

The Boston Globe

Serving our community since 1872

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026

Shift in public housing settings helps kids

Reimagined units with higher-income neighbors boost careers, study shows

By Katie Johnston
GLOBE STAFF

Isabel Moreta knows the damage living in public housing can do.

She raised her family on a 17-acre island of three-story brick buildings in South Boston largely cut off from the rest of the community. Drugs and crime were a big problem at the Old Colony complex, and neighbors gave it a wide berth, rarely cutting through or even making eye contact with residents.

But starting in 2010, the devel-

opment was torn down and rebuilt as part of the Hope VI program, a \$17 billion revitalization of 262 distressed federal housing projects around the country — the largest-ever effort to refurbish public housing. The result was modern mixed-income sites designed to blend seamlessly into the surrounding communities.

Now, research shows the redesign substantially improved the lives of the children who grew up there. The main reason for these

outcomes: increased interactions with people who live nearby, the higher income the better.

Compared to kids raised in similar but unchanged public housing, those raised in Hope VI sites are more likely to go to college and earn more money and less likely to be incarcerated, according to the research from Harvard's Opportunity Insights, an economic mobility nonprofit.

Researchers found little difference for adults, but for children each year spent in these renovated spaces increased their adult house-

hold income by 2.8 percent. All told, those born and raised there stand to earn 50 percent more by age 30, compared to those who grew up in more isolated and impoverished surroundings.

The new Old Colony complex is fully integrated into the neighborhood around it, with updated architecture, landscaped

grounds, and streets running through it. Outsiders regularly walk their dogs or jog through, sometimes even stopping to say hello, Moreta said, likely unaware they're in the midst of public housing.

HOUSING, Page A10

**MONEY,
RACE, AND
EQUALITY**

Monday remains a weakday downtown

Shops, cafes struggling to regain foot traffic, but some numbers improve

By Dana Gerber and Catherine Carlock
GLOBE STAFF

Downtown Boston is fighting a case of the Mondays.

That's the sense you get walking around the city's urban core at the outset of the workweek. Post Office Square benches that were once at a lunch-hour premium sit empty. In the Downtown Crossing Roche Bros., only a handful of cash registers are staffed — no long line of grocery store shoppers demanding their attention. Outside the Old South Meeting House, a T-shirt vendor with few customers to tend to is engrossed in a book.

"On a Monday, you'll have maybe a couple of people in line. On a Tuesday, you could have a line that stretches almost to the door," said Lucas Hausermann, an employee at the Financial District coffee shop Espresso Love. "You see [a] major, major difference."

More than six years after COVID-19 decimated foot traffic to the city's once-bustling hub of economic activity, downtown Boston is still in recovery — and not a symmetrical one. Mondays and Fridays have been slower to pick back up in the post-pandemic age, with many large companies requiring some in-person attendance, most often on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays. Employ-

4.2m
people visited downtown Boston on Mondays in 2025, just over 70 percent of Monday traffic in 2019.

MONDAY, Page A7



TEENS, CITY WORK TO SAVE JOB PROGRAM

Afterschool wages on chopping block amid financial crunch in Boston

By John Hilliard
GLOBE STAFF

Rachel Mejia has to raise her voice to be heard over the din of children running into St. Stephen's cafeteria in the South End. The 17-year-old works with local kids a few days each week after school — helping with homework, being a buddy during playtime, and acting as a sounding board if someone needs a friendly ear.

Mejia's proud of her job, funded by the city as part of an afterschool jobs program for teens and young adults. But that job is among 1,800 positions that would be eliminated by Mayor Michelle Wu's proposed budget



PHOTOS BY JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Rachel Mejia, 17, helped a student with his jacket at the St. Stephen's youth program, where backpacks lined a wall.

for next year.

"To them, it's just like another program," Mejia said. "But for us, it's more than just the money; it's a family, it's a community."

Advocates say the city-funded jobs provide more than a paycheck to predominantly Black and Latino students from lower-income backgrounds. The afterschool work allows them to test the water in future careers at nonprofits, community groups, public universities, and more.

"That's benefiting all of us — to have young people who are productive members of our community," said Alicia Sasser Modestino, a Northeastern University

TEENS, Page A6

From Harvard, MIT windfall, group offers students hope

Slowly, Axim brings ideas, seed money to education

By Hilary Burns
GLOBE STAFF

Just about five years ago, Harvard and MIT made a splash with the \$800 million sale of their online learning platform edX to the company 2U, promising to use the proceeds to help the higher education sector work better for more people.

While 2U has struggled since the acquisition, filing for bankruptcy in 2024, many have forgotten about the pile of cash left behind, which led to the creation of the Axim Collaborative, a nonprofit that maintains ties to MIT and Harvard and works to improve student outcomes.

Axim operates almost like an early-stage venture capital firm for education, investing in promising ideas and inspiring leaders who are working

AXIM, Page A7

Deal signals AI startups can thrive here

Key for PathAI and others is to tie products to region's strengths

By Jonathan Saltzman
GLOBE STAFF

Not long after he cofounded an artificial intelligence company in the basement of his Brookline apartment in 2016, Andy Beck briefly considered moving it to California, the epicenter of Big Tech and AI research. But the physician-turned-entrepreneur thought better of it, confident he could attract the talent and venture capital he needed to make PathAI a success.

Earlier this month, Beck's confidence proved to be justified. The Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche announced it was buying the Fenway company, which uses AI to help pathologists make digital diagnoses,

STARTUP, Page A6



SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

Andy Beck, at his desk in Boston, sold PathAI to Roche for \$1.05 billion.



Turn to preheat

Monday: Plenty of sunshine. High 70-75, low 61-66.

Tuesday: Temperature spikes. High 90-95, low 69-74.

Sunrise: 5:20. Sunset: 8:02.

Weather and comics, **D4-5**.

Obituaries, **C9**.

A global health emergency was declared for an outbreak of a strain of Ebola that does not respond to a vaccine. A3.

When a man got stuck at the bottom of an MBTA escalator, people who saw him did almost nothing. He ended up dying. B1.

The Trump administration's investigation of registration databases concerns critics, who say it could purge valid voters from the rolls before the November elections. A2.

Aaron Rai becomes the first English-born player in more than a century to capture the PGA Championship, winning the major tourney by three strokes. C1.

For breaking news, updated stories, and more, visit our website:

BostonGlobe.com

VOL. 309, NO. 138

Suggested retail price \$4.00



0 947725 4