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# Grim maps show how discarded needles litter 'Methadone Mile'

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By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF SEPTEMBER 22, 2016

No area of Boston is plagued by discarded drug needles like the so-called "[Methadone Mile](#)," a stretch of blighted blocks along Massachusetts Avenue in the South End, Roxbury, and Dorchester where the use of heroin and other opioids is rampant.

City [data](#) on recent constituent reports of discarded needles spotted in public places — on streets, sidewalks, alleys, and parks — demonstrates how the toll of drug use and the opioid epidemic has been widespread, leaving virtually no sections of the city unscathed.

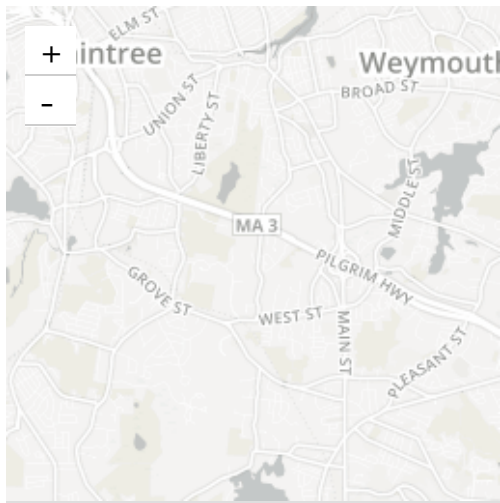
But records also show Methadone Mile, an area [recently chronicled by the Globe](#), has been particularly troublesome.

The maps below illustrate that grim fact:

## Reports of discarded drug needles in Boston

Each dot represents one report made to the City of Boston of discarded drug needles spotted in public places. The map shows a total of 1,494 such reports filed with the City of Boston between May 15, 2015 and Sept. 20, 2016. Another 396 reports were made during that time but cannot be mapped because no location information was available for those cases.





**DATA: City of Boston**

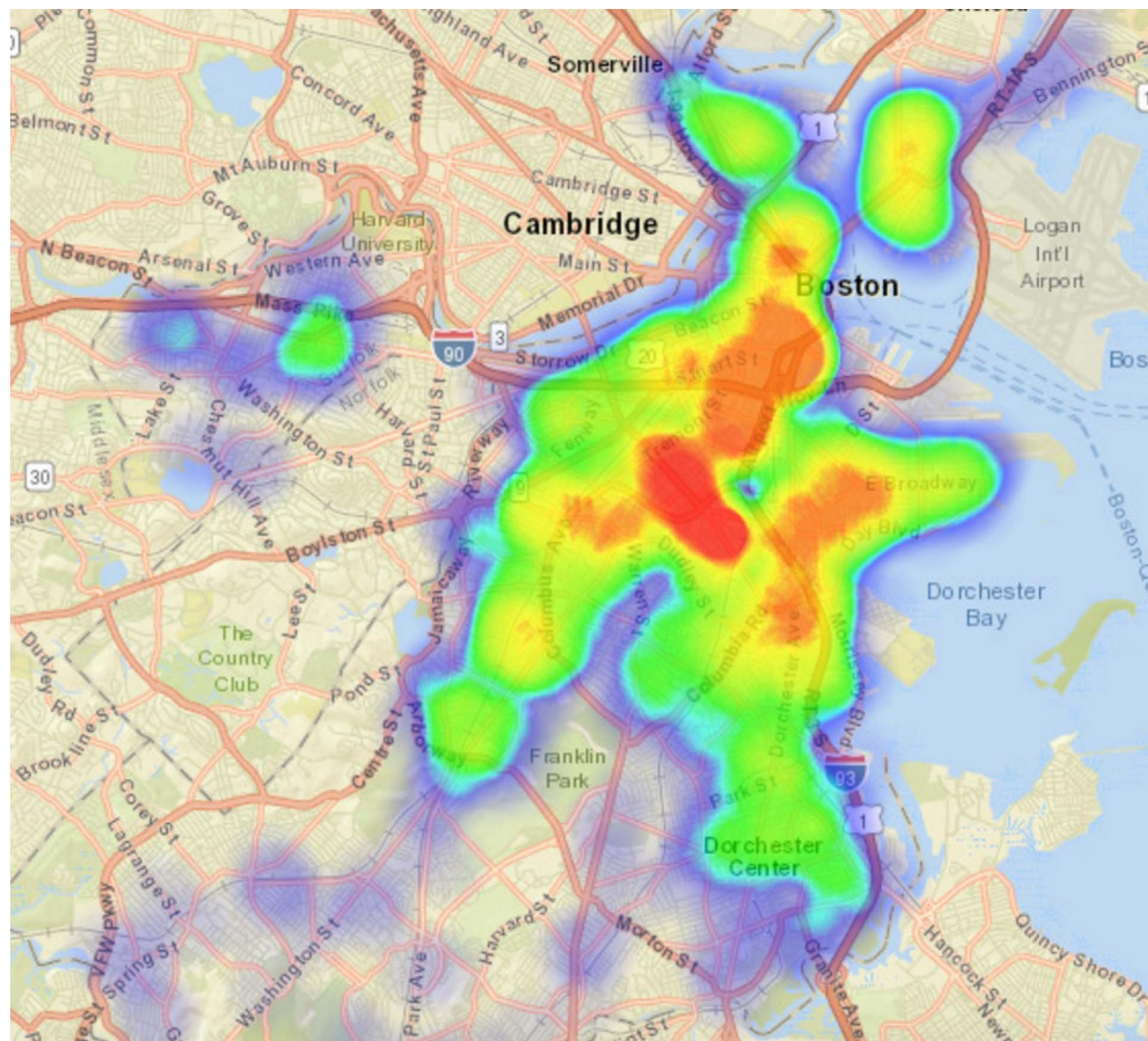
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Below is an image of a heat map of the same data. The map was made using a tool on the city's data website.



CITY OF BOSTON



## Life and loss on 'Methadone Mile'

On this stretch of Mass. Ave., the lives of people struggling with addiction — still using or in recovery — are lived in public sight.

The city in late May of 2015 [launched](#) the Mobile Sharps Collection Team, a group dedicated to removing discarded drug needles. The group has made it a priority to clean needles from Methadone Mile, or as city officials said they prefer to call it, "Recovery Road."

City data shows that reports of stray needles — which can be submitted to the city by [phone and online](#) — have risen steadily since mid-May of 2015, the earliest figures available.

In that month, just 11 reports were made to the city, data show. By comparison, 209 such reports were filed last month, the highest on record.

Through Tuesday, 184 reports of drug needles had been made in September.

Officials said this week that the team has collected 15,000 needles since its inception.

A promotional banner for Wayfair. At the top, it says "Up to 70% OFF Everything Home" with a close button (X) in the top right corner. Below the text is a photograph of a light blue wooden chest of drawers with six drawers. To the right of the main image are two smaller images of other furniture pieces: a green metal cabinet and a wooden chest of drawers. At the bottom left is the Wayfair logo, and at the bottom right is a yellow button that says "Shop Now" with a right-pointing arrow.

They attributed the rising number of reports to more people contacting the city about the issue — a development they encouraged.

Doing so allows the Mobile Sharps Collection Team, as well as outreach workers and other city employees who regularly survey key areas, “to quickly respond and remove these needles and keep our community safer,” said Ché Knight, spokeswoman for the Boston Public Health Commission.

“Additionally, Boston provides critical addictions and recovery services to people in need,” she wrote in an e-mail. “Opioid addiction is a national epidemic, and Boston is at the forefront of treatment efforts, which results in more people coming to Boston from across the region seeking care.”

City officials they have taken numerous other steps to confront the opioid epidemic, including bolstering support for recovery and outreach services and working with partners across the state to connect people with treatment opportunities.

#### Reports of discarded drug needles in Boston


The data dates back to May 2015 when the City of Boston launched a special team to respond to such reports and collect discarded needles. Figures for this month are as of Sept. 20.

Created with Highcharts 4.0.3  
May 2015 Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan.  
2016 Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep 0 50 100 150 200 250

**SOURCE: City of Boston**  
MATT ROCHELEAU / GLOBE STAFF

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