

Boston Official Says Walgreens Is Treating Black and Brown Neighborhoods Like 'Second-Class Citizens' Through Store Closures

Boston's City Council took Walgreens to task this week for closing three stores in primarily non-white, working-class neighborhoods, according to local TV station WCVB.

Walgreens store.

“For too long, corporate businesses have treated Black, brown and working-class communities essentially as though we are second-class citizens,” councilor Tania Fernandes Anderson said in a statement, per the outlet.

This week, Walgreens announced it would close three pharmacies in Boston neighborhoods Hyde Park, Nubian Square, and Mattapan. It will leave people in those areas in a “pharmacy desert,” NBC Boston wrote.

It is likely part of an ongoing strategy by Walgreens and competitor CVS to shutter retail locations, even as both chains get further into providing clinical care. In November 2021, CVS announced it would shut down 900 stores over a three-year period because of shifting consumer spending habits.

In 2019, Walgreens announced it would close some 200 stores. Economic headwinds this year could even have sped up some such plans.

But it still leaves people who need prescriptions in the lurch. “There’s not one locally to where I live so it would mean going across town to Quincy,” Kiera Mahoney of Mattapan told NBC Boston.

“In the Black neighborhood, they are just closing everything. Some of us [don’t] have transportation, some of us have to look for transportation now, especially the elderly, and I am elderly,” Ernell Trench, a senior living in the neighborhood, told WCVB.

The pharmacies were closed in areas that are “overwhelmingly Black and Hispanic communities,” according to The Boston Globe.

Walgreens did not reply immediately to a request for comment but said in a statement to WCVB that wants to create “the

right network of stores in the right locations.”

“When faced with the difficult task of closing a particular location, several factors are taken into account, including things like the dynamics of the local market and changes in the buying habits of our patients and customers, for example,” the company added.

The Boston council passed a (non-binding) resolution that asked Walgreens not to open any more stores in the area unless it delayed closing these three locations.

“What is occurring here seems to be a present-day manifestation of the embedded economic inequality that we still suffer from,” Fernandes Anderson also said.

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