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BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE OCTOBER 21, 2007

city ways



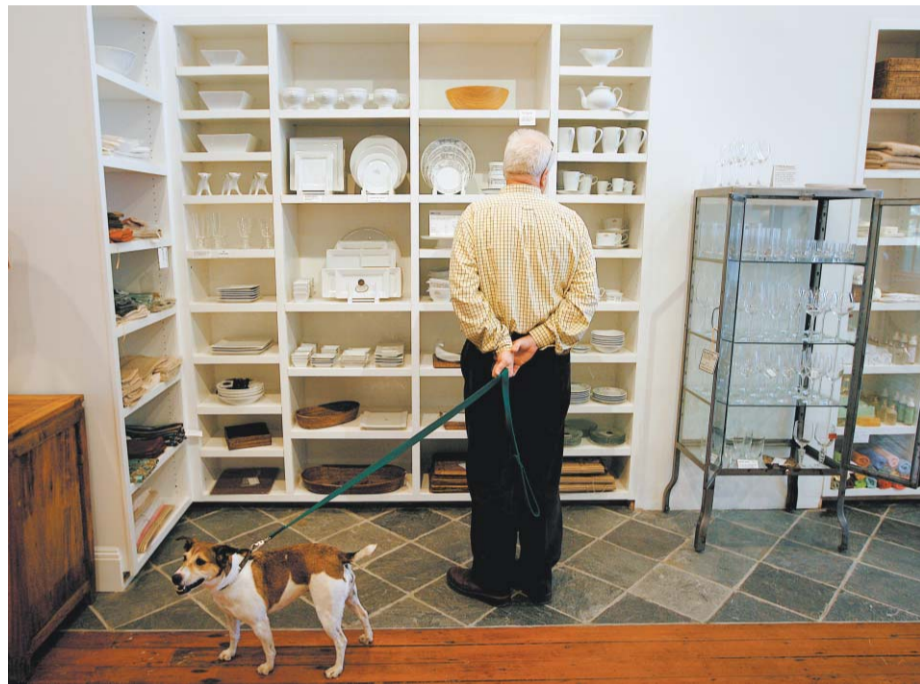
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Top left to right: While you're in the South End, eat at Aquitaine, shop at Posh; warm up with tapas at Toro; wrap your child in red from Kiwi Baby; browse at Michelle Willey and Vessels Gallery; slide 'em down the hatch at B&G Oysters; dine on Latin American specialties at Orinoco or on Indian dishes at Mela.

Dressing up with shops, foodies, new families, and old ties in the 'hood, the South End is abuzz

In full bloom

By Necee Regis
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

The South End is changing faster than Clark Kent in a phone booth. What's a phone booth, you ask? That's exactly what I'm talking about here.

First, it's hard to define the South End's boundaries. They keep expanding. Basically, the South End extends from Massachusetts Avenue on the west to Berkeley Street on the east; the northern border is Columbus Avenue, the southern, Harrison Avenue. But

with all the growth and development along the fringes, what is referred to as the "South End" now creeps outside these borders.

And then there's the area south of Washington Street — technically the South End — that has branded itself "SoWa," a district that's filled with art studios and galleries, new condos, and restaurants opening as enthusiastically as crocuses in the spring. (We'll leave that for another story.)

Second, the South End, in real estate parlance, is

hot. In the past 25 years the neighborhood — with the largest district of Victorian brick row houses listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the United States — has become a magnet for creativity in the arts, theater, and fine cuisine. Yet for all its big-city trappings, the South End remains a neighborhood at heart, where residents know each other's names, as well of the names of their children and pets.

The South End was created in the 1840s by landfill, **SOUTH END, Page M8**



PHOTOS BY BILL REGAN/FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Vertical-board siding characterizes both the English- and New England-style structures.

A region's history stored in its barns

By Jane Roy Brown
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

ASHFIELD — Barns can define a rural landscape. But in Massachusetts, where farm fields and woodlots once stood from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, barns are vanishing with the decline in local agriculture.

As these buildings succumb to weather, age, and gravity, the loss is more than visual. They also house a wealth of history and culture: Barns of the early 1800s displayed the traditions of immigrants' home

countries — mainly timber-frame English architecture in this region. A century later they more often modeled the latest thinking about efficiency and sanitation.

Whatever their form, barns mark the spots where farming persists, chiefly in the central and western parts of the state. In the region known as the Highlands — 1,100 square miles straddling the hilly terrain between the Connecticut River and the northern Berkshires — their plainspoken architecture

BARNs, Page M9

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FIND HAUNTED SPOTS AND PLAN A SCARY WEEKEND ADVENTURE

Cozy or chic, hot or historical, it's the South End

► **SOUTH END**
Continued from Page M7

on what was a narrow isthmus connecting Boston to the mainland. In the 1850s, according to the South End Historical Society, London-style squares with brick bowfront town houses were built to attract the mercantile class. Soon after, commercial avenues like Columbus were built in Parisian boulevard style. After suffering from neglect, arson, and economic setbacks through the 1970s, the area blossomed into a highly desirable place to visit and live.

LIVE, WORK, PLAY
Keep up with what's happening in the South End with an interactive map and a photo gallery at boston.com/travel.

I have enjoyed the South End's charms for over a decade, but for an insider's perspective I met up with six-year resident Drew DeRose, 42, at his favorite breakfast spot, Flour Bakery and Café on Washington Street. Owned and run by baker-extraordinaire Joanne Chang, Flour, in addition to all manner of scrumptious sweets, serves sandwiches, quiches, soup, pizza, and even dog biscuits for hungry pooches. (To make new friends, sit at the large community table.)

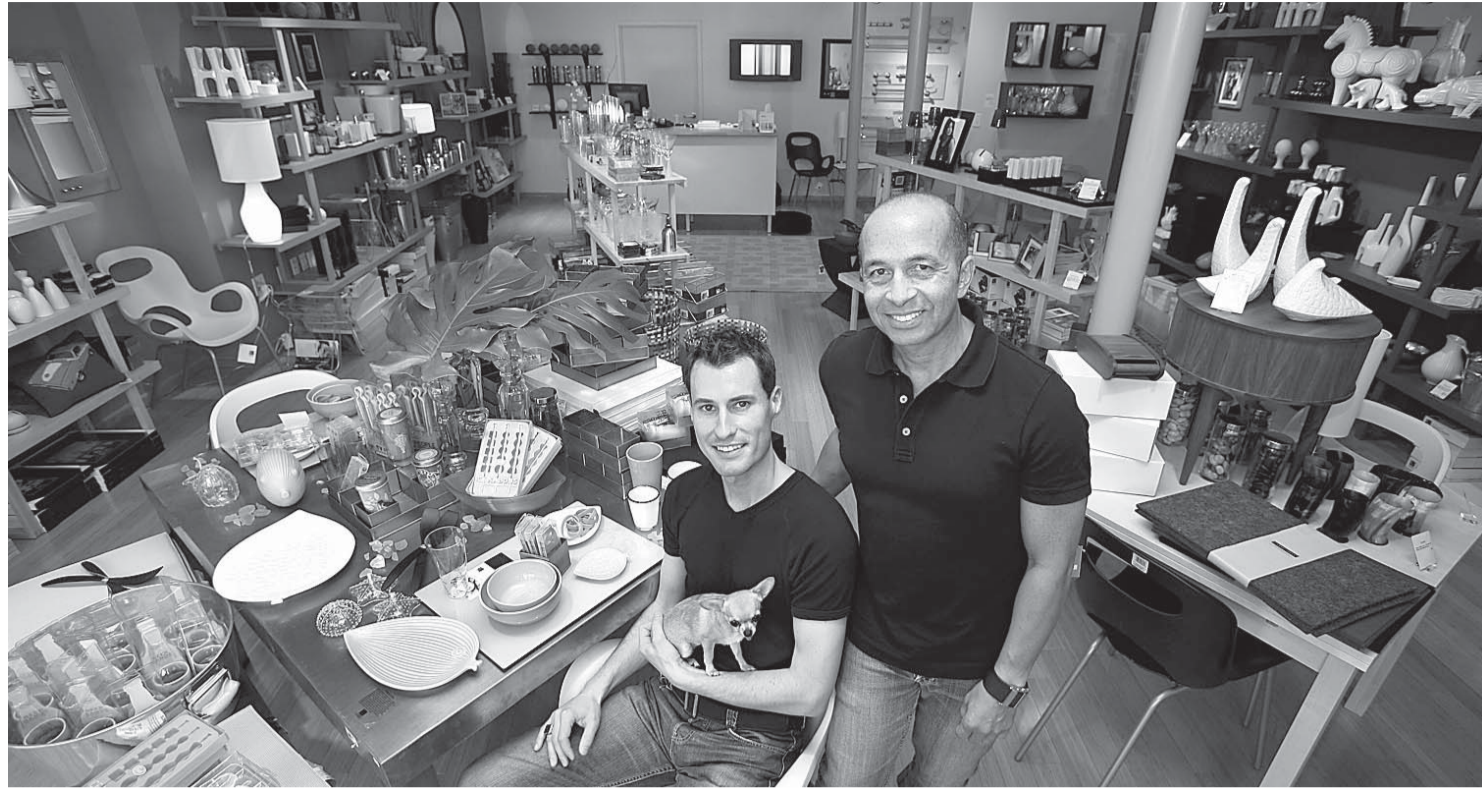
Sated with scones and appropriately caffeinated, we left the cafe and walked east.

"It's interesting to look at the architecture in the South End," said DeRose, who sources and creates merchandise in China, as he stopped at 12 East Springfield St., an inauspicious brick building. "This was Plymouth Hospital. It was the first and only black hospital in Boston."

A small sign, almost hidden by vines, gives a brief description of the hospital and nurses training school that was established circa 1903. It's now a private residence.

We continued our tour, with DeRose pointing out places I had never noticed: the Allen House at 1682 Washington St., a grand Victorian mansion that blends Italianate and French Second-Empire architecture; the South Burying Ground, established in 1810 as a potter's field; the community garden at Rutland Street, one of many developed in the city by the Open-Space Land Trust; the house at 5 Haven St., one of two remaining circa 1830 wood houses in the South End; and the sculpture in the rose garden in Worcester Square, established in 1851.

All that history left us famished, though in the South End choosing a place to eat can be a problem. There are more great dining opportunities here than the largest appetite could handle in a week. (At last count there were 30



PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

At Motley Home, owner Jimmy Ward (with Twilo), left, and his partner, Jim Conner, specialize in items high in style and design. Union Park with its fountain lies between Shawmut Avenue and Tremont Street, the address of the Boston Center for the Arts.



chef-owned, independently run restaurants in the district, with more on the way.)

We meandered to Orinoco on Shawmut Avenue where owner Andres Branger, a native of Venezuela, does more with 830 square feet than many with 10 times the space.

At a cozy table in the rustic interior, we shared pernil galipan, a slow-cooked pork and salsa pressed sandwich, and an order of maracuchitos, queso paisa (cheese) wrapped in sweet plantains. Other specialties include arepas (traditional Venezuelan corn pocket sandwiches), empanadas (filled Latin American turnovers), and pabellón criollo, a shredded beef dish served with white rice and black beans.

I returned over several days and sampled a diverse selection of the neighborhood's offerings. I tried the hot stone cooking at the Indian restaurant Mela, scarfed down a fried oyster and spinach salad at the casual-hip French bistro Pops, nearly drowned while drinking a stream of cava (held at the appropriate arm's length) while munching on grilled corn rubbed with garlic mayonnaise and other tapas tidbits at Toro, nibbled Parmesan arancini with pomodoro fondue at Stella, and savored the sublime spicy clam stew at B&G Oysters.

Whew. It wasn't always so easy to eat this well. At the time when many considered the South End marginally dangerous, chef Gordon Hamersley was one of the first to open a fine restaurant here. Hamersley remembers that in 1987 his guests would use their car phones to request an escort for the 15-foot walk from the curb to the front door. (What's a car phone, you ask?)

"Spaces back then were funkier. Even now we don't have super-fancy rooms," says Hamersley. "The South End's always been a



PHOTOS BY JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

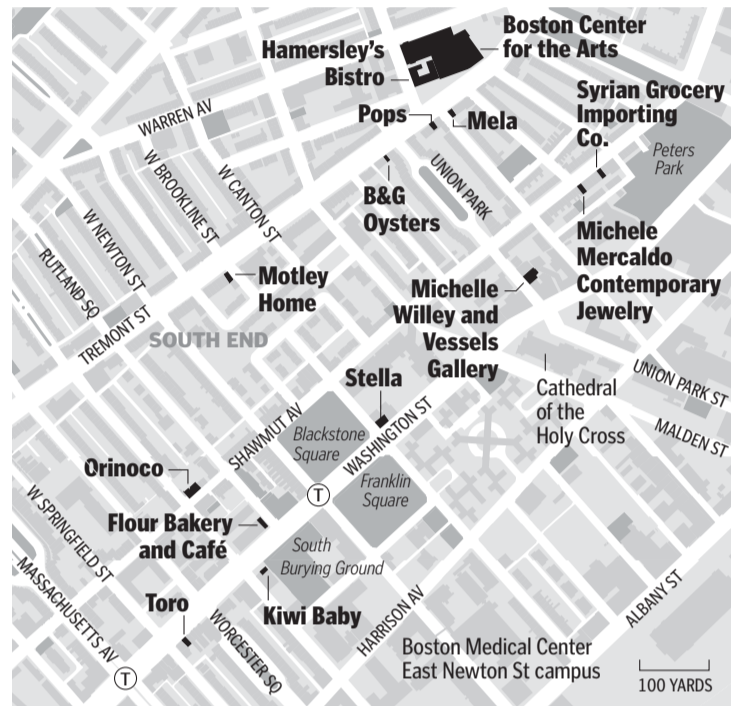
place a little on the edge, with an art influence, a creative influence. It's always been a neighborhood that's a combination of living and working."

Today, Hamersley's Bistro is a touchstone destination for dining in the South End. Hamersley's intention to "do great food but simplify it" can be tasted in his signature roast chicken with garlic, lemon, and parsley.

After eating, there's shopping. Small, independent stores are catching up with the growth of restaurants in the district. There seems to be a predominance of home boutiques followed by a new trend: baby stores.

"In the past four years there's been a boom of children in the neighborhood," said Carmen Kuru. Owners of Code 10 Café, Kuru and her husband, Zafer, recently opened Kiwi Baby on Washington Street. This two-level shop offers apparel, furnishings, toys, and even baby strollers — the same strollers that are seen everywhere on streets and in restaurants once dominated by rainbow flags and well-dressed men. On Clarendon Street, Tadpole sells toys, clothing, books, and bath accessories for the youngest South End residents.

In the home decor category, DeRose led me to the super-hip Motley Home on Tremont Street. In addition to the Jonathan Adler line of lamps, candles, and pottery, etched glassware, barware, Dwell table linens and bedding, and other unique household items, Motley Home has adjusted its inventory to the new demographics,



JOAN McLAUGHLIN/GLOBE STAFF

adding kid accessories like Dwell bedding and stroller blankets, toys, and bib sets.

"The South End used to be edgy, gay, and creative. As the neighborhood has improved families are moving in so we added cool design stuff for kids' rooms and kid decor," said Motley owner Jimmy Ward.

Over on Union Park Street, Aunt Sadie's devotes one-quarter of its space to kid-friendly items. In addition, this seven-year-old shop has a plethora of housewares and personal fragrances arranged in a way that's more rustic-country than high tech. (Think Anthropologie without the clothing.)

New to the street, though not to the neighborhood, is the home boutique Michelle Willey that sells practical yet elegant everyday objects such as French porcelain you can put in the microwave and fine linens by Matouk. Sharing this space is the Vessels Gallery, which features one-of-a-kind ceramics from all over the world and pillows from Tibet. Down the street and around the corner on Washington Street, the home furnishings store Lekker has all the elegantly designed flatware, dinnerware, and kitchen accessories you could ever lust for, and more.

A surprise find was tucked between storefronts on Shawmut Avenue. Michele Merkaldo Contemporary Jewelry Design is a small showroom, art gallery, and jewelry studio. Merkaldo displays her own collection, as well as a small selection from national and international artists who work with gold, silver, platinum, and gemstones. In addition, Merkaldo exhibits paintings by local artists, and the front window is transformed four times a year into a vibrant installation.

After parting with DeRose I

wandered farther along Shawmut and found the Syrian Grocery Importing Co. Perhaps my favorite discovery in my meandering, the store is also the oldest I encountered, open since 1940. The wood floor is divided by shelves chockablock with products: olive oils, vinegars, mustards, Syrian cheese, nuts, baba ganoush, fig jam, tamarind concentrate, a dozen olive varieties, and pomegranate molasses.

"A lot of people come to discover the South End. We're one of a few that's been here a long time," said Ramon Mansour, whose parents bought the store in 1967. Mansour and his brothers Joseph and Montgomery run the place today.

"My dad was from Beirut but my mom was born on Shawmut Avenue," said Mansour. "In the 1960s, this was a 75 percent Syrian and Lebanese neighborhood, with some Greeks and Armenians as well."

Their clientele seeks them out to purchase Argan oil from Morocco, North African preserved lemons for making tagine, pistachio halva, and spices including zaatar, a Lebanese spice similar to wild thyme that's mixed with sumac, sesame, salt, and olive oil and baked on bread or roast lamb. As a nod to current trends, they also stock specialty oils, gourmet crackers, flatbreads, and caperberries.

Along with dining and shopping, the arts in the South End have been growing at an accelerated rate. Calling itself an "urban cultural village," the Boston Center for the Arts (known as BCA) is a four-acre complex that houses the Mills Gallery, the Community Music Center of Boston, The Beehive (a bistro and bar with live entertainment nightly), 40 artist studios, the Boston Ballet school and rehearsal studios, the intimate Plaza and Black Box theaters, and, since 2004, the Calderwood Pavilion, which provides a second theater for the Huntington Theater Co. as well as a home for two other companies. (Several other restaurants and shops also share space in these buildings.) The complex, built in 1850 as an organ factory, also includes the 23,000-square-foot Cyclorama rotunda.

David J. Miller, the artistic director of the Zeitgeist Stage Company, is rehearsing for his seventh season at the BCA. His new production, the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Kentucky Cycle" by Robert Schenkkan, is being performed in the Black Box Theatre through Nov. 17.

"The BCA is one of Boston's important cultural institutions," said

If you go . . .

Public transportation

The nearest subway stop is the Back Bay Station on the Orange Line. Walk south on Dartmouth Street and cross Columbus Avenue. The MBTA bus No. 43 travels along Tremont Street from Park Street Station on the Green and Red lines en route to Dudley Square in Roxbury.

Parking

Finding on-street parking in the South End can be a challenge.

Atelier | 505 Parking Garage
Under the Calderwood Pavilion. Enter on Warren Avenue, at the rear of the facility.

Garage@100 Clarendon St.
Entrance on Clarendon Street between Stuart Street and Columbus, just before Back Bay Station.

Open lots on Berkeley Street
There are two open parking lots on Berkeley Street at Columbus. Open till 10 p.m.

Where to eat

Orinoco
477 Shawmut Ave.
617-369-7075
orinocokitchen.com
Latin American specialties in a cozy, casual setting. Dinner \$7.95-\$14.75.

Hamersley's Bistro
553 Tremont St.
617-423-2700
hamersleysbistro.com
Innovative contemporary cuisine with an emphasis on simplicity and fresh ingredients. Entrees \$25-\$36.

Pops Restaurant
560 Tremont St.
617-695-1250
popsrestaurant.net
One of the neighborhood's newest places, serving comfort food classics with a twist. Dinner \$12-\$20.

Flour Bakery and Café
1595 Washington St.
617-267-4300; flourbakery.com
Pastries and sandwiches \$1.75-\$7.50, dinner specials \$4.95-\$11.95.

Mela
578 Tremont St.
617-859-4805; melaboston.com
Modern Indian cuisine and hot stone cooking. Dinner \$14-\$27.

Toro
1704 Washington St.
617-536-4300
bostonchefs.com/clients/Toro/index.html
Tasty and authentic tapas in a festive environment, \$5-\$17.

B&G Oysters
550 Tremont St.
617-423-0550; bandgoysters.com
Part clam shack, part oyster bar in a stylish subterranean setting. Dinner \$18-\$25.

Stella
1525 Washington St.
617-247-7747; bostonstella.com
Stylish Italian cuisine in an equally stylish environment. Dinner \$15-\$27.

What to do

Boston Center for the Arts
539 Tremont St.
617-426-5000; bcaonline.org
Michelle Willey and Vessels Gallery
8 Union Park St.
617-424-6700 michellewilley.com
vesselsgallery.com
Fine home decor and one-of-a-kind ceramics.

Michele Merkaldo Contemporary Jewelry
280 Shawmut Ave.
617-350-7909; michelemerkaldo.com
Handcrafted jewelry and fine paintings.

Syrian Grocery Importing Co.
270 Shawmut Ave.
617-426-1458
Gourmet and ethnic imported foods including spices, oils, vinegars, olives, and jam.

Kiwi Baby
1636 Washington St.
617-247-2229
kiwibabyboston.com
Baby clothes, accessories, toys, and furniture.

Motley Home
652 Tremont St.
617-266-5566
Hip household and gift ideas from lamps to glassware to baby bibs.

Miller. "With four theaters we attract a diversity of audiences to musicals, plays, comedies, a gay theater festival, and now with the Beehive we have live music. It's an accommodating and inviting home for us."

Accommodating and inviting. Much like the evolving South End.

Necce Regis, a freelance writer in Boston and Miami Beach, can be reached at necceeregis@yahoo.com.

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