

‘It feels like the cost of eating out has gotten more expensive.’

ALLIE DUNCAN, *who goes out to eat less often than she used to*

WHAT A NIGHT OUT SAYS ABOUT THE ECONOMY



MATTHEW J. LEE/GLOBE STAFF

Lorenzo Ross, the kitchen manager at Smoke Shop, delivered meals during the dinner rush early this month.

Restaurant owners tracking fewer visits and smaller checks

By Shirley Leung
GLOBE STAFF

At the barbecue joint Smoke Shop, the customer who used to come three times a month now stops by twice. At Brine, summer has been remarkably slow for a seafood restaurant with a patio in Newburyport. And at Shanti, an Indian restaurant in Dorchester and Roslindale, corporate clients are trimming their catering budgets.

Restaurant owners aren't ready to utter the "r" word yet — the dreaded recession economists keep predicting — but some-

thing's different. Customers are fewer, checks are smaller, and not as many people are in the mood for those bon-vivant nights out.

That's the case with Allie Duncan, a 28-year-old marketing manager who recently had dinner at the Smoke Shop in the Fort Point neighborhood. She used to eat out two to three times a week. No more.

"In recent months, it feels like the cost of eating out has gotten more expensive," she said. "I really only go out to eat with people if it's like an occasion, like a catch-up, or some-

thing like that."

Restaurants are an early indicator for the nation's consumer-driven economy, as discretionary as discretionary spending can get. When consumers fear for their jobs, feel squeezed by rising costs, or become uncertain about the future, one of the first items cut from household budgets is eating out.

Nationally, the number of people visiting restaurants is down 2.6 percent for the first half of the year, according to research firm Circana, which blames the cumulative effects

ECONOMY, Page A7

Critics wary as Trump already questions vote

Supporters contend they are ensuring a fair election, but opponents are bracing

By Sam Brodey
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — When Donald Trump expressed disbelief over a large audience assembled for Vice President Kamala Harris in Michigan last week — baselessly claiming that artificial intelligence generated the images — the obsession with crowd size was not his only fixation

on display.

"This is the way the Democrats win Elections, by CHEATING - And they're even worse at the Ballot Box," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. "She should be disqualified because the creation of a fake image is ELECTION INTERFERENCE. Anyone who does that will cheat at ANYTHING!"

Much of the backlash focused on Trump's AI claim. But his comments highlighted an emerging dynamic in this volatile campaign: unfounded allegations that Democrats are cheating and insisting that the 2024 election won't be legitimate unless he is victorious.

In the eyes of Trump critics, the former president's intention is clear: to lay the groundwork for Republicans to reject a potential defeat, just as he did four years ago.

"It's becoming more and more

obvious that it's an intentional play to start planting seeds of doubt about the election," said Geoff Duncan, the Republican former lieutenant governor of Georgia who became a vocal critic of his party's election denialism.

The Trump campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

Salleigh Grubbs, the chair of the Cobb County, Ga., GOP, called the notion that Trump is preparing to contest the election "ridiculous."

TRUMP, Page A6

HENRY LEE 1925-2024

For four decades, he served as guardian of the Public Garden, Boston's treasures

By Bryan Marquard
GLOBE STAFF

Henry Lee and the fledgling Friends of the Public Garden he led faced impossible odds in the 1970s when the civic group fought a plan to build a set of office and residential towers — the tallest rising higher than 600 feet — that would shroud in shadows a jewel of Boston open space.

On one side was a powerful developer backed by the governor, mayor, and business groups, along with The Boston Globe and other newspapers. On the side of sunlight was Mr. Lee, an exceedingly polite schoolteacher who was not given to raising his voice, even in anger.

"I never thought we'd beat it," Mr. Lee recalled in a 2001 Globe interview, nearly a quarter century after efforts by his organization and others resulted in the hulking Park Plaza proposal being scaled back into a smaller, less intrusive project.



DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF/2011

Mr. Lee led the Friends of the Public Garden against a massive development project in the 1970s.

Zuckerman's initial Park Plaza proposal, Mr. Lee was just as persistent at deflecting acclaim for his own efforts.

LEE, Page C9

Auditor to examine shelter system

Review of maxed-out sites comes as costs near \$1b

By Danny McDonald
GLOBE STAFF

The state auditor is examining spending on Massachusetts' maxed-out emergency shelter system, which has also come under scrutiny for a lack of transparency as costs have swiftly soared to about \$1 billion a year amid complaints about living conditions for homeless families.

"During this challenging time, in which the shelter system is operating at full capacity, we have heard concerns raised by residents who want to ensure their taxpayer dollars are being spent in a transparent, appropriate, efficient and impactful manner," said the office of State Auditor Diana DiZogio in a statement.

DiZogio's office said it could not discuss details of its probe, but noted the analysis of the state's Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities will look at issues in the shelter system, among other topics.

The office plans to publicly share the full audit report after it is completed. Audits typically take a year to a year-and-a-half to complete, "depending on the agency's level of responsiveness to our office," it said.

A spokesman for the administration said the housing agency has been cooperating with DiZogio and is "committed to this continued engagement to ensure a thorough and transparent review process."

DiZogio, a Democrat from Methuen, was elected auditor in 2022 and has ruffled feathers

SHELTERS, Page A10

Exam school applications fall sharply

Drop follows population decrease, change to process

By James Vaznis
GLOBE STAFF

Applications to Boston's highly sought exam schools have fallen by nearly 50 percent over the last four years, amid a series of significant changes to the admission process and continuing declines in the school-age population.

The smaller school-age population, however, only partially explains the dramatic drop in applications; enrollment in the sixth and eighth grades in Boston Public Schools, which is when students apply to exam schools, has declined at a slower pace than the applications themselves, according to a Globe review of state data.

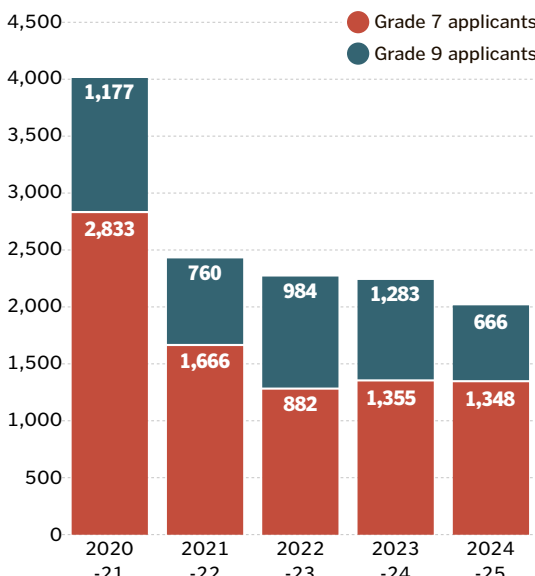
BPS also changed the way it counted applications three years ago, and now excludes from its numbers students who do not have at least a B average in English, math, science, and social studies. Previously, there was no GPA cutoff for admission consideration.

Consequently, the number of applications to Boston Latin School, Boston Latin Academy, and

EXAM SCHOOLS, Page A10

Applications to exam schools down by nearly 50 percent

The 2020-21 admission year was the last year using the former admissions system. These numbers do not include ineligible applicants.



SOURCES: 2023 Boston School Committee presentation, 2024 Boston School Committee presentation
CHRISTOPHER HUFFAKER/GLOBE STAFF

The Boston Zoning Commission rejected an initiative to require large, new buildings to dramatically reduce their reliance on fossil fuels. **B1.**

The consumer price index cooled in July compared with a year earlier, providing further evidence that inflation is moderating. **D1.**

Outside choices

Thursday: Mostly sunny. High: 75-80. Low: 65-70.

Friday: Pleasant. High: 77-82. Low: 65-70. Sunrise: 5:52 Sunset: 7:45 Comics and Weather, **D5-6.** Obituaries, **C8-9.**

VOL. 306, NO. 46

* Suggested retail price \$4.00

