

# Food with Purpose: Dudley Dough and Haley House Bakery Café

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**Abstract** Haley House has sustained a tradition of community service and community engagement since its founding in 1966. What began as a very personal project by its two founders to engage with homeless men in Boston's South End neighborhood has grown over the years through creating two social enterprises, the Haley House Bakery Café and Dudley Dough.

Building off the work of its South End Soup Kitchen, Haley House opened the Haley House Bakery Café in Boston's Dudley neighborhood in 2005, training and employing workers with barriers to employment in a nearly self-sustaining nonprofit restaurant while offering delicious, healthy food in a vibrant community setting. Haley House welcomed the ideas and inspiration of Dudley residents, becoming a multifaceted hub for community engagement, all rooted in the food. When the City of Boston declared Dudley an Innovation District, Haley House launched Dudley Dough, a social enterprise pizza shop in the District's anchor building, as a way to offer fair wage employment and an economic future for residents who might otherwise be priced out, and forced out, of the community. Throughout it all, Haley House has remained committed to providing "Food with Purpose," and the strong community ties it engenders.

**Keywords** Social purpose business • Job training • Community engagement • Haley House • Gentrification

## Connecting Pizza and Economic Justice

At Dudley Dough, the menu features mocha lattes, kale smoothies, and specialty pizzas like cauliflower béchamel. This bill of fare and the restaurant's sleekly modern décor would be at home in any health-conscious, affluent US suburb. But the sign on the door reads "Pizza with Purpose" and the location is Dudley Square in Roxbury, a long-neglected inner-city neighborhood in Boston.

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JUSTICE pops out in bright red on the menu's front page and that repeated word underscores the recipe for neighborhood revitalization proclaimed in the 2016 Dudley Dough Manifesto:

Dudley Dough celebrates the labor of exceptional workers who nourish our community with healthful food—empowering them with just pay, dignity, and a voice in their workplace. We pursue social wealth, not greed, as the driving force of commerce. We believe that individual and societal well-being are bound together.

The focus on justice in the menu and manifesto make it clear that more is happening behind the Dudley Dough counter than preparing delicious pizzas. This welcoming restaurant is structured as a social enterprise, designed to serve its local community and to provide stable employment. Its presence in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston reflects the social justice mission of Haley House, a Boston nonprofit that “uses food and the power of community to break down barriers between people, transfer new skills, and revitalize neighborhoods” (Haley House 2016).

For 10 years prior to the launch of Dudley Dough, Haley House owned and operated the Haley House Bakery Café, a popular restaurant and neighborhood cultural center that had served and helped to stabilize the Dudley area of Roxbury. As a small nonprofit committed to “Food with Purpose,” Haley House staff were very conscious of how under-compensated the workers in typical restaurant kitchens are, often working paycheck to paycheck and struggling to support their families. The group envisioned Dudley Dough as a model for self-sustaining, community-oriented social enterprise restaurants with a primary mission of investing the staff in the success of the business and sharing the rewards with them.

A parallel mission for Dudley Dough was forged in the context of rapid neighborhood transition. Boston City planners had identified Dudley Square, with its long-neglected storefronts and underserved residents, as the promising hub for a Roxbury renaissance, designed to become an innovation district with newly constructed residential and office buildings to attract high-tech businesses and young professional workers. This planned redevelopment raised concerns around displacement and gentrification in a setting where entry-level employment was scarce and long-term residents were at risk. As a social enterprise, Dudley Dough is structured to offer accessible economic opportunities for workers and provide Dudley's residents with an anchor to secure their own place in the future of Boston.

The connection between pizza and economic justice, like the Haley House mission to serve and empower Boston residents, goes back several decades. This chapter tells how the principles behind Haley House have created a powerful force for social justice in Boston and an innovative, scalable social enterprise model for serving food with purpose.

## Feeding and Housing Homeless Neighbors in Boston's South End

Haley House's [50-year history](#) is unique for its continual envisioning of creative responses to societal injustice. Its story begins in 1966, when a group of young activists residing in Boston's South End neighborhood identified unmet needs of their neighbors who were struggling on the streets, largely men whose lives had been undone by alcohol. Kathe and John McKenna were at the core of this activist group, and one cold day in February 1966 John McKenna brought home one of their roofless neighbors, Tom Flynn, whom he had discovered freezing in a snow bank.

For the first year, their apartment was an incubator for social action. John taught school to fund their generosity of spirit, while men were unequivocally welcomed to share their home and their food. Kathe and John were inspired by the principles of the Catholic Worker Movement, such as "personalism," honoring the inherent worth of every individual; living in solidarity with the poor; living out the works of mercy; and recognizing that when one of us is vulnerable, we are all vulnerable. Friends of the McKennas were moved by their ideals and brought support in many ways, often volunteering to help directly.

By the end of the first year, the group had identified a building that was slated for demolition and that could be a perfect home for what was already an inspiring movement. With the help and generosity of a few friends, they were able to purchase the building and to convert the storefronts into a soup kitchen—the only soup kitchen in Boston at the time. Above the soup kitchen, there were four floors of rooms where they were able to accommodate volunteers willing to serve without pay. In its earliest years, as homelessness in the South End and other Boston neighborhoods began to reach critical proportions, nonprofit and city services—including shelter for the homeless—lagged behind urgent daily needs.

It soon became clear that food alone was not enough, leading the group to acquire permanent housing for struggling neighbors in order to offer a foundation to prevent further displacement. Over the next 30 years, many social justice initiatives developed at "Haley House," named that first year to honor a fellow activist, Leo Haley, who died after helping some strangers on the street. As Boston's South End neighborhood began to gentrify, pricing out its immigrant and working class members, Haley House acquired a separate rooming house to preserve a place for folks who would otherwise have been pushed out. In the years to come, Haley House expanded its housing portfolio to include over 100 units throughout the South End. Today, the units include a mix of government-subsidized housing for lower income families and single rooms for individuals who have experienced homelessness, as well as one building that includes a unique model of mixed-level rents. This model is possible because Haley House has owned the building outright since the 1980s, allowing for flexible rental rates that are discounted (or not) according to a tenant's ability to pay.

Food and housing are essential human needs, but by the 1990s the Haley House founders and supporters realized that these fundamental services were not enough in themselves to reverse the drastic cycle that drove individuals from

disenfranchisement-to-addiction-to-prison-and-back. To help individuals break this cycle, Haley House developed its first economic empowerment initiative, a supportive training program that developed organically through the work taking place in the Soup Kitchen.

In the mid-1990s, Jane Moss, a volunteer in the Soup Kitchen who knew the craft of bread baking, started sharing her baking talents with some of the guests. This marked the beginning of Haley House's first training program, with three Soup Kitchen guests and four formerly homeless men (living above the Soup Kitchen) helping to run the operation. Soon, South End neighbors who were seduced by the smell of the good bread came in wanting to support the initiative as customers. In response, the training program carved out a corner of the Soup Kitchen and opened a bakery shop. Volunteers and trainees took turns in staffing the shop. Trainees were paid minimum wage to support their move to independence.

Thanks to its long history of neighborhood service, Haley House had become a place where socially minded individuals could identify a need and strategize how to address it, using minimal funds and accessing the social capital available through the support of the organization's friends and volunteers. In the collaborative process, community was built, and the individuals in that community led the charge in developing what was to become the Haley House Bakery Café.

For the next 10 years, the South End bakery continued to train and grow, sending its graduates out into the restaurant world. In 2001, local chef Didi Emmons approached the bakery to make pizza dough for her new venture, Veggie Planet, which had limited space for food production. Haley House also began selling fresh-baked scones and muffins (based on Didi's recipes) to 15 shops and cafes around Boston.

Even with its tight margins, this wholesale business was a great support to the training program. Haley House was working with a broad range of trainees, men and women facing a variety of barriers to employment. This program gave them an opportunity to learn skills (both culinary and work readiness) that allowed them to move on to jobs in other bakeries and workplaces. Working in the corner retail shop helped them to hone their social skills and their sales and marketing abilities. By 2004, the Haley House wholesale bakery business had grown to a point where it had reached full capacity in the Soup Kitchen. The trainees were using the Soup Kitchen's only oven, and there was no room for a second oven.

The lack of kitchen space was not the only barrier to expanding the scope of social enterprise at Haley House. To create long-term growth and provide employment for more local workers and trainees, the bakery business needed to shift from relying primarily on volunteers and philanthropy to become more self-supporting. There was also a discussion of where an expanded Haley House bakery should be located. The South End had become one of the most fashionable and high-priced neighborhoods in Boston; its brownstones were selling for millions of dollars to wealthy professionals. Other Boston neighborhoods, however, were still lacking in fundamental services including restaurants serving healthy, reasonably priced food. One such Boston neighborhood was the Dudley area of nearby Roxbury.

## **Food with Purpose: Social Enterprise in an Underserved Boston Neighborhood**

Haley House founder Kathe McKenna was already spending time in the area around Roxbury's Dudley Station, serving a weekly breakfast to men and women on its streets. The Roxbury section of Boston, while adjacent to the South End, had not experienced the same type of gentrification. According to 2000 US census data, 63 % of Roxbury's residents were black, 24 % were Hispanic, and 5 % were white. The median household income was \$27,133 compared to a 1999 median income of \$41,590 in the South End. The 2000 census recorded that 27 % of Roxbury residents were below the poverty line and over 74 % of households were characterized as on low to moderate income (City of Boston Department of Neighborhood Development 2006).

Dudley had once been a hopping commercial district in the center of Roxbury, with movie theaters, jazz clubs, restaurants, dance halls, and more, but by the early 2000s, due to years of red-lining and disinvestment, most had shut their doors. There were few options for healthy food or eat-in dining available. Even McDonald's Express had closed its doors. As Haley House looked to expand the bakery, along with its training program and the economic opportunities it provided, the Roxbury community beckoned. Some Haley House friends and supporters in the neighborhood urged a move to Dudley to open an expanded "Haley House Bakery Café" in an abandoned warehouse building, once a storage facility for corrugated cardboard, near Dudley Station.

The move out of the Haley House Soup Kitchen in the South End to Dudley was a risk. In its new stand-alone location, Haley House Bakery Café would need to become a more formal, revenue-generating business operation. To meet the cost of monthly rent and salaries, it would have to attract a larger base of customers, or find additional sources of income. The first step was to write a business plan articulating what the organization hoped to create, outlining a clear vision and mission for Haley House Bakery Café. The business plan projected that the Café would be able to achieve break-even status by year three. This goal would allow Haley House to be less dependent on philanthropy to cover the costs of the training program. But to get up and running the organization needed to convince more funders to believe in the Haley House vision and to donate money to prepare the new café space and fund the move and related setup costs. As with most things at Haley House, volunteers were essential to getting the new Bakery Café operation off the ground. Over the summer of 2005, crews of students did whatever work needed doing to transform the Dudley Square warehouse into a comfortable dining spot, by upholstering the seats and painting the walls.

Didi Emmons, whose Veggie Planet restaurant was now running smoothly, offered her gifts as Haley House Bakery Café's founding chef. She developed a menu comprised of healthier spins on classic American and African-American comfort food.

When Haley House Bakery Café opened its doors near Dudley Station in Roxbury in August 2005, the mission was relatively simple: to offer healthy food options in

a neighborhood where there were few dining spots, to provide job training to under-employed individuals and to create sustainable, Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI)-friendly jobs. Members of the community who have spent time in prison are frequently blocked from employment due to their past history, even though they have served their sentences. Many employers establish policies to require these CORI checks as a condition of employment, even when the jobs involve no security risk. As a result, few legitimate opportunities are available to citizens returning from incarceration.

The Bakery Café had a clear sense of its social impact goals and mission, but it also faced the daunting challenges of launching a restaurant, a famously risky proposition. Close attention needed to be paid to adjusting the menu and to the design and systems of the restaurant. Issues had to be addressed promptly in order to ensure the success of the business. We soon discovered that the vitality and identity of our enterprise depended on our ability to adapt and respond to opportunities and ideas that were presented to us.

I arrived at Haley House Bakery Café a few days after the doors had opened, and received a crash course in restaurant management. What place did I, a middle-class white guy, have in running a nonprofit café in the largely working class hub of Boston's African-American community? I had no training in business, social work, restaurants, or any of the critical areas in which we were working. Before Haley House, my career had been in grassroots marketing, in film and music. Prior to coming to Dudley, the skills I had developed were largely in finding unexplored outlets for music and film and in building partnerships to help to raise the profile of these cultural assets. Initially, the connection wasn't clear, but soon it began to reveal itself.

Dudley had long been dismissed by many as a place where nothing good could happen, but that was not what I was seeing or experiencing. In my role as manager, I found myself working with members of our community to help to showcase and celebrate the abundance of talent in our neighborhood. This work energized me. As is evident from our origins, a core value at Haley House has been to welcome those who walk through the door. As people identify needs and offer solutions to address them, we build community together. These threads resonated, too, at Haley House Bakery Café, with hundreds of new people engaging with us every day, traveling across former neighborhood barriers to meet, converse, and engage with each other. I often found myself introducing people who shared common interests, but whose paths might not have otherwise crossed if not for the café. I felt like I ran a "pub with no beer" (that is, until we got a beer and wine license).

After a few weeks, a customer approached me, saying that she had a board meeting that evening. Could we possibly put together a platter of wraps and drop it by her office at 5 pm? Even though catering was not a part of our Bakery Café business plan, I ran out and bought a platter, and we delivered a platter of wraps to her that evening. Thus began our catering business, which has continued to grow and support the rest of the café operations. This ad hoc introduction of catering to the Bakery Café business plan is a lesson in the importance of adaptability in the success of a social enterprise. Catering expanded our customer base significantly and it

allowed our fellow nonprofits and like-minded for-profits to support us while addressing their own needs for food at meetings and events. This advent of catering also coincided with the rise of the “Fair Trade” movement, and our friends supported us in that spirit. People who had never heard of Haley House were ordering from us because our food was consistently good and healthy. We wanted the food quality to be as important as the “social good,” so that people would continue coming back to us. It is quite possible that without catering we would not have survived our leaner years as a business.

## **Becoming a Dynamic Community Hub One Neighbor at a Time**

This same responsive approach to our neighbors’ input would also enrich the Haley House Bakery Café programming and deepen our connection in the community, defining us as a community hub. On one of the first days we were open, Lana Jackson walked in and identified something that was missing: “You need art on these walls.” With the curatorial help of her photographer friend, Lolita Parker Jr., we were soon setting up shows for artists from the community, launching six exhibits every year. Another customer, Nina LaNegra, approached us asking if we might consider hosting her performance series embracing food, art, culture, and spirituality, “Art is Life itself!,” which had been running in a bar up the street; it has now been a staple of Café programming for over 10 years.

Boston Police Officer Bill Baxter had been developing a curriculum using food as a vehicle to break down stereotypes in order to reduce gang violence. He asked, “Would you be interested in working with me on this?” Within a few days, after the café’s 4 pm closing, a dozen students from the nearby Timilty Middle School gathered for a class taught by the charismatic Officer Bill (aka “Officer Donut”) and chef Didi. This evolved into our “Take Back the Kitchen” program, with classes in health, nutrition, and culinary arts, offering instruction to over 300 students each year.

Our response to these ideas led other community members to propose programming. Soon we were presenting a Dinner & A Movie series with the Color of Film Collaborative and History Nights in partnership with Discover Roxbury and the Roxbury Historical Society. Two women who were prominent figures in the Cambridge poetry “slam” scene approached us to establish a Boston-based slam. From the beginning it was a hit, and after a year, the “House Slam” took a team to the National Slam Competition, returning with all of the lead prizes.

After the Café had been open for about 8 years, it became evident that while one of our goals as an organization was to break down barriers, our menu prices represented a barrier to an individual or a family who might not be able to afford to go to a restaurant. A member of our residential volunteer community, Albert Ramirez, helped us to launch Community Tables, a Saturday-evening, three-course dinner, offered on a “pay-what-you-can” system. Each week, we reach out to neighborhood churches,

mosques, housing complexes, and support agencies to invite our neighbors in to share a meal together, regardless of their ability to pay. With donations from area farms like The Food Project and ReVision Urban Farm, and vendors such as Iggy's Bread, we have been able to expand our reach more widely in the neighborhood.

The dynamic Fulani Haynes serves as Community Tables' host, welcoming in families and friends, and creating an environment where all are truly welcome. A retired nurse, Fulani has been involved at Haley House Bakery Café from the very beginning—performing with the Fulani Haynes Jazz Collaborative, hosting a Jazz Brunch, and teaching classes for Take Back the Kitchen. Fulani embodies the spirit of hospitality that is central at Haley House: welcoming people, encouraging engagement, and building community.

Every summer, we host an *outdoor* Community Tables banquet, with 250–300 guests in attendance. Both the weekly Community Tables dinner and the annual outdoor event have deepened our relationships with our friends and neighbors. It has become one of our eagerly anticipated signature events.

Early on in our existence, we were approached by Sandra Casagrand of the Bay State Banner, the newspaper of record in the local African-American community, offering to help us showcase the cultural events at the Bakery Café. She worked with us to put together a marketing plan that was within our budget, so that people could consult the Banner to find out what events were happening that week at the Bakery Café. Our weekly ad in the Bay State Banner has reinforced our place in the local Roxbury community and certainly has helped boost attendance at our events.

Although it was not our motivation at the outset, in establishing these partnerships, Haley House Bakery Café has become a dynamic community hub—a place where things that mattered to Roxbury residents could happen—one friend describes it as a place of “positivity.” Others call it a “third space,” a place where people convene and connect outside of work or home.

Through our food and our newfound cultural connections, we had grown strong connections with our friends at Hibernian Hall and Discover Roxbury. We were invited to join the Roxbury Cultural Network, a consortium of a dozen local arts organizations, working to support and promote arts in our community. Soon we were among the founding members of Common Thread Dudley Square, a coalition working to organize monthly outdoor events in our community. We found ourselves very engaged in our community.

Volunteers have also played a central role in our move toward sustainability. One summer, in the early years of the Bakery Café, Matt Hamilton joined us as an intern. Matt loved the Bakery Café's signature chocolate chip cookies, and when he returned to Boston College in the fall, he convened a meeting exploring how BC might help Haley House by purchasing Haley House cookies to sell to students in its dining halls. Ever since then, BC has been buying the cookies to sell in its dining halls, as a support to our programs. Over that time, the cult of the Haley House chocolate chip cookie has grown, and on June 8, 2011, the Boston City Council named the day “Haley House Cookie Day,” officially honoring Boston's favorite chocolate chip cookie.



Carol Kong arrived at the Bakery Café as a volunteer in its early days, cooking during our Thursday evening performance series. She soon joined the staff as Bakery Café manager, and before long she was running the entire operation. She holds the bar high for her staff and supports them every step of the way. Carol's ability to identify the work that needs to be done and build a team to do it has enabled the Café to grow and build steadily.

While the Bakery Café expanded its business model to include catering services, our staff training program operated much as it had out of the South End Soup Kitchen. At a certain point, we had a waiting list for the program of 50 people—essentially a 5-year waiting list for a 6-month training program. Questioning our impact in this program given this logjam, we took a few months' hiatus to reflect. During this time, our catering manager, Danny Cordon, expressed his vision for a training program focusing exclusively on men and women coming out of prison, helping them through their transition back into society.

A visionary leader, Danny himself had spent time in federal prison and knew the immense challenges faced by returning citizens. In Danny's vision, the focus of the trainees' work would be on the production of cookies for Boston College, but their training would emphasize the importance of "life skills" and deeper conversations about trust, respect, family, community, and more. Danny led the launch of the Transitional Employment Program (TEP). Today, Jeremy Thompson brings his own experience to leading the program, which has grown to include computer training, mindfulness training, and financial literacy, with "life skills" training provided by friends at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. TEP is now 6 years old, with its graduates offering a valuable network of mentoring support to newer trainees. The transformation of our training program has changed our organization at its core, involving our entire staff in addressing the crisis of mass incarceration and the "School-to-Prison Pipeline." In supporting individual men and women as they transition from incarceration, we have built a deeper relationship with our local community.

## **Expanding the Impact of Food with Purpose: A Social Justice Restaurant Model**

While the original Haley House Bakery Café business plan projected reaching break-even status by 2008, it became clear early on that our goal was too ambitious. In a few more years, we were generating 90 % of our operating budget through sales. One might argue that it is more efficient to hire accomplished culinary professionals than to train inexperienced people to do the same work, but for us, training and job creation took priority over efficiency. And, as we compared our figures with other fledgling social enterprises, we recognized that generating 90 % of our operating budget in a relatively short period of time was quite remarkable. We adapted our expectations, because we did not want to reach a break-even point at the expense of our staff and our social justice mission.

Today, Haley House employs 34 people at the Bakery Café, in addition to paid employment for five returning citizens through TEP. Haley House Bakery Café's sales revenue breaks down as follows: 39 % café sales, 44 % catering, and 17 % wholesale.

Fortunately, Haley House was able to buffer shortfalls in anticipated revenue growth during the early years of the Bakery Café thanks to its organizational history. Through decades of buying property as part of its housing mission, Haley House had maintained minimal debt and set aside funds for future projects and capital needs. Nonetheless, even with this capacity to cover short-term gaps in the Bakery Café's operating budget, we recognized that building a self-sustaining restaurant business was the best path to offering more training and expanding our social impact. The success of a social enterprise restaurant model could also serve as a powerful statement about overcoming the dismal wages and employment conditions typical of the restaurant industry in Massachusetts and across the United States.

Issues of low income, poor health, and high rates of violence and incarceration disproportionately affect the residents of inner-city neighborhoods of color. With limited opportunities available, many inner-city residents seek jobs in the food industry, where minimal education and experience are required. According to the National Restaurant Association (2016), in 2016 Massachusetts restaurants were expected to register \$16.5 billion in sales, with 10 % of the population working in this industry. Between now and 2024, they project a job growth rate of 8.1 %. Sadly, however, neither of these patterns of growth has translated into increased worker pay. Federal labor statistics indicate that the "13 million-plus restaurant workers in the U.S. face a poverty rate nearly three times that of the rest of the country's workforce, and the industry hosts seven of the ten worst paying jobs" (Fuchs 2014).

Throughout the history of the Bakery Café, Haley House has been approached regularly by leaders in neighboring districts, asking if we might consider opening an operation in their neighborhood. Some of these Boston neighborhoods were similar to Dudley, commercial districts that would benefit from a catalyst to stimulate local business. As our business grew, and with it we built a bigger staff, we realized that the model of interconnected retail, wholesale, training, and catering divisions that had evolved over time at the Café did not lend itself to replication. We began to consider how we might create a more streamlined, replicable social enterprise model that offered a faster path to financial growth and break-even sustainability while providing stable, fairly compensated employment for staff.

As it happened, the first opportunity to broaden our social impact emerged right around the corner as an offshoot of the efforts by the City of Boston to jump-start economic development in the Dudley neighborhood. By 2014, Boston's economic growth and escalating cost of housing had set off a construction and redevelopment boom all across the city, this time including Roxbury. Dudley was in transition as city planners designated it as a new "innovation district" and approved multiple new construction projects. The City also announced plans to redevelop the Ferdinand building, one of Dudley's original landmark stores which had been vacant for decades.

Situated at the center of Dudley Square, "Ferdinand's Blue Store" was an iconic furniture showroom once flanked by the old elevated Orange Line train that had

been dismantled and moved in the 1980s. Ferdinand's was a business that allowed customers to pay on "layaway," and many older members of the community remember it fondly. The business itself closed during the infamous "Blizzard of '78," a storm that paralyzed traffic in Boston for over a week. Following the storm, Ferdinand's never reopened. Its abandonment came to symbolize the overall neglect and disinvestment in Dudley.

Now, the City was soliciting proposals for new retail and restaurant operations to help anchor a modernized Ferdinand building. While we welcomed the idea of neighborhood economic development, we also recognized the risks to long-time residents and small businesses. Because of high rates of poverty, more than 75 % of the housing in the pre-redevelopment Dudley neighborhood is government subsidized. The scarcity of market rate housing has resulted in a greater demand for it, often resulting in artificially inflated rents and sale prices. The city's stated plan was to increase housing density, in order to accommodate more affluent newcomers without displacing the existing residents. In theory, this strategy reduces the percentage of affordable housing without reducing the actual number of affordable units, but longtime merchants and service providers now need to pay higher rents to continue to serve their clientele in this market.

Residential gentrification puts upward pressure on commercial rents, often driving out small storefront businesses that are replaced over time with upscale restaurants and higher priced stores. In many Boston neighborhoods, independent businesses are giving way to higher priced, less community-minded stores. Dudley businesses have always had a distinctively independent character, and it was important that this be true of the new Dudley development.

In the South End, Haley House had witnessed how gentrification drives out long-term residents and local businesses with escalating rents and property values. If Haley House had not purchased the building for our Soup Kitchen in 1967, we could not have afforded the cost of staying open in the South End, and we likely would not exist today. With that hindsight, as investment in the Dudley neighborhood deepened, we felt the strong need to secure our Café's future there, if possible through purchasing our Café building. The owner had indicated early on, however, that he was not interested in selling to us. With redevelopment moving forward in Dudley, the ground was starting to shift beneath our feet. In 2014, we appealed to our landlord. This time, much to our relief, he agreed to sell us the building. Ownership ensured that the Café's role as a dynamic community hub reflecting the needs and priorities of Dudley's residents would continue.

Concurrently, we began to move forward with a plan for a second social enterprise that would provide sustainable and more adequately compensated restaurant employment as well as healthy food. We responded to the City's "Request for Proposals" for a retail space in the newly renovated Ferdinand building with a proposal for a healthy fare pizza restaurant. We had chosen to design our new model as a fair-wage restaurant, co-op or other similar employee-ownership model, with the core value of investing employees in the success and outcome of the business. Uncertain of our prospects for designation, we also applied to a special fund at the Herman and Frieda L. Miller Innovation Fund to research and develop a new, more equitable restaurant model for future execution.

Within a few weeks of our hearing that we could purchase our Café building, the City of Boston approved our proposal for launching Dudley Dough, and we received the grant from the Miller Innovation Fund to design a socially equitable restaurant model. Suddenly, we found ourselves undertaking three major projects at once.

## **Anchoring a Community in Transition**

With the city's Innovation District designation, active construction projects, and the redevelopment of the Ferdinand space into the renamed Bolling Building, a different "Dudley Square" identity was emerging. Even the name was newly formalized, since it was always simply Dudley to longtime neighborhood folks. While there were some new assets to celebrate, the community was quickly losing some longtime pillars of the commercial district, due to rising rents and changing tides. The rebranding as an Innovation District meant that Bostonians who had never before come to Dudley were now comfortable doing so, and they were beginning to price out some of the longtime residents.

Just as Haley House learned the importance of owning our building for the long-term sustainability of our operation in the South End, we know how critical it is to provide economic opportunity and stability for a neighborhood's long-term residents particularly in the face of gentrification. We envision Dudley Dough as a social enterprise model that will benefit local workers, and provide a fair share in the economic benefits associated with development. Without such local, socially-minded business models, many Roxbury residents will be hard-pressed to support their families and move up the employment ladder.

So again, "Food with Purpose" guides us—to provide Roxbury with more healthy food choices *and* economic empowerment for its residents. We are seeking to bridge a disconnect between local residents and access to the benefits of economic development, in which residents might otherwise be displaced, and to expand our impact to serve an even broader community by creating a self-sustaining and replicable business model.

The model we articulated for our second social enterprise, Dudley Dough, is the one offering higher wages for restaurant staff and greater investment in the success of the business. Staff is being trained in reading profit and loss statements, basic business practices, customer service, food costing, and more. In addition to the main attraction, pizza (which can be quite healthy and has a greater markup than most restaurant items), we have differentiated Dudley Dough from the Bakery Café with other offerings: specialty coffee drinks (the café offers drip coffee only), smoothies, and beer on tap. Dudley Dough is designed to celebrate the dignity of workers and labor, with an eye-catching mural of working people visible from the lobby of the Bolling Building.

With our new model, we seek to address the issue of income inequality in our community and to offer the restaurant industry an alternative to the \$9/h standard for restaurant kitchen workers. We hope to liberate our staff from working paycheck

to paycheck while holding down multiple jobs. By including some part-time staff in the mix, we are also able to offer higher wages to people with caregiving responsibilities or goals for advancing their education.

Dudley Dough has benefited from the track record of the Bakery Café in numerous ways. When the Bakery Café first opened in 2005, those who knew the name “Haley House” associated it with our Soup Kitchen, making it a challenge to market our café as a restaurant for everyone (where people pay money for food). After 10 years, we have firmly overcome that challenge, and the inclusion of “Haley House” in Dudley Dough’s logo has helped the pizza shop through positive association with the Bakery Café. Similarly, as we seek funding to get Dudley Dough off the ground, we have been able to return to several funders who supported the launch of the Bakery Café. The proven success of the Bakery Café makes Dudley Dough an attractive enterprise to fund.

We were fortunate early on to find a great candidate for the role of the Dudley Dough team leader. Luther Pinckney grew up in nearby Highland Park. He had worked as a manager in numerous area restaurants and knew exactly how hard it was for restaurant workers to make due. From his “front-of-house” experience as a host, he was adept at welcoming people and ensuring that their experience is a good one. Through years in this role, he had become a community leader and recognized figure. He has worked closely with our founder, Kathe McKenna, through the build-out of Dudley Dough and its early months as an enterprise.

## Conclusion

Reflecting back on the original business plan for the Bakery Café, I found that so many things have changed and grown that we could not possibly have foreseen. Inevitably, in the earliest days of the organization, energy was expended on addressing the immediate issues. Over time, we have been able to build capacity and take a longer term view.

Here are some of the lessons we have learned from our experience in Dudley:

- Invest the community in your work—the resulting vitality and impact will be greater for all.
- Be flexible in order to adapt your model. Our key example of flexibility is adding the catering service. Without it, the Bakery Café might not have survived. As Dudley Dough moves forward, we are mindful of this. If our strategies change, we are guided by our values, which have been the foundation of our community trust.
- You need good stewards to keep things together and moving forward: without Carol at the Bakery Café and Luther at Dudley Dough, neither enterprise would succeed.
- Activate your space—become a crossroad.
- Know your market and grow your market. Are you able to serve a greater part of your community—who is missing from the equation?

- Determine an acceptable and sustainable level of outside funding for your program—but be flexible with it. This should be an ongoing conversation with your various stakeholders.
- Try to create an economic buffer. The organizational history of Haley House and our mix of programs helped to overcome shortfalls in projected revenue as the social enterprise got up and running.

Our near-term goals are to bring Dudley Dough to the point where it generates enough financial success that we can share that success with employees in the form of increased earnings. Further down the road, the goal is to reach a point where we can use that success to make similar investments in other neighborhoods by building on the model and lessons learned at Dudley Dough.

Since the Bakery Café produces dough for Dudley Dough, the Bakery Café will also benefit from this replication. Soon, we also hope to expand the Café facility, building an annex toward the street, to connect it more directly to the community and to significantly expand seating and capacity for the Bakery Café, offering even more jobs in the community and more space for connection and partnerships. If we succeed, we can then apply some of the lessons learned at Dudley Dough back to the original model of Haley House Bakery Café, raising hourly wages and offering more investment there, too.

From its earliest days, Haley House has sought to break down barriers, build bridges, and establish channels to empowerment for people in the margins—Dudley Dough is the latest manifestation of our mission.

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