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Officials awaiting FBI to reopen the area

Police anticipate the public can return soon

By **Megan Woolhouse** | GLOBE STAFF APRIL 21, 2013

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BILL GREENE/GLOBE STAFF

Yekaterina Fliginskaya styled Erin Boyce's hair on Sunday at a salon on Newbury Street, near the site of the deadly bombings last week during the Boston Marathon.

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City officials said they expect a barricaded stretch of Boylston Street in the heart of the Back Bay that was the site of a deadly bombing nearly one week ago will reopen to the public soon, likely early this week.

Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis said Sunday that investigators were making progress and had collected an "enormous" amount of evidence from the site, but noted that the area will not reopen to the public until FBI investigation officials signal that their work is complete, perhaps as soon as Tuesday.

"I'm very happy with the progress," Davis said at a press conference held in the Boston fire station near the bombing site. "We are satisfied there are no more explosive devices in the area of Boylston Street."

Police said Sunday the crime scene area still under investigation was down to six city blocks.

A "mobile city hall" will be stationed in the Back Bay neighborhood to aid residents and businesses in their

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recovery, city officials said.

While the crime scene remained eerily quiet and empty, the streets around it hummed as residents and visitors came out in droves on a bright sunny day to walk, shop, and dine near the scene of one of Boston's greatest tragedies.

Some were defiant, others sorrowful, and many were simply curious and eager to be around others and remember the Marathon's many victims. There were staggering juxtapositions as diners in outdoor cafes had brunch near police blockades. People shopped in stores just steps from where FBI workers in white hazmat suits walked. On Newbury Street, a musical quartet played for money just around the corner from a solemn memorial to Monday's victims.

While many desperately wanted life to return to usual, it had not.

Michael Simon, a 21-year-old Boston Conservatory student, said he had been barred from returning to his Boylston Street apartment above the Pour House Bar & Grill for nearly a week, although he was allowed inside briefly to collect some clothes. He said he has thought about Monday's victims and wondered if he will ever feel comfortable in Boston again, but he is also eager to return home and to his routine.

"My life hasn't been normal for the last week," he said. "I've been sofa hopping and wearing the same clothes."

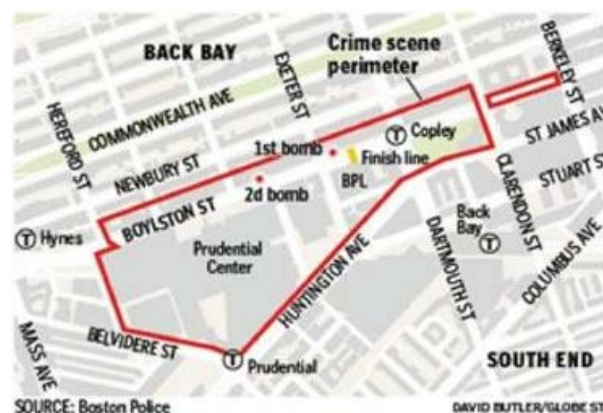
Police could not offer an estimate of how many people remain unable to return to their homes, but a spokeswoman for the department said no one had been stranded without a place to go.

City officials said they were assessing the safety of buildings and utilities, and they had not yet begun removing debris or conducting internal building assessments. Makeshift memorials will be moved to Copley Square Park, at some point, they said, and message boards would be erected to offer people a way to share their thoughts on the tragedy and the potential location of a monument to the victims.

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Officials said people with businesses affected by the bombing are encouraged to call or visit the Business Resource Center the city opened at the Park Plaza Hotel to receive information on street openings when they occur. People may contact the center at 617-635-4500. More than 200 businesses had already registered, according to Sheila Dillon, of the city's department of neighborhood development.

State officials on Sunday afternoon reopened the Copley ramp of the Massachusetts Turnpike, which is part of Exit 22 located along the eastbound side of Interstate 90 in Boston near the bombing site. The other half of that turnpike exit, the Prudential ramp, had reopened Wednesday morning. Copley Station on the MBTA's Green Line remains closed until further notice, officials said.

Mayor Thomas M. Menino, who arrived at a Sunday afternoon press conference in a wheelchair and to applause from a crowd gathered on Boylston Street, told reporters "it's time to move this city forward.

"We've been working hard to develop a plan to open Boylston Street," he said, "now the most famous street in the world."

Business owners such as Johnny Marchio, owner of three hair salons on Newbury Street, said the horrific events of the last week had taken a toll on his business, and many customers had cancelled appointments. But he said it was nothing he couldn't weather.

"We can always reschedule," he said of the lost business. "And I think it's important that you try to move on."

The giant glass window of the second-floor salon overlooked a bustling street. Marchio had decorated the glass with a banner of US flags and a sign that read, "Stay Strong Boston."

Erin Boyce, a student at Harvard Business School, sat in one of the stylist's chairs. After spending Friday in lockdown at home as police chased the bombing suspects, she said she felt safe and happy to be out among others despite reminders of the tragedy everywhere.

"We were pretty much on edge all week," she said. "At some point, you have to go back to your normal everyday life."

Tao Harris of Watertown and his friend, Paul Jackson of Newton, said they regularly visit the Back Bay on Sundays to take in a movie, each brunch, or watch football at a bar. On Sunday, they visited Georgetown Cupcake, unwilling to let their routine be altered.

"Everyone's out and nobody looks worried," Jackson said.

Yet for many, the emotions were just under the surface.

Jamie Mercurio of Brookline was heading to a memorial to reflect on what has happened. Talking about the events, her eyes briefly filled with tears.

“People still need to live their lives,” the 27-year-old said. “But maybe for a day, none of us will take anything for granted.”

Globe correspondent Matt Rocheleau contributed to this report. Megan Woolhouse can be reached at mwoolhouse@globe.com. Follow her on Twitter [@megwoolhouse](https://twitter.com/megwoolhouse).

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