NECAT
CULINARY ARTS TRAINING

Catalyzing Hope,
Opportunity and Renewal
in Roxbury's
NUBIAN SQUARE

building
for change

building
for our future

RUGGLES HALL

our story

THIRTEEN YEARS AGO New England Culinary Arts Training (NECAT) opened its doors with a fundamental job training mission: help Bostonians experiencing barriers to employment to enter the workforce in the fast-growing food-service industry that employs people from all backgrounds and with varying skills.

SINCE THEN, we have matured into the city's largest and most diverse non-profit culinary training program, enrolling about 250 participants annually.

WE HAVE HELPED more than 1,400 Massachusetts residents dramatically improve their lives. NECAT contributes to the common good by moving people from dependence on government support to become contributing members of the regional economy and tax base. NECAT's programs help reduce unemployment, recidivism, substance abuse and homelessness.

WE NOW HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY to expand our programs, strengthen our financial sustainability, and contribute to community development by purchasing and moving into a permanent new home in Nubian Square, a Roxbury neighborhood experiencing dynamic change. It's a move that will benefit our participants, our organization and Nubian Square's renaissance.

STUDENTS & STAFF WITH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR, BILL STRICKLAND, THE INSPIRATION FOR NECAT

NECAT has built a record of accomplishment and collaboration that has set us apart in Boston's workforce development community. As we have grown, adapted, and refined our programs, we have kept our mission in mind:
To empower adults facing barriers to employment through culinary skills training, social-emotional development and career readiness for success and long-term financial security.

We are guided by our belief that everyone – especially those facing obstacles – has an equal opportunity for personal growth, achievement and a better future. As an organization deeply committed to social justice, NECAT embraces diversity, equity and inclusion, and we will do everything in our power to assure our mission, services, culture and governance reflect this commitment. NECAT is unwavering in its commitment to help those who have been marginalized and underserved, despite demeaning national rhetoric and the federal government's threats to grants and programs that support organizations like NECAT.

building a foundation for change
Creating New Opportunity for NECAT in Nubian Square

our impact

Our culinary and life-skills training has enabled more than 1,400 Massachusetts residents to dramatically improve their lives. Our students who arrive from marginalized and underserved communities, men and women experiencing homelessness, incarceration, substance abuse and economic hardship, now have hope and an opportunity to thrive.

75%
from lowest-income neighborhoods including Roxbury

50%
of participants live in Roxbury, Dorchester & Mattapan

>25%
born outside the United States

>40%
court-involved background

~50%
experiencing homelessness or housing instability

Many
in substance-use recovery

NECAT's tuition-free training progam focuses on adults 18 years or older who show an interest and aptitude for employment in food service and are willing to commit to NECAT's training schedule. After completing NECAT's 14-week program, graduates have the technical skills to be employed as Line Cooks, Prep Cooks, Sous Chefs, and first-line food prep supervisors. Graduates earn an average starting salary of more than $20.00 per hour, exceeding Boston's living wage of $18.78.

building futures changing lives
Creating New Opportunity for NECAT in Nubian Square

who we serve

building futures changing lives
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Meet Melissa

Graduate of NECAT Boston Cohort 69

"The structure of the program and the family feeling made coming to NECAT something I looked forward to every day. I learned so much, and the staff's support helped me get out of my comfort zone. NECAT empowered me to succeed in my culinary career."

Melissa learned about NECAT through Access to Recovery (ATR), one of NECAT's community partners, as she sought a way forward in her recovery journey. Quiet and reserved at first, she quickly embraced every opportunity to learn, asking questions in the classroom and kitchen and working with Career Services to build her resume. After graduation, she became one of the first members of NECAT's new Job Club to secure full-time employment. Melissa landed her dream job as a cook at the Epiphany School in Dorchester.

Meet Abdul

Graduate of NECAT's Behind-the-Wall program

Abdul comes from a family of chefs and signed up right away when he learned about culinary job training through NECAT's Pre-Release Program. Upon release, NECAT's Career Services team helped him secure a job at a Dorchester restaurant, where he was soon promoted. Abdul started attending NECAT's Job Club to advance his culinary career and secured a position at Cactus Club at a salary increase of almost 50%.

"The biggest change isn't the paycheck; it's the person I've become. I'm consistent, I'm focused, and proud of what I'm building. I couldn't have done it without the support I received at NECAT, and I'm proud to be a NECAT graduate."

Meet Nathaniel

Graduate of NECAT Boston Cohort 73

"NECAT is the best. As a returning citizen, NECAT gave me the skill and confidence I needed to thrive. I've not only gained technical cooking techniques, but key knife skills along with life skills. The staff are amazing—supportive, helpful and friendly, it's more of a family. Now, I'm a Lead Catering Chef at Haley House and proud owner of my own business - Xperience Kulinary Kreations, all thanks to NECAT. I am forever grateful!"

the need

Now is a pivotal moment to grow our mission. Currently, we are in leased space at 23 Bradston Street, in a building that is difficult for our participants to reach by public transportation. And it is essentially hidden, limiting our ability to build public awareness and visibility. As our programs have grown— now serving about 250 participants annually — we've also identified practical and financial limitations in our leasing arrangement. We are unable to fully control our space, can't build equity, are burdened by real estate taxes despite our nonprofit status, and must contend with the many uncertainties that accompany working with a landlord and other building tenants. These drawbacks have constrained our ability to expand our programs to serve the many additional men and women who would benefit – and to help fill a persistent gap in regional job-training efforts. Our current location has also limited efforts to ramp up our promising catering social enterprise, which is opening a new path to skills training and employment, and promises to strengthen our long-term financial sustainability by generating fee-for-service income through catered events.

Our lease expires in June 2027. So, we must act now to address these shortcomings and ensure our ability to expand our services.

NECAT can expand our transformational programs, strengthen our long term financial sustainability, and contribute to the renewal of a storied urban community by purchasing and moving into a permanent new home in Nubian Square, a Roxbury neighborhood experiencing dynamic change.

building a brighter future
Creating New Opportunity for NECAT in Nubian Square

the project

In January 2026, NECAT completed a new strategic plan that, together with our dozen years of experience operating at Bradston Street, has informed the design and operation of our new facility

building oversight team

Maarten Hemsley – Founder and Board Chair
Maddrey Goode – Executive Director
Alina Gardner – Program Director
Mike Moriarty - Contract Accountant
Katrina Conrad- Community Engagement
Board Members:
Mike Rothschild, Jen Corcoran, Rebecca Hemsley

Our new permanent home in Ruggles Hall in Nubian Square, is an historic four-level, 48,000-square-foot building at the corner of Washington and Ruggles Streets.

Working with our design and construction consultants – RODE Architects and Lee Kennedy Company, we've developed detailed construction, engineering and design plans.

We aim to ensure that minority/women-owned businesses (MWBE) play a significant role in completing the project

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Creating New Opportunity for NECAT in Nubian Square

develop

a larger and more accessible, efficient, and visible training facility.
Ruggles Hall will place NECAT in a thriving neighborhood close to many of our program partners, employers and resources for our participants.
The building is a short walk from one of Boston's busiest public transit hubs, which is served by several free bus lines.
NECAT plans to occupy the 2nd and 3rd floors of Ruggles Hall, providing much more space than our current facility.

improve

institutional visibility and catalyze collaborations by placing NECAT within a vibrant, emerging ecosystem of social service, cultural, commercial and economic development institutions in Nubian Square, the historic hub of Boston's African American community.
Ruggles Hall is close to a wide range of public and nonprofit organizations involved in workforce and community development – including a City employment center, the Boston public schools administrative campus, and several social service providers. We have a Memorandum of Understanding to lease available rental space to our new neighbor, Roxbury Community College, which will provide opportunities for social enterprise and establish a close workforce development relationship.
Having these close neighbors will aid student recruitment and job placement and help nourish greater collaboration and program innovation.

strengthen

our long-term financial sustainability by eliminating rent and real estate taxes, creating new sources of earned income, and building equity.
We anticipate the move will reduce annual occupancy costs by almost $500,000 and increase net annual revenues by approximately $200,000.
Rental income from tenants will generate enough revenue to cover debt payments. In addition to a strong return on investment, this financial improvement will, among other benefits, enable us to expand programming and staff and better manage the unpredictability in the timing of future revenue sources, such as government and foundation grants.

the benefit

NECAT's new home in Ruggles Hall will attract participation in its remarkable programs. Students can reach Nubian Square directly on the City's free bus lines. By increasing NECAT's visibility in a safe, vital neighborhood, we'll encourage event attendees, partners, and potential employers to celebrate the organization's growth and future plans to serve more students

new, substantially larger and more efficient teaching kitchen
dedicated kitchen and workspace for our growing catering social enterprise
dedicated function space to be used for income-generating events
exhibition and meditation/wellness space
offices and board room
enlarged Career Services and Alumni Engagement Center and computer lab
expanded teaching and workspace to allow for future growth

the numbers

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$18M
Total Project Cost

$9M To fund building acquisition Fall 2026

funding sources

$4.5M South ShoreBank

$4.5M MassDevelopment

$9M To fund build-out to be completed by Spring 2027

$7.5M Renovations and fit-out

$1.5M Repairs, utility upgrades and soft costs

commitments in hand

$1.2M Individuals and Family Foundations

$1.3M Commonwealth Surtax Funds, Social Enterprise grant, tax credits

$6.5M left to raise

prospects in motion

FEDERAL FUNDING
City of Boston application accepted by Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley's office for potential 2027 funding

MA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BILL
$500,000 included in House version of Governor Healey's Economic Development Bill

FOUNDATIONS
Targeting >20. Grant applications underway

NEW MARKETS TAX CREDITS
NECAT has engaged Affirmative Investments; potential funding Q1 2027

STATE HISTORIC TAX CREDITS
Ruggles Hall is 100+ years old. Working with Ryan LLC: first award received

individuals, family foundations & you

build with us

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nicole Collymore is Compliance Officer, Boston Healthcare for the Homeless Program.

Jennifer Corcoran is Vice President of Development for Joseph J. Corcoran Company and volunteers with the Boys and Girls Club of Dorchester and Charlestown Lacrosse & Learning Center.

Reverend Doctor Dana Gonsal is Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dorchester, Chaplain at Suffolk County House of Correction, President/CEO of The Classic Shoe Shine Corporation, and a vital community advocate.

Rebecca Hemsley is Director of Marketing & Advertising at South Coast Almanac LLC and serves as President of the Foundation for Wareham Education.

Maarten Hemsley (NECAT Founder, Board Chair & President) is a semi-retired financial executive with many years' experience managing public and private companies.

Catherine Medina-Perez is a Philanthropy Sr. Associate at Santander US. She has over 10 years of Community and Youth Development experience. She is fluent in English and Spanish.

Ari Munoz is Senior Supply Chain Operations Manager, Pepsi-Co/Frito-Lay and a performance-driven leader with over a decade of experience in operations, management, and sales. Ari is fluent in English and Spanish.

Sofia Rodriguez is a graduate of NECAT and an Allergen Chef at Simple Servings, Sodexo. She is an advocate for creating an allergy-aware kitchen environment. Sofia is fluent in English and Spanish.

Michael Rothschild is a principal of Abbott Investments and President of the Newmarket Business Association.

Sara Sprague (Deputy Board Chair) is the Head of Strategy and Operations for US Commercial Operations and Business Solutions at Takeda Pharmaceuticals.

William (Bill) Strickland (Honorary Board Member) is founder of Manchester Bidwell and the Strickland Global Leadership Initiative, and the inspiration for NECAT.

Betsy Taylor is a seasoned financial expert, having served as the Director of Finance & Treasury for the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) before retiring.

building a brighter future

Creating New Opportunity for NECAT in Nubian Square

NECAT'S LEADERSHIP TEAM

Maddrey Goode – Executive Director
Alina Gardner – Program Director
Avery Perry - Culinary Director
Barbara Platt Johnson - Development Director
Quandre McGhee - Catering Director & NECAT graduate