind report on Boston's progress toward being a carbon-neutral city by 2050 finds that while we have made notable progress in some areas, a variety of obstacles will make meeting that goal difficult. The Boston Foundation's *Inaugural Boston Climate Progress Report* was prepared by researchers at Northeastern University's Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy.

It will be updated every two years to assess Boston's progress, our resilience to future climate disruptions, and the equity of our climate response. The report highlights a dozen key outcomes that must be achieved by programs, projects, and initiatives whose success is imperative to reaching the overarching goals, and then lays out four "big lifts," system-transforming actions which Boston—along with the broader region and state—needs to accelerate to sharply reduce net emissions.

"As a coastal city, Boston is already seeing the effects of our changing climate and is pursuing plans to mitigate them on multiple fronts," said Amy Longworth, Executive Director of the Boston Green Ribbon Commission, which supported the report. "This report sets out a framework for us to track our efforts during what will be a decades-long, all-in process to prepare ourselves for the impacts of a warming planet. The challenge requires transformative action."

**GO TO [TBF.ORG](https://www.tbff.org) FOR THE REPORT AND A VIDEO OF THE RELEASE FORUM**



## From Our President and CEO M. Lee Pelton

**O**n November 17, I shared an evening of joy, hope and promise with hundreds from the Greater Boston community at the Boston Foundation's 2022 annual meeting, our first in-person meeting since 2019. The theme of the evening, and the 2022 annual report, "A City Reawakens," represents new beginnings, a renaissance of sorts, as we reawaken from a years-long pandemic. COVID's impacts persist and many continue to suffer. Yet we remain resolute, buoyed by the Psalms refrain "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

I am both proud and grateful for the Foundation's efforts—still ongoing—to right wrongs, soothe hurts and mend

broken hearts in collaboration with organizations and people who are proximate to the communities we serve.

We look forward to more moments of joy with the unveiling of Embrace Boston's memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King on Boston Common on January 13.

Opportunities like the unveiling of The Embrace allow us to regain some of what we have lost. They also help us reimagine what we can be at our very best, as we swing open wide the doors of opportunity and set the table for all to enjoy life's bounty. When we do so, we lift up—in word and deed—our nation's motto: *e pluribus unum*, "out of many, one" as a living creed.

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### Donors to the 2022 Annual Campaign for Civic Leadership

Together, we are building  
a more equitable Greater Boston.  
To give to the 2023 campaign,  
visit [tbfb.org/civicleadership](https://www.tbfb.org/civicleadership).

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