

Best of Theater 2025



Lyla Randall and Sarah Bockel in Huntington Theatre staging of Fun Home. Photo by Marc J Franklin.

BY JULES BECKER
Contributing Writer

At a time when authoritarian agendas threaten to destroy the American experiment, the best area productions of 2025 have largely focused on DEI. Both outstanding plays and musicals — visiting as well as home grown — have given important attention to the concerns of ethnically diverse as well as physically challenged and LGBTQ Americans.

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South End Brunch Club Closes Successful First Year with Kwanzaa-Themed Brunch

December 27 event honored Mel King's legacy and recognized young activist Harrison Clark

BY SOUTH END NEWS STAFF
With information provided by South End Brunch Club

The South End Brunch Club closed out a successful inaugural year on December 27 with its fifth Mel King Monthly Brunch at Piano

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Screenshot via Boston Neighborhood Network Media, YouTube.

Breadon Makes History as Boston's First Openly LGBTQ and immigrant City Council President



District 9 Councilor Liz Breadon. Photo via boston.gov.

Culpepper sworn in as District 7 Councilor

BY SUE O'CONNELL
Editor

In a stunning upset Monday, District 9 Councilor Liz Breadon secured the Boston City Council

presidency with a 7-6 vote, becoming the first openly LGBTQ person to hold the position.

Breadon, who in 2020 became the first openly gay woman to serve on the council, emerged as a last-minute compromise candidate following intense behind-the-scenes

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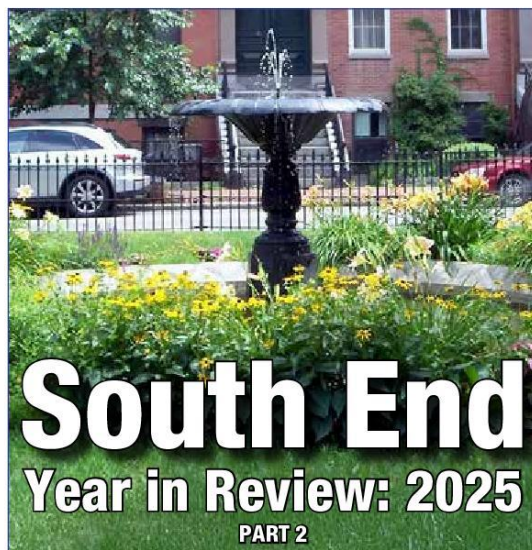


Photo by Boston Starbucks Rebel. Public domain via Wikimedia Commons.

BY SUE O'CONNELL
AND SOUTH END NEWS STAFF

Boston's 2025 Municipal Elections

Elections, Dining, Development, and Recognition

Alongside its public safety challenges, 2025 was a consequential year for Boston politics, South End businesses, and long-term planning decisions that will shape the neighborhood's future.

Continued on page 3

Mayor Michelle Wu won a second term after finishing first by a wide margin in the September preliminary election. Her leading challenger, nonprofit executive Josh Kraft, later withdrew from the race, leaving Wu effectively unopposed in

Restaurant Round Up

BY SOUTH END NEWS STAFF

Boston Chops Closes Both Locations

Both locations of Boston Chops steakhouse closed January 1, 2026, including the South End restaurant that had served the neighborhood for more than a decade, originally reported by Boston Restaurant Talk.

The closure comes as Urban Hospitality Group CEO Brian Piccini secured new ownership for the properties. An Instagram post from Boston Chops announced the restaurants "are now closed to



Photo via Boston Chops, Facebook.

make way for new ownership and a revitalized concept to better serve the community."

Piccini had announced in October that he was selling Boston

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Year in Review

Continued from page 1

November. She went on to win re-election with an overwhelming share of the vote, entering her second term with strong political footing.

The City Council at-large races resulted in continuity, with all four incumbent at-large councilors winning re-election, reinforcing stability in council leadership.

District 7 and District 2 Council Races

The most significant council race affecting the South End was District 7, which includes portions of the neighborhood. The seat became open following the resignation of Councilor Tania Fernandes Anderson, who pleaded guilty earlier in the year to federal corruption charges related to misuse of public funds.

Fernandes Anderson was sentenced in September to one month in federal prison, followed by supervised release and restitution. She completed that sentence and was released from custody in mid-November 2025. Her resignation set the stage for a closely watched election to replace her.

Voters elected a new District 7 councilor in November, Miniard Culpepper, closing a turbulent chapter and shifting attention toward restoring trust, accountability, and constituent services.

In District 2, which also includes the South End, the incumbent councilor Ed Flynn retained the seat.

Restaurants, Bars, and National Attention

The South End's dining scene remained one of Boston's most closely watched:

- **311 Omakase** received a Michelin star when the Michelin Guide debuted in Boston, bringing international attention to the neighborhood.
- **Louis Corner** opened in the former Butcher Shop space on Tremont Street,

marking a high-profile transition.

- **Banyan Bar + Refuge** closed after a kitchen fire and subsequent burglary, highlighting the vulnerability of small businesses during a difficult year.
- **J.J. Foley's Café** earned national recognition for serving what was described as the best Guinness in America.

Late in the year, chef George Mendes announced plans for two future South End concepts, signaling continued confidence in the neighborhood's long-term appeal.

Development and Planning

Several projects shaped discussion about the South End's future:

- Plans advanced to convert 95 Berkeley Street from office space into residential units.
- A proposed artist live-work development at 52 Plympton Street sparked debate about affordability, displacement, and preserving the neighborhood's artistic legacy.
- Planning continued for projects along Tremont Street tied to institutional and mixed-use development.

Recognition and Civic Investment

The year also brought notable recognition:

- Several South End institutions were honored as Boston Legacy Businesses during a ceremony held in the neighborhood.
- Boston received national climate recognition in 2025, with a South End affordable housing development cited as a model for energy-efficient retrofits.
- Northeastern University awarded community grants to organizations serving the South End and surrounding neighborhoods.

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Restaurant Round Up

Continued from page 3

Chops while keeping the restaurants open during the search for a buyer. Urban Hospitality Group also owns dbar and Deuxave.

Mesob Brings Ethiopian and Eritrean Cuisine to South End

A new Ethiopian and Eritrean restaurant opened in December on Washington Street in the South End, originally reported by Boston Magazine.

Mesob, located at 1746 Washington Street,



Photo via mesobrestaurantboston.com.

offers breakfast, lunch, and dinner featuring traditional dishes including kitfo, tibs, poached berbere eggs, and fitfit. The restaurant takes its name from the woven basket used to serve shared meals in Ethiopian and Eritrean traditions.

The menu includes ample vegetarian and vegan options alongside meat dishes.

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This year's visiting plays and musicals have often probed these themes with equally compelling results. The best of these stagings have ranged from Tony Award, winning musicals to very sharp original solo works. As in previous years, I am presenting my best list in two parts, area and visiting, to do full justice to the year's finest productions.

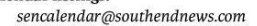
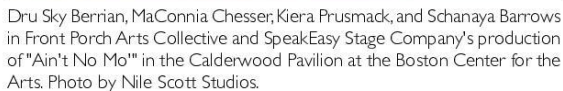
Area Stagings

Tick, Tick... Boom! (Umbrella Stage) - An exuberant production of Jonathan Larson's important effort before "Rent."

Ain't No Mo (speakEasy Stage Company and Front Porch Arts Collective), *Crowns* (Moon Box Productions), *Featherbaby* (Greater Boston Stage Company), *Her Portmanteau* (Central Square Theater and Front Porch Arts Collective), *learning how to read by moonlight* (Chuang Stage and Company One Theatre), *Mother Mary* (Boston Playwrights Theatre), *Our Town* (Lyric Stage Company), *Summer, 1976* (Central Square Theater), *The Garbologists* (Gloucester Stage Company), *The Meeting Tree* (Company One Theatre), *The Mountaintop* (Front Porch Arts Collective in collaboration with Suffolk University Modern Theatre)

Hamilton (Broadway in Boston)
Kimberly Akimbo (Broadway in Boston)
Our Class (Arlekin Players Theatre)
Parade (Ambassador Theater Group)
Sardines (Presented by The Huntington)
300 Paintings (Presented by American Repertory Theater)

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child (Broadway in Boston), *Kim's Convenience* (Adam Blanshays Productions Presents Soul Pepper Theatre Company in association with American Conservatory Theater), *Passengers* (7 Fingers presented by American Repertory Theater), *Two Strangers* (Carry a Cake Across New York presented by American Repertory Theater)



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LEGAL NOTICES

CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIAN FOR INCAPACITATED PERSON PURSUANT TO G.L. c. 190B, §5-304		Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court
		Docket No. SU25P1989GD
In the matter of: Edwin Valentin Acevedo Of: Boston, MA		RESPONDENT Alleged Incapacitated Person
To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by Mass. Dept. of Mental Health of Westborough, MA in the above captioned matter alleging that Edwin Valentin Acevedo is in need of a Guardian and requesting that (or some other suitable person) be appointed as Guardian to serve on the bond.	Suffolk Probate and Family Court 24 New Chardon Street Boston, MA 02114	
<small>The petition asks the court to determine that the Respondent is incapacitated, that the appointment of a Guardian is necessary, and that the proposed Guardian is appropriate. The petition is on file with this court and may contain a request for certain specific authority.</small>		
<small>You have the right to object to this proceeding. If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 A.M. on the return date of 01/07/2026. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance. If you object to the petition, if you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.</small>		
IMPORTANT NOTICE <small>The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.</small>		
WITNESS, Hon. Janine D Rivers, First Justice of this Court. Date: December 12, 2025 <i>Stephanie L. Everett, Esq, Register of Probate</i>		

CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION		Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court
		Docket No. SU25P1407EA
Estate of: Elizabeth Jee Also known as: Elizabeth Gwan Jee		Date of Death: 01/27/2021
To all interested persons: A Petition for Late and Limited Formal Testacy and/or Appointment has been filed by Way Kyi of Boston, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that: Way Kyi of Boston, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in unsupervised administration.	Suffolk Probate and Family Court 24 New Chardon Street Boston, MA 02114 (617)788-8300	
<small>You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/12/2026.</small>		
<small>This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.</small>		
UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC) <small>A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.</small>		
WITNESS, Hon. Janine D Rivers, First Justice of this Court. Date: December 26, 2025 <i>Stephanie L. Everett, Esq, Register of Probate</i>		

CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF GUARDIAN FOR INCAPACITATED PERSON PURSUANT TO G.L. c. 190B, §5-304		Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court
		Docket No. SU25P2887GD
In the matter of: Hoang Van Tai Of: Boston, MA		RESPONDENT Alleged Incapacitated Person
To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by Boston Medical Center of Boston, MA in the above captioned matter alleging that Hoang Van Tai is in need of a Guardian and requesting that (or some other suitable person) be appointed as Guardian to serve on the bond.	Suffolk Probate and Family Court 24 New Chardon Street Boston, MA 02114	
<small>The petition asks the court to determine that the Respondent is incapacitated, that the appointment of a Guardian is necessary, and that the proposed Guardian is appropriate. The petition is on file with this court and may contain a request for certain specific authority.</small>		
<small>You have the right to object to this proceeding. If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 A.M. on the return date of 01/27/2026. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance. If you object to the petition, if you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.</small>		
IMPORTANT NOTICE <small>The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.</small>		
WITNESS, Hon. Janine D Rivers, First Justice of this Court. Date: December 30, 2025 <i>Stephanie L. Everett, Esq, Register of Probate</i>		

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Brunch Club

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Craft Gallery, 793 Tremont Street.

The brunch celebrated Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), the second principle of Kwanzaa, and presented the organization's third Mel King Leadership Award to Harrison Clark, a UMass student and civic activist who has spoken nationally on health equity and reparations.

The monthly brunches honor the late Mel King, the Boston civil rights activist, organizer, poet, politician, and university professor who passed away in 2023. For over fifty years, King opened his home for Sunday brunches that welcomed the entire community—a tradition the South End Brunch Club was founded to continue.

"The Mel King Brunch is about amplifying the important work of culture bearing by purposefully engaging with the community to share resources and close intergenerational gaps," said Heather Cook, founder and CEO of TSEBC.

All five brunches in 2025 reached capacity. In November, instead of hosting a brunch, the organization provided a Turkey Feast Giveaway for 150 families and 100 holiday meals to elders. TSEBC also hosted a SPAN Women's Empowerment Brunch and sponsored

sored a second holiday meal giveaway with partners including the Caribbean Foundation of Boston and Urban Community Home Health Aide services.

Looking ahead to 2026, the South End Brunch Club has partnered with Boston Neighborhood Network to produce "The Mel King Blueprint," a monthly one-hour community news and interview program premiering in February.

"It is an honor to see so many in our community gather in the spirit that Mel King established with his Sunday Brunch," said Edwin Sumpter, chief operations officer of TSEBC. "We are extending his Blueprint for community service through our Mel King Brunch and other endeavors in our Beloved Community."

Bless Robinson, chief creative officer, added: "For the past seven months, I have walked as a universal activist in service to my community and the experience has been both deeply humbling and profoundly gratifying."

The South End Brunch Club has received support from the Mel King family, Boston City Councilors Ed Flynn and Julia Mejia, former Councilor Frank Baker, and numerous local businesses and community organizations including Starbucks Back Bay, Lambert's Supermarket, Hummingbird Jamaican Cuisine, and Boston Neighborhood Network.

City Council

Continued from page 1

negotiations that stretched into Sunday night. The physical therapist, who immigrated from Northern Ireland in 1995 and lives in Brighton with her wife, defeated District 4 Councilor Brian Worrell in the closely contested race.

"At the federal level, we face deep uncertainty, attacks on democratic norms, on civil rights, on the social safety net that so many Bostonians rely on," she said after winning the presidency. "In this context, cities matter more than ever. Boston must continue to lead by protecting immigrants, by advancing racial and economic justice, by investing in public education, by treating housing as a human right, and by standing firmly by our LGBTQ+ equality, reproductive freedom, and the dignity of all people."

The council vote came hours after Boston Mayor Michelle Wu was sworn into her second term Monday morning at Symphony Hall. Wu ran unopposed in the General Election after Democratic candidate Josh Kraft suspended his mayoral campaign in September.

In her opening remarks, Wu criticized the Trump Administration for cutting funding for housing, education, and health care. "We will not appease or abet any threat to our city, and we will not wait for permission to build the

world our families deserve," Wu said. "Over the next four years, Boston will be the proof that the nation we fought for is possible—a place where we take care of each other and take on the challenges that matter the most."

Other members of Boston City Council were also sworn in Monday, including Minard Culpepper as the new District 7 Councilor. Culpepper replaced convicted former City Councilor Tania Fernandes Anderson.

The path to the council presidency came after Councilor Gigi Coletta Zapata withdrew from the race Sunday evening, having previously claimed she had secured the votes. Councilors Enrique Pepén and Sharon Durkan made a late-night visit to Breadon's Brighton home to ask her to "consider being a compromise candidate."

"I didn't know I'd be standing here this time yesterday, but that said, I'm ready to lead," Breadon told her colleagues during Monday's meeting. In her floor speech, she pledged to "continue to be a peacemaker, a bridge builder, and someone who hopefully will be instrumental in helping us go forward positively, with strong leadership from all of us."

Breadon succeeds Councilor At-Large Ruthzee Louijeune and has served on the council since 2020, now beginning her fourth term.

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