



Get Tickets: Sacred Cod

# Why doesn't Amazon offer same-day delivery in Roxbury?

E-MAIL

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

GOOGLE

LINKEDIN

132



MIKE SEGAR/REUTERS

**By Dan Adams, Meghan E. Irons and Megan Woolhouse**

GLOBE STAFF APRIL 21, 2016

Eleven months after its debut, Amazon's same-day delivery service is available to nearly everyone in Greater Boston — everyone, that is, except for residents of three ZIP codes in predominantly black

## Roxbury.

The service, available around Boston and in 26 other metropolitan areas, allows a customer with a \$99-a-year Amazon Prime subscription to buy an item from the online retailer's vast catalog in the morning and have it dropped on the doorstep by evening. But [an analysis by Bloomberg](#) found Amazon's same-day delivery zones in Boston and several other cities conspicuously don't include certain minority neighborhoods.

The most striking example was Roxbury, a tiny island of exclusion surrounded by a sea of same-day delivery that extends even to distant suburbs near the New Hampshire border.

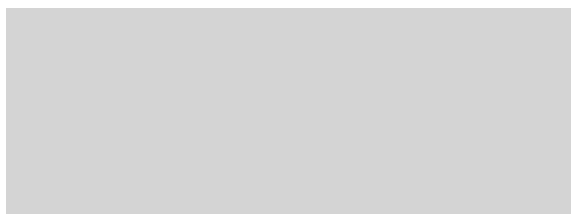
Roxbury residents on Thursday expressed dismay, but not shock. They said Amazon's decision to leave the neighborhood out is just another example of the second-class services they've come to expect from government and businesses.

"I'm not surprised," said Shanita Jefferson, a 28-year-old resident of the Roxbury section of Grove Hall. "There are a lot of things that we don't get in Roxbury and Dorchester that other communities get."

"If we are paying the same amount for the same products then we should get the same service," she added.

While there's no indication Amazon excluded Roxbury specifically because of its racial makeup — some suggested income was the deciding factor — local officials and business leaders were angered by the report. Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh said his office had reached out to Amazon.com Inc. and urged the Seattle company to "rectify this issue as quickly as possible."

"I was  
disheartened to



hear the report of Amazon excluding certain neighborhoods from the company's same-day delivery program," Walsh said in a statement. "All of our neighborhoods should be treated equally."



## Sub-prime service

The three Boston ZIP codes that do not receive Amazon Prime deliveries:



GLOBE STAFF

An Amazon executive told Bloomberg that Roxbury was "an anomaly." In a separate statement to the Globe, the company defended its practices, saying it considers customer data and delivery logistics, not demographics, when deciding where to launch same-day delivery service.

"There are a number of factors that go into determining where we can deliver same-day," an Amazon spokesman wrote. "Those include distance to the nearest fulfillment center, local demand in an area, numbers of Prime members in an area, as well as the ability of our various carrier partners to deliver up to 9:00 p.m. every single day, even Sunday."

He added that Amazon would continue expanding same-day service to other ZIP codes, but did not respond to questions about when or whether Roxbury would be added to the list. Meanwhile, the company is rumored to be gearing up for even faster one-hour deliveries around Boston by [leasing a warehouse in Everett](#).

Same-day delivery is available on total orders of \$35 or more, though not for all products.

Amazon's same-day delivery service does cover other neighborhoods with large minority populations, including parts of Mattapan, Dorchester, and East Boston. It also extends to majority-minority municipalities such as Chelsea and Lawrence.

A Globe analysis of Census Bureau data found that the three ZIP codes excluded from same-day delivery by Amazon are among the poorest in Boston. Each has a median household income below \$33,000, compared with \$54,485 for all of Boston. All three have more nonwhite residents than white residents.

However, the ZIP code with the highest proportion of black residents, in Mattapan, is include in the delivery zone. What unites the excluded areas, it appears, are low income levels.

The authors of the Bloomberg report noted that while launching the service in areas with the most subscribers is perfectly logical, “a solely data-driven calculation that looks at numbers instead of people can reinforce long-entrenched inequality in access to retail services.”

Former state treasurer Steven Grossman, now chief executive of the Roxbury nonprofit Initiative for a Competitive Inner City, said there's no defending companies that crop out low-income areas. He called on residents to petition Amazon.

“Perhaps [Amazon] can find short-term justification in their own minds, but not mine,” Grossman said. “It's insensitive, unjust, and unwise.”

But other business leaders stood by Amazon, saying the company is simply acting according to financial realities.

“There's also not a Neiman Marcus store [in Roxbury]. There's not a Mass. General [Hospital]. There's no Newbury Comics in that neighborhood,” said Mike Dreese, chief executive of Newbury Comics Inc., which sells clothing through Amazon. “The economics of delivery are pretty brutal, so if you don't have a density, it's not economical.”

Amazon is not alone in carving out Boston neighborhoods from its delivery zone. [A review in January by the Dorchester Reporter](#) found that many trendy, on-demand companies offering convenient delivery of food and other services — including Caviar, Drizly, Favor, Instacart, and Postmates — don't serve parts of Dorchester and Mattapan.

Across the harbor in East Boston, similar companies have distributed fliers seeking delivery drivers, even though they don't deliver to customers in the neighborhood.

When Google launched its same-day service, dubbed

Google Express, in 2014, the initial delivery zone included Roxbury but [cut out much of Dorchester](#). The company has since expanded its delivery area to cover nearly all of Boston besides Logan Airport.

Intentionally discriminatory practices such as red-lining — an array of racist policies by banks and other institutions in the 20th century that crippled economic development in minority urban neighborhoods — are largely outlawed today. But troubling disparities between Boston's neighborhoods persist.

Residents in parts of the city with large minority populations [pay more rent relative to their incomes and face longer commutes to work](#) than residents of other

areas, for example. Community advocates in Boston have also decried so-called food deserts, or neighborhoods where it's nearly impossible to find affordable, healthy groceries.

And minority entrepreneurs in Roxbury say [they lack equal access to startup accelerators](#) and venture capital.

In that context, residents said, it's hard for them not to see Amazon's exclusion of Roxbury as part of a pattern.

"It's just not fair," said Roxbury resident Richie Medina. "Business would be better if they treat everybody the same."

## ZIP codes with no same-day service

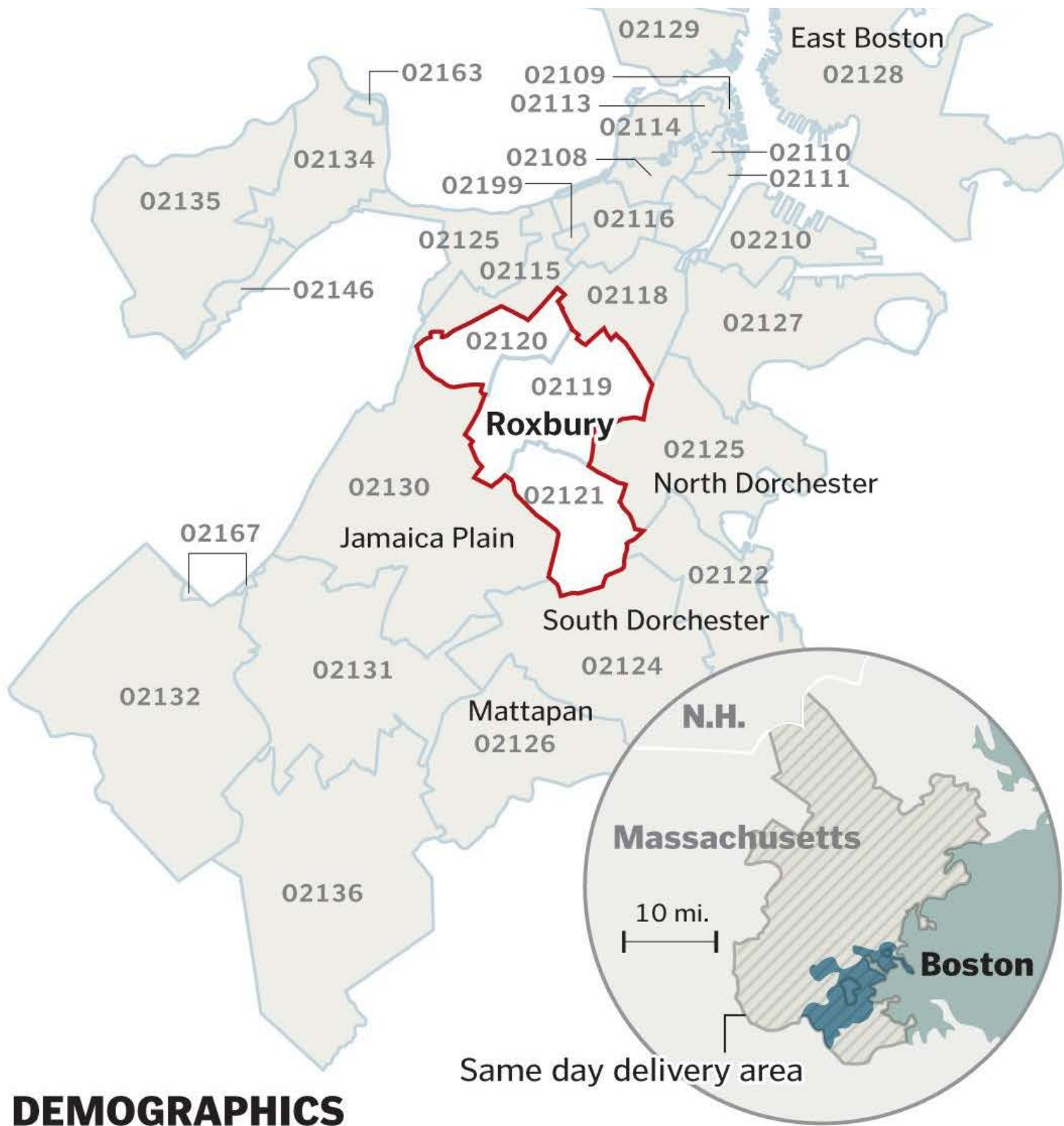
Income may explain why there is no Amazon Prime delivery service in three Boston ZIP codes. Two of those ZIP codes have some of the highest minority concentrations in the city.



SOURCE: Google

PATRICK GARVIN/GLOBE STAFF

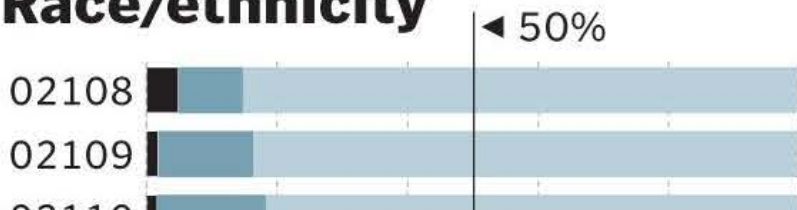
**When Google launched its same-day service, dubbed Google Express in 2014, the initial delivery zone included Roxbury but cut out much of Dorchester.**



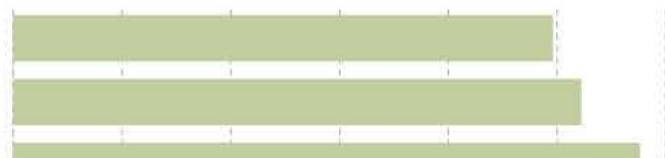
## DEMOGRAPHICS

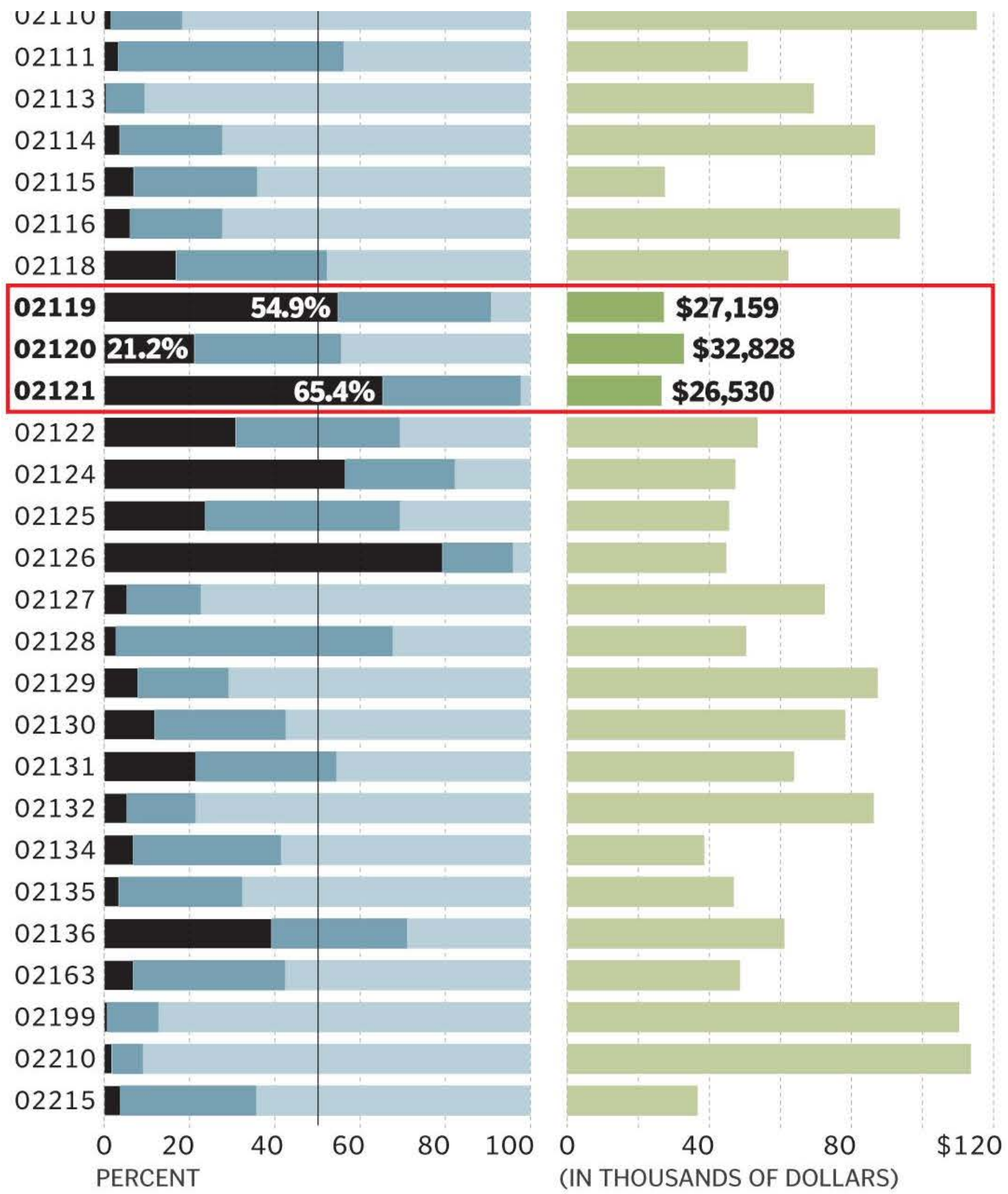
African-American
  Other
  White

### Race/ethnicity



### Median income\*






SOURCES: Census Bureau, Amazon, Bloomberg \*Median household income  
 JAMES ABUNDIS, MATT ROCHELEAU /GLOBE STAFF

*Matt Rocheleau of the Globe staff contributed to this report. Dan Adams can be reached at dadams@globe.com. Meghan E. Irons can be reached at meghan.ironis@globe.com. Megan Woolhouse can be reached at megan.woolhouse@globe.com.*

Get [Business Headlines](#) from the Globe in your inbox:

[Privacy Policy](#)

SHOW 132 COMMENTS

Stay updated, right in your news feed. 

## Top 10 Trending Articles

Most Viewed

Most Commented

Most Shared

Why do so many veterinarians commit suicide?

Red Sox sweep 4-game series from Yankees

On Football: Concern now is for injured Jimmy Garoppolo

Hillary Clinton needs yet another comeback moment

FBI pulls over car, questions five people in NYC blast invest...

Christopher L. Gasper: Jacoby Brissett last man standing fo...

### Learn More

Ayotte faces uphill battle against Hassan and N.H. history

[SIGN UP FOR NEWSLETTERS](#)

Developer Don Chiofaro scales back Boston tower plan

[MY ACCOUNT](#)

[MANAGE MY ACCOUNT](#)

**This time, Emmy voters (mostly) get it right**

[DOWNLOAD CUSTOMER SERVICE APP](#)

[CONTACT](#)

[HELP](#)

[FAQS](#)

[GLOBE NEWSROOM](#)

[ADVERTISE](#)

Authorities name man they want to question in NYC blast



**SOCIAL**

[FACEBOOK](#)

[TWITTER](#)

[GOOGLE+](#)

**MORE**

[EPAPER](#)

[NEWS IN EDUCATION](#)

[ARCHIVES](#)

[PRIVACY POLICY](#)

[TERMS OF SERVICE](#)

[TERMS OF PURCHASE](#)

[YOUR AD CHOICES](#)

[WORK AT BOSTON GLOBE MEDIA](#)

---

© 2016 BOSTON GLOBE MEDIA PARTNERS, LLC

---

---