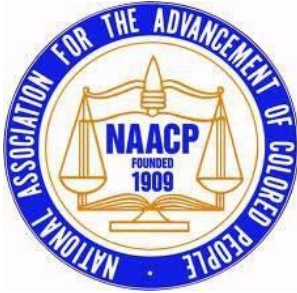


The Boston Olympic Bid, Communities of Color, and the Future of Our City

July 16th, 2015



Mission and Rationale for the NAACP/URBAN Boston Collaboration on a potential Boston Olympics

The NAACP and URBAN Boston (Urban Research-Based Action Network) believe in a healthy, inclusive, engaged Olympic bid development process. We believe that the planning process for the bid, as well as the bid itself, should benefit the widest possible group of Bostonians and promote long-term sustainable development for the city. We have not taken a position about the ultimate desirability of the bid. However, we strongly believe that grassroots engagement for agenda-setting, values clarification, and gathering evidence will ensure that all residents of Boston, especially low-income communities and communities of color, will benefit from the planning process whether or not the bid is approved. This type of engagement means going beyond simply 'a seat at the table' or a guarantee of certain benefits. Rather, it means respecting and engaging all communities in a way that is commensurate with a co-equal partner with other stakeholder groups such as universities, government and private firms.

The NAACP and URBAN Boston also recognize that conversations about the Boston Olympic bid go beyond simply planning for the games. The latest plan put forward by Boston2024 was described by the Boston Globe as "**repositioning the Olympics less as the ultimate goal of the planning effort and more of a waypoint along a sweeping 18-year economic development plan.**"¹ A planning process of this length and magnitude has major implications for the future of Boston. We believe that communities must be a part of this and all planning processes in the city to make sure residents have input and influence over the future of their neighborhoods.



We offer this memo as an opening to a conversation and as an appeal to researchers, students and practitioners to build knowledge for an ambitious, viable, inclusive and equitable process by which the Olympics 2024 bid will be created. We hope that the ideas we provide and those we inspire can provide support for a new kind of planning process not just for the Olympics, but for all planning processes in the city of Boston.

¹ Arsenault, M. (June 29th, 2015). "New Olympics plan would give rise to 2 neighborhoods." The Boston Globe, retrieved from <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/06/29/boston-unveils-ambitious-new-olympics-plan/jfVx6cejFvsKS2ccqbcQ0K/story.html>

Our Work So Far

The NAACP and URBAN Boston are building a library that includes information about other cities' experiencing planning for and hosting the Olympics. The library includes white papers, academic articles, and media pieces about cities such as London, Atlanta, and Barcelona. In addition, the NAACP has spoken with several academic experts that understand the impact the Olympics can have on cities, including Professor Harvey Newman from Georgia State University, Professor Andrew Zimbalist from Smith College and Dr. David Roberts from the University of Toronto. From a review of these documents and conversations with experts, we believe Boston must be mindful of the potential negative effects of hosting an Olympics, including displacement, accelerated gentrification, security issues, and the diversion of resources away from existing and more urgent priorities and towards planning for the Games. However, we also do not want to focus solely on mitigating potentially negative effects. Throughout this process, we also want to acknowledge the potential improvements that can be made to our neighborhoods via an Olympic bid.

We are also collecting information about the City of Boston's existing plans for development, including plans for housing, education, health, and transportation. We are collecting this information because we would like to better understand how a Boston Olympic bid might help or hinder the City's existing development initiatives. We would also like to know whether or not there are ways to use an Olympics bid to advance the City's existing goals for social and human development.

There is much more work to be done, and our questions about the bid and its impact on the city have evolved and changed over time, with particular concern about the absence of the community in this major planning process. We hope that tonight's event inspires researchers and community members alike to become a part of this learning process, contribute to the dialogue on this issue, and strengthen and improve the Boston Olympics bid for the benefit of all Bostonians.

Key Questions and Call for Participation

The overarching goal of this project is as follows; how can we ensure that plans for a Boston 2024 Olympics provide benefits to *all* Bostonians? To provide answers, we would like to address the following key questions:

1. What is the vision for the future of Boston from the perspectives of community members, city government, and from Boston2024?
2. From the perspective of community members and city government, in what ways might a Boston Olympics in 2024 help or hinder their vision for the future of the city?

To answer these questions, we need a team of committed researchers, students, practitioners and community members who are willing to be a part of this community-based research project. We also need a commitment from Boston 2024 that they will be open to the results of this work and are willing to partner with low-income communities and communities of color as part of the planning process. We

are grateful for their participation in tonight's event and look forward to continued conversations and collaborations as Boston develops this Olympic bid.

The Olympic Legacy

There have been many questions about what the legacy of the Olympic Games could be in Boston. We see three potential legacies that could come from an Olympic planning process that includes input from communities:

1. The development of both physical and social infrastructures that will benefit the broader Boston community, beyond those neighborhoods directly impacted by the games.
2. An inclusive, transparent planning process for more equitable regional development.
3. Increased political participation by community members and community groups from underserved communities.

We hope that these do become a part of the Olympic legacy in Boston and that this project can contribute in some small way towards these larger goals. We thank you all for your participation tonight, we welcome your feedback on this memo, and hope that you will be a part of building a more inclusive planning process for the Boston Olympic bid and beyond.

Moving Forward: A Call for Participants for Community-Based Research on the Boston Olympic Bid

If you would like to be a part of this collaborative research project, please see a member of our team to sign up today! You can also send us an email at urban.boston@umb.edu. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to be a part of this project, including academics, practitioners, graduate students, community organizations, and interested community members.

Once we have assembled our volunteers, we will meet in the next few weeks to better understand what everyone brings to the table in terms of knowledge, expertise, and funding. This work is currently a project of the URBAN Boston planning team, which is comprised of unpaid volunteers from universities and community organizations. In addition to developing a research plan, we will also be actively looking for funding for this work. We look forward to having you as a part of our team!

NAACP/URBAN Boston Collaboration Committee Members

Nia K. Evans, Chair, Boston NAACP Economic Development Committee (niakevans@gmail.com)

Michael Johnson, Associate Professor, Public Policy Department, University of Massachusetts Boston
(Michael.johnson@umb.edu)

Lindsay Morgia, Graduate Student, Public Policy Department, University of Massachusetts Boston
(Lindsay.morgia@gmail.com)