

Boston blacks face opposition to their plan to form separate city

They import officials from California model to plead their cause

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Boston

Some black people in Boston want to create a black city — Mandela, Mass. — within the city's boundaries.

Why? "Because Boston shortchanges us in delivery of public services," say Andrew P. Jones and Curtis Davis, part of the wave of young professionals in Roxbury, Boston's main black community. "Police don't respond quickly to our calls. Garbage collection is erratic. We're Boston's neglected minority."

Mr. Jones and Mr. Davis head a group called the Greater Roxbury Improvement Program (GRIP), which is leading the drive for a separate community.

On Nov. 4, voters in 10 city districts will show in a nonbinding referendum how they feel about the secession of a 12.5-square-mile area from Boston. The area affected could become the state's third largest city, with 150,000 of the

Hub's 625,000 citizens, 125,000 of them black.

GRIP is climaxing its campaign by importing officials from East Palo Alto, Calif., a majority-black community that voted three years ago to separate as a political unit from San Mateo County. It contains 18,000 people, including whites, Mexican-Americans, and Asians, living in a 2.5-square-mile area surrounded by affluent white communities.

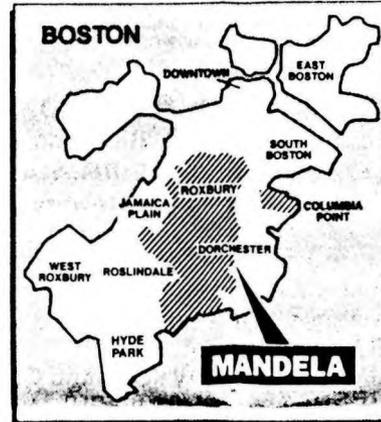
As of now, East Palo Alto does not operate its own schools, water and sewerage services, or fire department, says its city manager, Frederick Howell. A new city has to earn a credit rating to issue bonds, he says, that would finance fire stations, schools, and other capital expenditures.

Mandela became an issue last November when a letter protesting "lack of city services" in Roxbury was sent to Boston Mayor Raymond L. Flynn.

The mayor rejected the idea of placing the issue before the voters, but GRIP collected the necessary signatures to put it on the ballot. In the long run, Mandela, named for imprisoned South African black opposition leader Nelson Mandela, must be approved by the legislature, the governor, and the city of Boston.

Critics say the proposed city would face serious economic problems. Mayor Flynn's office released a study in early October saying Mandela would have a \$135 million deficit in its first year. George Russell, Boston's treasurer and a black, says Mandela would lack the

tax base of the major businesses of downtown Boston. He says most Mandela residents do not own their homes. They would also lose the benefits of Boston's linkage program, which transforms a percentage of funds, jobs, and contracts from downtown developers into minority aid, he says.



Blacks appointed to top City Hall offices oppose Mandela. They say that advocates for Mandela are ignoring the economic effects of such a withdrawal of residents.

Proponents argue that Mandela could balance its budget. Jones says Mandela has an assessed worth of \$1 billion.

A prominent black minister, the Rev. Charles R. Stith, has openly opposed the division of the city. He has organized One Boston to contest GRIP's goals.

Mayor Flynn has denounced the secession proposal. But three state representatives, Royal L. Bolling Jr., Byron Rushin, and Gloria Fox, support it. And recent Melvin H. King, the Hub's most visible black politician, has aligned himself with GRIP.

Advocate Jones argues that if Mandela succeeds: "We control our own destiny. We raise our own taxes. We run our own police force. We plan our own future. We elect our own officials."

But critics say blacks should stay part of the Hub. "Boston can be a model for a city once torn apart because of racial tension in the schools, coming together: one people," says the Rev. Mr. Stith. "O-

city has in the works a program to bring Boston jobs for Boston people, to give jobs to minorities, to give contracts to black and minority businesses, to create affordable housing. Why should we give up this movement toward one city offering parity to all its diverse citizenry? Ten years ago we didn't have this movement toward racial harmony in Boston."

Polls by newspapers and television and radio stations say Mandela will lose. Black community grass-roots talk says that middle-class blacks will vote against secession and lower-income blacks will vote for it. No poll clearly defines the white vote, which could be decisive.

Is East Palo Alto a model for a Mandela?

Yes, says Mayor Barbara Mouzon. "Our aim is to control the development of the city and to reduce crime, especially the drug traffic," she says. With incorporation approved, she says, the city has several goals:

- To convert a closed school into municipal offices.
 - East Palo Alto rents city offices from San Mateo County.
 - To oversee public facilities. The city of Menlo Park provides fire protection. Three governments provide public schools. Five agencies provide water and sewage.
- East Palo Alto is partly split by Interstate 80 with middle-class homeowners on one side and poorer urban apartment dwellers and a commercial area on the other.