

harmony with surrounding historic buildings and districts, and are consistent with the plans and guidelines for the Cultural District.

### **Hinge Block**

For more than 20 years city planners and community members have identified the Hinge Block as a key parcel in the revitalization of Boston's theater district. The block, which is bounded by Stuart, Tremont, Washington, and Boylston Streets is the crossroads of the Cultural District and a key overlap between the Cultural District and Chinatown. New development of the block should be low-rise, in scale with the nearby Chinatown neighborhood and should be incrementally built so that rapid change does not overwhelm the fabric of the area.

The block will house a variety of uses that reflect the different character of the areas that surround it. New facilities on the block should include a major public area, public space for the performing arts, visual arts facilities, affordable housing and commercial and cultural facilities for the Asian community, and other retail and restaurant uses that serve both Chinatown and the Cultural District. Some ground floor uses should be oriented to the creation of a Visual Arts Center which will include a set of arts facilities interconnected by shop- and cafe-lined walkways surrounding the major public space.

The development program for the block should also create opportunities for equity participation by minority business enterprises and should preserve and restore the block's many historic buildings, which include H.H. Richardson's Hayden Building and the Young Men's Christian Union (YMCU) Building. The development program should also study the feasibility of reopening the closed Orange Line Station in the center of the block as well as building an

underground parking facility on the block. City owned-land in the Hinge Block can be used to leverage many of these benefits and uses.

As part of this plan, the BRA and two consultants, Benjamin Thompson Associates (BTA) and Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM), Chicago (the designers of Rowes Wharf), studied different configurations for the block, which is equal in size to two or three Financial District blocks. Three different configurations were studied for the Hinge Block. Two were prepared by SOM, the other was done by BTA. All three plans create a new public space at the center of the block and preserve the block's historic buildings. BTA emphasized the pedestrian environment of the block and its relation to the surrounding public space system. SOM looked at the overall massing of the Hinge Block, including the scale of building elements taller than 80 feet and their relation to potential massing in surrounding developments.

SOM also looked at skyline images of the block with the options of three new 155-foot (about 12 story) buildings on the block or two new 155-foot high buildings and a 235-foot building (about 20 stories) set back from the corner of Tremont and Stuart Streets opposite the Shubert lot. This building would step up towards a taller campanile-type building on the Shubert lot. The BRA is currently proposing a height limit of 155 feet for all of the buildings on the block.

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*The Hinge Block is the geographical and functional center of the new Cultural District.*

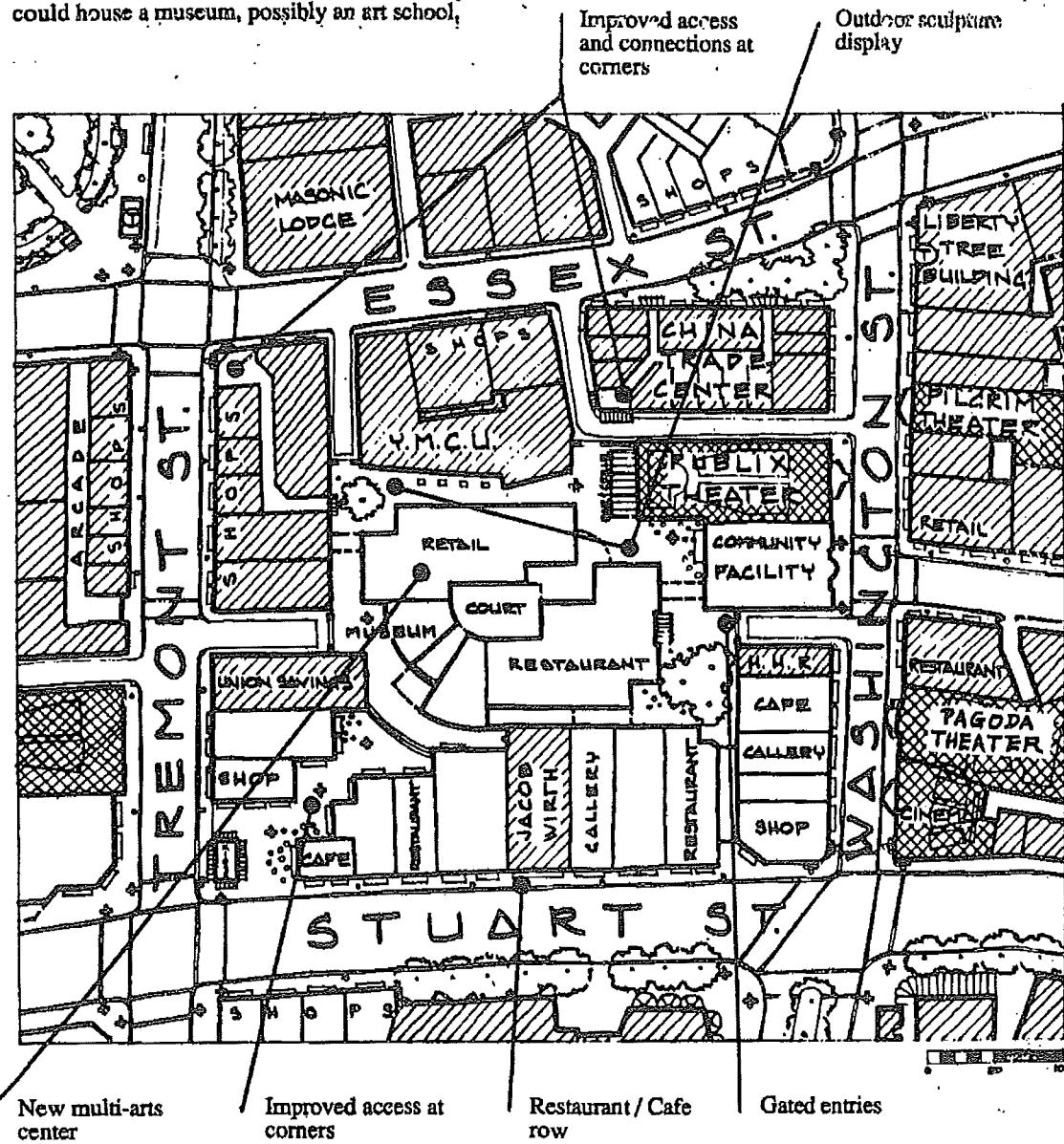
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SOM, Scheme A: calls for a grand, enclosed winter garden surrounded by a multi-level, glass-covered space. This central space would be surrounded by stores, cafes, and galleries. All new buildings on the

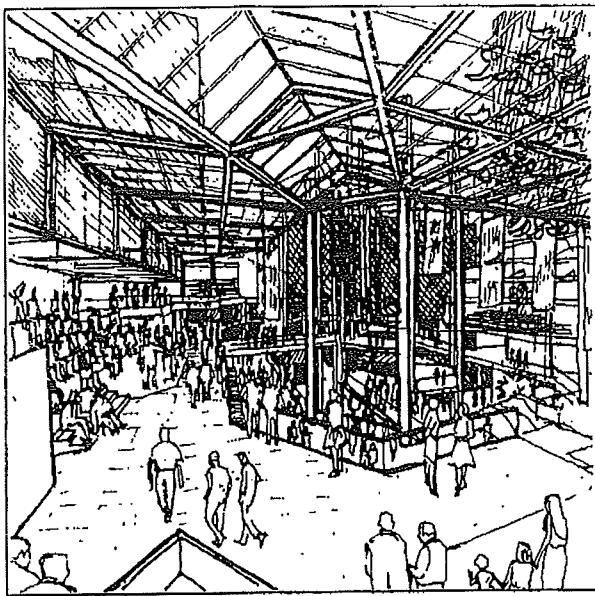
### Hinge Block: heart of the Cultural District.

The "Hinge Block," so named because its central location is in fact defined by the boundaries of four districts, is the geographical and functional heart of the new Cultural District. It has several historic buildings in it, including the H. H. Richardson Building on Washington, the Y.M.C Union on Essex, and Jacob Wirth restaurant on Stuart Street. Its surrounding structures are of low and medium height. At its center is a spacious area which lends itself to creation of a protected pedestrian place with a new architectural element as its focus. This building could house a museum, possibly an art school,

as well as shops and offices, an outdoor sculpture garden, and a cafe, all taking advantage of the light and warmth of its southern exposure. The new building will be visible from the Stuart/Tremont intersection, and that corner will be redesigned to invite people to enter and walk through the block. On this edge of "Tremont Circus," a corner kiosk will attract pedestrians, and offer services supportive of the theater and nightlife activities nearby.

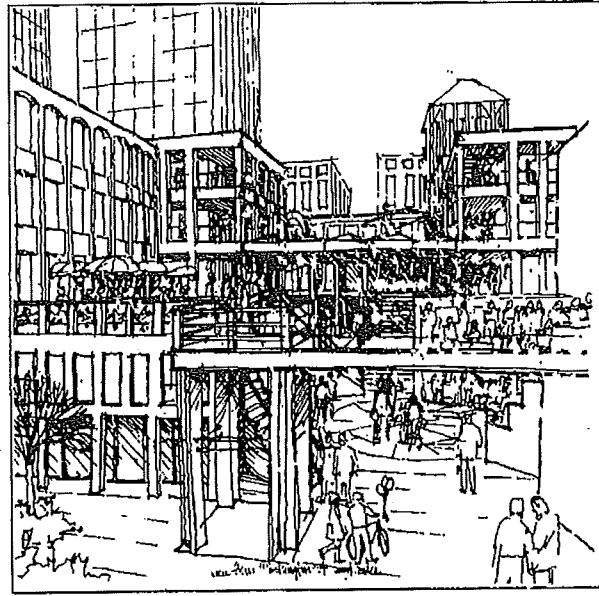


Benjamin Thompson Associates



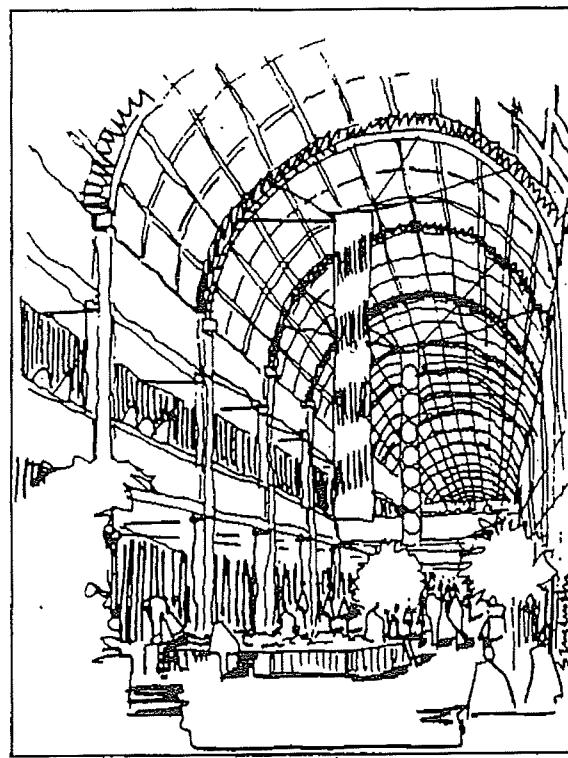
INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

HINGE BLOCK SITE A



INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

HINGE BLOCK SITE B



INTERIOR PERSPECTIVE

*Perspective Views by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, Chicago*

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Hinge Block would connect from the main street to the winter garden. The scheme would require a single parcel owner for all of the Hinge Block or an agreement by different owners to jointly develop the Hinge Block. LaGrange Street would be open for pedestrian access through the block.

According to SOM, under this scheme "... A multi-level, terraced central space is created that provides varied impromptu and controlled performance space as well as commercial and retail functions. The central space would be glass-covered and become a destination for the Midtown area, especially during the winter ... It also becomes a destination for the region at night with its commercial, office, and arts/theatrical orientation. A towering skylight structure provides a Cultural District identity and a graphic billboard with an energy level of Times Square. ... The common, central space is surrounded by towers, two residential and one office."

SOM, Scheme B: calls for a central open area surrounded by a series of open and enclosed spaces, courts, and terraces connected by a network of bridges, galleries, and walkways. These areas would be connected through interior spaces surrounding a central courtyard type space. The scheme assumes that the different owners of property on the Hinge Block cooperate with the BRA, OAH, and with arts groups.

According to SOM, "One of the site concepts is to create a series of overlapping spaces, and arts/performance areas of various heights, levels, and proportions that enhance one's movement through or into the Hinge Block. ... The major thrust of the scheme is that as one enters one of the spaces in the Hinge Block, there is the sense that something else (a performance or other activity) is going on in an adjacent area several levels above. ... A 199-seat theater be-

comes a focus in the major space with art galleries, museums, commercial/retail cafes and impromptu performance spaces highlighting other areas."

Benjamin Thompson Associates suggested an open space network with an arts facility at the center surrounded by cafes, kiosks, and shops. The plan also assumes that different property owners will cooperate with the BRA, OAH, and arts groups.

According to Thompson, "The 'Hinge Block' ... is the geographical and functional center of the new Cultural District. It has several historic buildings in it ... Its surrounding structures are of low and medium height. At its center is a spacious area which lends itself to the creation of a protected pedestrian place with a new architectural element as its focus. This building could house a museum, as well as shops and offices, an outdoor sculpture garden, and a cafe, all taking advantage of the light and warmth of its southern exposure."

After a careful review of the three preliminary schemes, a decision was made to recommend low-rise development on the block. This option is consistent with both the Benjamin Thompson plan and the Chinatown 2000 plan, which was prepared for the Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council.

#### Shubert Parking Lot

The lot, located at the corner of Tremont and Stuart Street is the privately-owned South Cove Urban Renewal Parcel C-4. It lends itself to development which could significantly contribute to the Cultural District. A mixed-use project on the site could include a major hotel, in addition to offices, housing and ground-floor retail and restaurant uses. In return for additional height above 155', a 250-seat performance

art space and 5 non-profit membership galleries could be developed.

Three different configurations for the Shubert parking lot were studied by SOM. SOM recommended a 325-foot high, campanile-type building on the site.

#### Option 1

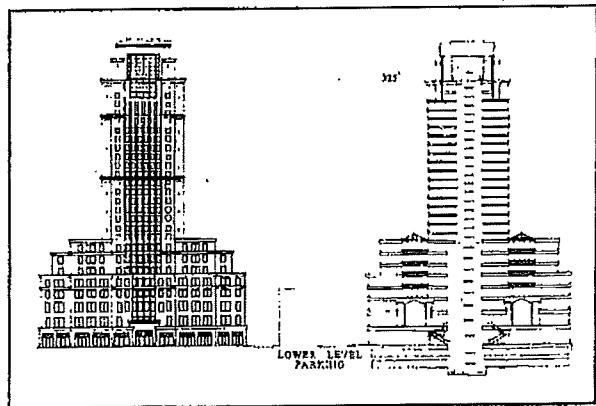
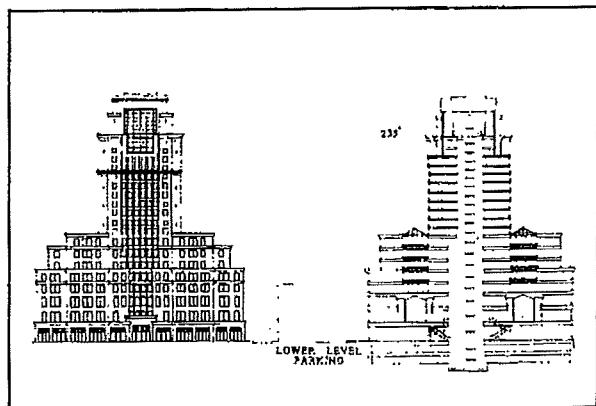
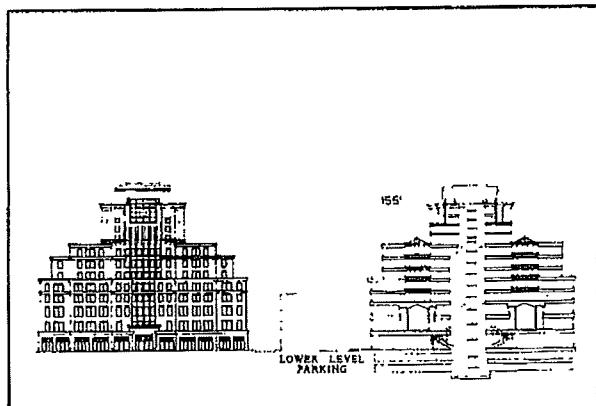
This 250,000 square foot building would be 155-feet high with an FAR of 10. The ground floor would be used for retail activity while the upper stories would be primarily residential or hotel. This height and massing would be about the same scale as recent Park Square developments.

#### Option 2

This 300,000 square foot building would be 235 feet high and have an FAR of 11.5. The building could be either primarily offices or a mixed use development. Retail facilities would be located on the ground floor. The project would also include a 199-seat theater and adjacent art galleries. The size of the building is approximately the height of the mid-rise building of Howard Johnson's at Park Plaza. The additional height would allow views of Boston Common without creating adverse environmental impacts.

#### Option 3

SOM has proposed a 350,000 square foot building of 325 feet with an FAR of 13.5 for this site. The building would be either a hotel and/or residences with ground floor retail facilities. In addition, the project would include either galleries or two 199-seat theaters. The tower element would not cast new shadows on Boston Common and its decorative top and slender, campanile-type image could serve as a beacon that



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would identify the Cultural District on the Boston skyline.

Based on the need to balance traffic impacts and the provision of cultural facilities, the intermediate (Option 2) plan has been recommended. This option will encourage reinvestment without risking overdevelopment.

#### **Hayward Place**

The currently-vacant parking lot bounded by Hayward Place, Washington Street, Avenue de Lafayette, and Harrison Avenue, could be redeveloped as a mixed-use complex that will include cultural facilities. Development rights for the parcel, which is owned by the city, are controlled by the Campeau Corporation, the parent company of Jordan Marsh and Bloomingdales and manager of the Lafayette Place shopping mall. Campeau has expressed an interest in developing mixed-use facilities on the site.

Redevelopment plans for this site have long envisioned a mixed-use project to include a major retailing component to extend Downtown Crossing activity into the Cultural District. An intensive shopping facility would front on Washington Street across from the row of historic theaters. Two small theaters, a 199-seat dance theater and a 200-seat concert hall, are to be included with their marqueses located on Hayward Place and/or Avenue de Lafayette to contribute to the creation of "Theater Alleys". Additional cultural components are also being studied.

The project also offers opportunities to improve the pedestrian environment of Washington Street such as extending the auto-restricted zone and adding small public spaces for cafes, public art, and performances. Any office, residential, or hotel space above the tradition-

tional height of the adjacent street walls will be stepped back to protect the microclimate and scale of the public ways.

A height allowance of up to 400 feet has been recommended for the Hayward Place site. The site is adjacent to three MBTA stations and could include a new parking garage. Further office development on this location can provide the economic incentive needed to renovate the failed Lafayette Place mall. This latter development is critical to providing a true mixed-use economy in Midtown.

#### **Parcel 30/Keith Block**

The larger block bounded by Boylston, Tremont, Avery, and Washington Streets is known as Parcel 30. It is two to three times the size of many Financial District blocks and contains a number of historic buildings. A large portion of Parcel 30 and the Keith Block parcels across Avery Street contain several largely vacant buildings and parking lots which are part of the proposed Commonwealth Center mixed-use project. The project area is located between three historic districts - the Liberty Tree, Piano Row, and Washington Street Theater districts - and is the visual terminus to Downtown Crossing.

Parcel 30 has long been an important site for theater in Boston, until recently having theater marqueses on Washington and Tremont Streets. The parcel includes the vacant State Theater, which is the second-oldest extant theater structure in the city. Ruth St. Denis, one of the founders of American modern dance has performed in this theater.

The parcel was also the site of one of the first theaters in the area, the Haymarket Theater, which operated from 1796 to 1803. The Tremont Theater, later called the Astor, also operated on part of the parcel from

1889 to 1978. Many George M. Cohan musical comedies played at that theater which was also the site of the first Boston showing of the controversial movie "Birth of a Nation."

The creation of legitimate theater activity on this site will be important to reestablishing the continuity and historic patterns of the Cultural District.

The Commonwealth Center proposal, now under review by the city and the community, provides a major opportunity to reinforce this portion of the Cultural District. The project is expected to include two small theaters - a 499-seat flexible space drama theater and a 499-seat dance theater as well as complementary uses, public spaces, and through-block pedestrian ways. In addition, the renovation of the Paramount Theater is to be undertaken by the same developer and its adaption for use as the 499-seat dance theater is under consideration.

#### **Opera House**

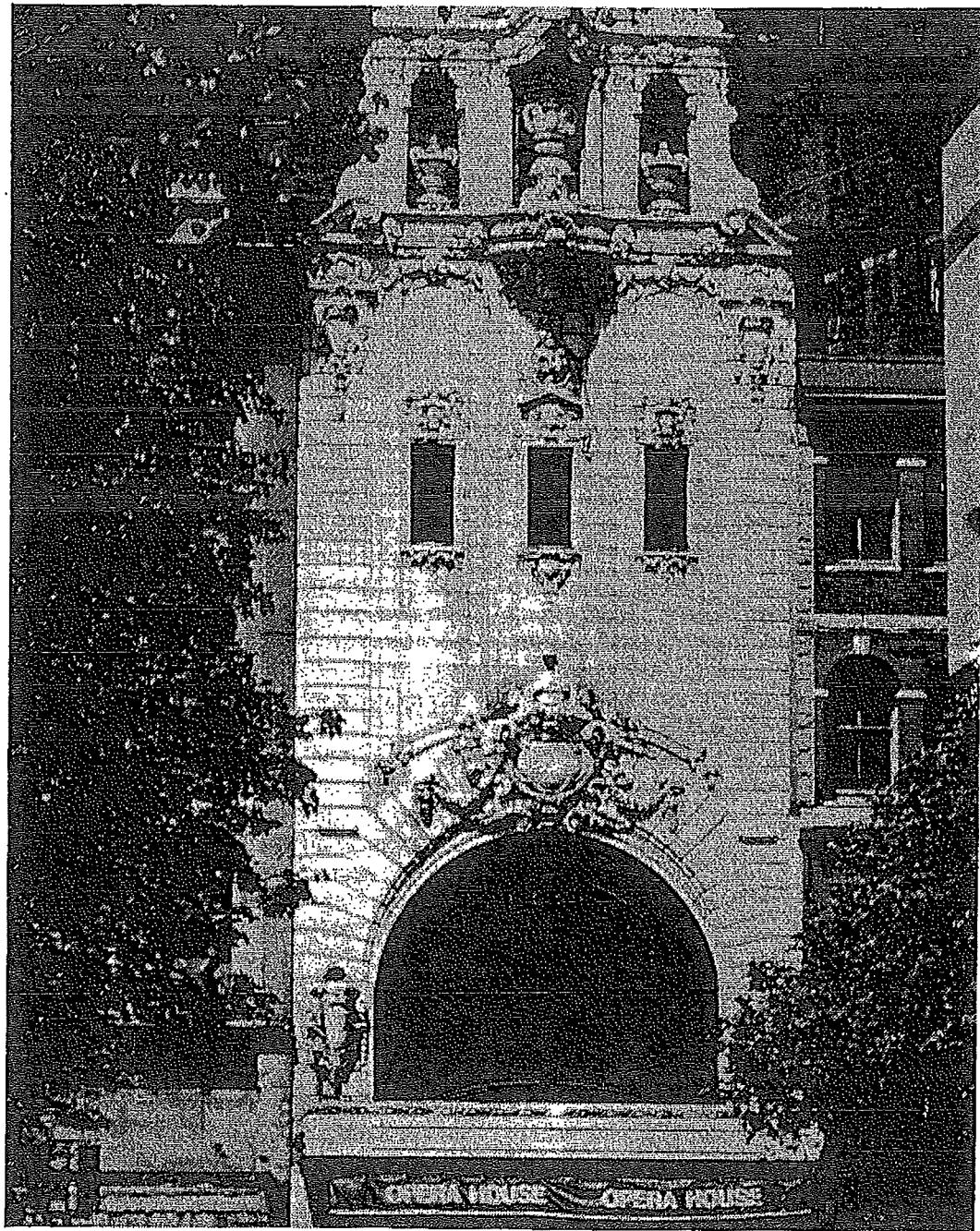
As part of the transformation of the Cultural District, the city of Boston is seeking a \$16.8 million state grant to renovate the historic Opera House, which was built in 1928 as the B.F. Keith Memorial Theater. The money, which would come from the state's Civic Convention Center Fund would help:

- Provide first-class performance space that would be available to the Opera Company as well as other Boston-based performing arts and community groups;
- Provide an anchor for the Cultural District's facilities along lower Washington Street;
- Maintain the Opera Company's artistic quality and ensure its continued existence.

Under the plan, the Opera Company, which purchased the theater in 1978, would convey the theater to the city which in turn would establish a commission that would lease the property back to a non-profit agency. This agency would manage the facility as a performance center for opera and other performing arts uses.

The funds would pay for badly needed renovations to the historic theater. In the late 1800s, Keith and his partner Edward Albee perfected what became known as vaudeville near the site of the Opera House on lower Washington Street. They parlayed the concept into a nationwide chain of more than 400 theaters that became part of the RKO (Radio-Keith-Orpheum) entertainment conglomerate which also included financier Joseph Kennedy.

The renovation plans call for replacing the building's roof; upgrading mechanical and electrical systems; upgrading lighting, projection, and sound systems; constructing adequate kitchen facilities; making the building accessible for handicapped people; replacing hot water tanks and boiler room sump pumps; replacing old theater seats and carpeting; and cleaning the front dome of the theater. The plan further calls for: repairing and restoring cornices and center pieces in the auditorium; restoring the buildings murals to their original forms; restoring the Mason and Washington Street facades; restoring the box seating area and renovating the trustees room; renovating and replacing present elevator systems. In addition stage facilities should be expanded to handle full-scale opera productions; offices and rehearsal studios need to be renovated; hydraulic lifts must be installed in the orchestra pit. Finally, the renovation plan envisions constructing a smaller 150-seat theater in the Opera House building.



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### A Potential Home for The Institute of Contemporary Art

The ICA has been an integral part of Boston's cultural character for over 50 years. The Institute brings to the city innovative programs and performances that include painting, sculpture, photography, music, dance performances, multi-media art, lectures and special education programs.

The ICA's present 25,000 square foot facility on Boylston Street is too small, placing enormous limitations on the Institute's ability to present a full range of contemporary art of Boston's resident artists as well as those of the larger national and international art world. A new facility would allow the ICA to better provide comprehensive contemporary art programming. Specifically, the ICA hopes to develop major new exhibition and gallery space, extend its film and performing arts programs, improve its educational facilities, and develop a cable television program focusing on video art.

As a first step in developing plans for a new facility, the ICA, the BRA and OAH have recently been awarded a \$180,000 state grant, which will be matched by a \$90,000 city grant from the Boston Redevelopment Authority. The money would be used to study programmatic concepts, develop schematic designs, and analyze potential sites. One of the potential sites being studied for a new ICA home is the Wilbur Theater/Parcel P-7 site. The project on this site would involve a joint effort among the ICA, the Wilbur Theater, the Wang Center, the New England Medical Center, owners of the Blewen Building/Wang Center and the air-rights over the Wilbur Theater; and developers who have previously received designation from the BRA to develop the vacant lot next to the Wilbur Theater. The concept currently being explored calls for ICA galleries, shop and restaurant

uses at the base of the narrow P-7 lot. The lot would also contain elevators to larger ICA galleries and office space at the top of a 235-foot building which would extend over the Wilbur Theater, but would be set back from the theater's historic facade. The middle floors of the building would contain New England Medical Center office space and would be connected to the Blewen Building. The conceptual plan for the site also includes an interior walkway that would link the ICA, Wilbur Theater, and Wang Center continuing to a glass-covered arcade joining the Chinese Culture Institute, the NEMC parking garage, and the nearby Orange Line NEMC Station.

### Historic Preservation Projects

A number of the neglected historic buildings in the district would lend themselves to reuse for cultural facilities. As part of their work on the plan, Brannigan-Lorelli Associates will undertake feasibility studies for the restoration of Steinert Hall, and the adaptation of the Modern Theater to a 400-to-600 seat concert hall and arts office space. Emerson College, as part of its plans to restore the Saxon/Majestic Theater, is designing a concept for the development of the former Gary Theater lot behind the Saxon/Majestic. The vacant lot would provide space for backstage uses, rehearsal studios, shop/storage, and arts offices as well as possible expansion of State Transportation Building offices.

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*A number of the neglected historic buildings in the district would lend themselves to reuse for cultural facilities.*

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Two districts on the National Register of Historic Places -- Washington Street Theater District and the Liberty Tree District -- merit special studies to coordinate renovation and reuse of their neglected historic buildings.

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### **Liberty Tree District**

The Liberty Tree District, at the corner of Essex and Washington Streets, consists of half a block of mid-to-late 19th century commercial buildings. The district forms one corner of the prominent Washington/Essex/Boylston Street intersection. Six of the buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and three others are considered notable historic buildings. Many of the historic buildings are largely vacant and a few could be considered as endangered. The Liberty Tree Building at the corner is a neglected architectural treasure. The red brick commercial building was built with two upper story meeting halls and a carved wooden plaque set in a facade niche to commemorate the Liberty Tree which stood across the street. The upper floors of several of the commercial buildings have high ceilings, lending them to use as rehearsal studios. All the buildings should be restored and made viable for a mix of cultural facilities, Asian-oriented shops and services, and general retail/office uses. The building may also house legitimate adult entertainment uses. Should the Pilgrim Theater, currently operated for X-rated movies, be redeveloped, it could be partially adapted for cultural uses, perhaps as an Asian arts center.

### **Washington Street Theater District**

The Washington Street Theater District is located along the west side of Washington Street south of West Street and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The district contains seven buildings dating back from the 1870s to the early 1930s and includes buildings that represent Midtown Boston's historic role as a center of vaudeville and movies. The district is unique in its diversity of architectural styles, providing a rich street wall to this stretch of Boston's main street. Two recent renovations include the handsome Bigelow-Kennard Building and the Adams

House Restaurant, now a restaurant and club. Funds to upgrade the Opera House are being sought and a private developer has agreed to restore the Art Deco-style Paramount Theater, possibly to include a small dance theater and other complementary uses. The feasibility of redeveloping the Modern Theater as a concert hall is being studied. Restoration of the remaining commercial buildings for uses which contribute to the quality and activity of the Cultural District will be encouraged.

## **Summary**

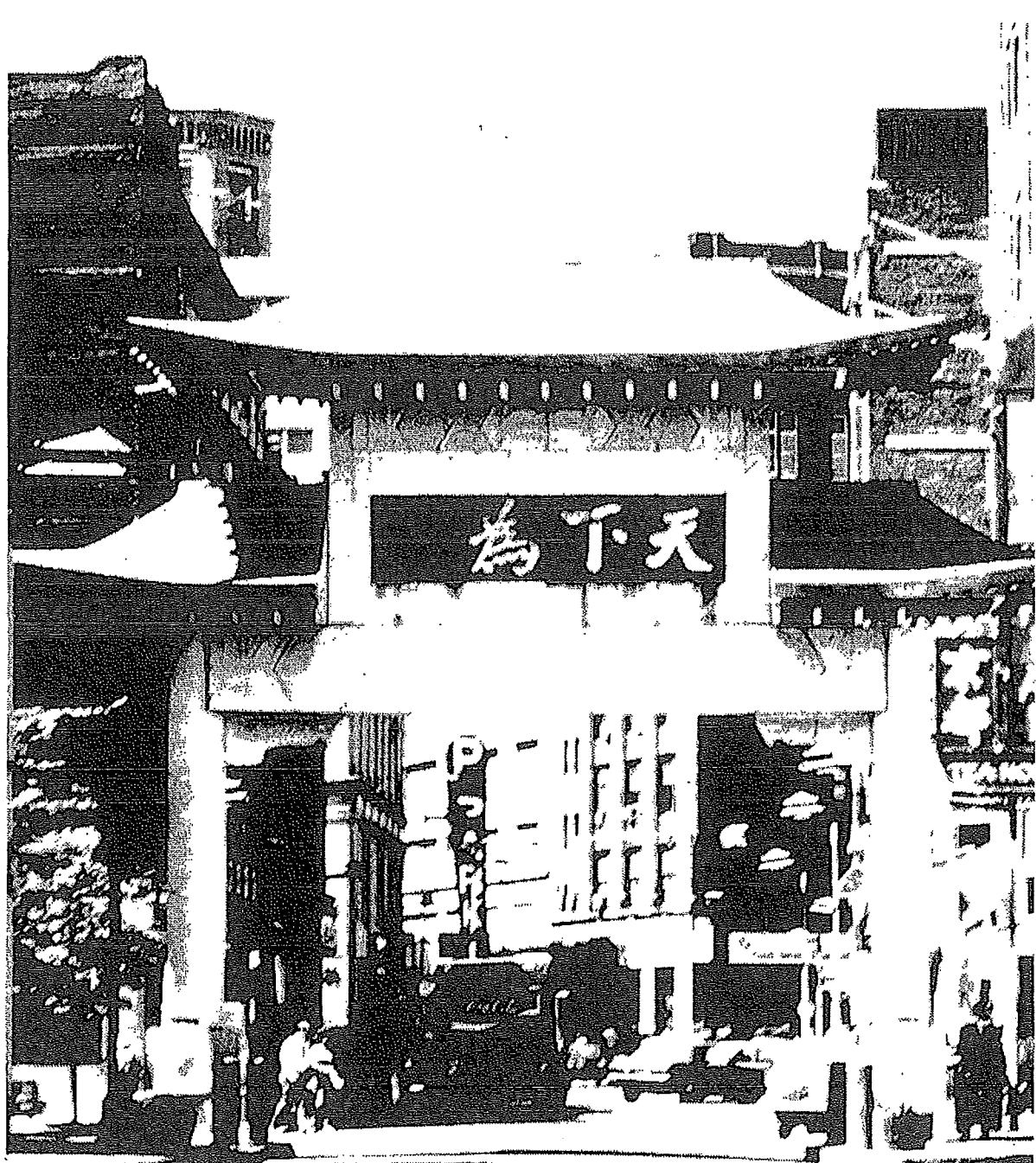
*The center of the revitalized Midtown area will be a vibrant, multi-faceted Cultural District which will become the region's center of culture.*

*The Cultural District Plan was developed over the last four years by the Cultural District Task Force, a group that represents the non-profit arts community, residents of the area and of abutting neighborhoods, representatives of the business community, and community leaders concerned with such issues as historic preservation, open space, and urban design. Under the plan, the district's currently-fragmented concentration of historic theaters and quality evening activities will be strengthened by the addition of ten small- and medium sized-performance facilities in new and renovated theaters. These facilities will be connected through an improved open space system that will include a new public gathering place on the Hinge Block, and smaller public areas in and near new Midtown buildings. The facilities will be complemented by the presence of a new community of residences, neighborhood-oriented retail facilities, offices, hotels, restaurants, and art galleries, as well as expanded commercial and residential facilities for nearby Chinatown. The variety of uses in the district will ensure that the district is lively and inviting at least 18 hours a day, seven days a week.*

*The new performance facilities will be used by the more than 50 high-quality, non-profit performing groups in the city that currently do not have regular access to performance and rehearsal space. The facilities will range in size from 199-to-799 seats and will augment the existing large commercial theaters in the district. The new facilities will include renovated historic theaters, and new facilities in mixed-use projects. New public areas in the district can also be used for impromptu and informal performances.*

*Visual arts facilities will include new galleries, exhibition space, satellite museums, and possibly a new home for the Institute of Contemporary Art. Many of the new facilities will be clustered around a Visual Arts Center on the Hinge Block at the center of the district. The visual arts will also be supported through an extensive public art program in the Cultural District.*

*Funding for the transformation of the area will come from a variety of sources. The developers of large projects on certain carefully-selected parcels will include cultural facilities as part of their project, renovate historic theaters or buildings, or build mixed-income housing. Density bonuses will be given to any other building in the district that includes cultural facilities and active ground floor uses. Funds from the sale of city-owned land in the Cultural District as well as federal and state grants could also help fund new facilities. Fund-raising, programming, and promotion of the district and its facilities will be the responsibility of the Midtown Cultural District Trust, a non-profit public/private partnership.*



## CHINATOWN

Chinatown is a community at a crossroads. For more than 30 years, the neighborhood has struggled with highway builders, institution makers, and urban planners. But those fights were fought within a framework that based all plans for the area on the needs of the city, the regional economy, and the nearby medical institutions. As a result, the neighborhood, which tripled in population from 1950 until 1987, lost more than half its land to new roads and medical institutions. Chinatown's streets have become major thoroughfares for Boston. In addition, the adjacent Combat Zone is incompatible with the family character of Chinatown and cuts the neighborhood off from downtown, other neighborhoods, and Boston Common and the Public Garden.

Now, community members, with the support of the city, are planning Chinatown's future, building new housing, and starting new economic enterprises. Led by the Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council, Chinatown's leaders are coordinating a grassroots planning process which makes the community the central reference point.

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*Now, community members, with the support of the city, are planning Chinatown's future.*

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This initiative comes at a critical time. The growth in the neighborhood's population, the loss of land, and rapidly rising land values have created a crisis situation. The neighborhood needs more affordable housing, improved open space facilities, traffic relief, and better economic opportunities. Community-based planning must also embrace Chinatown's unique role in the city, prevent further encroachment on neighborhood land, and allow the community to grow.

Making the Chinatown community the central reference point in the planning process is fundamental to the success of the Midtown Cultural District Plan and

establishes a number of key planning principles for the area:

- A community-based master development plan is being prepared that addresses such issues as the neighborhood's need for affordable housing, better and more diversified economic opportunities, improved open space, better traffic conditions, and improved social services and community development capabilities.
- No further institutional expansion should be allowed until a master plan is adopted by the community and the city.
- Publicly-owned land in Chinatown should be used only for housing, community services, and open space.
- Chinatown's residential areas should be expanded by developing affordable housing on air rights created by the depression of the Central Artery as well as on air rights over the Massachusetts Turnpike.
- Chinatown's growth into nearby areas, such as lower Washington Street and the Bedford/Essex corridor, should be encouraged.
- Chinatown should be reconnected with the city's central business district, with nearby residential neighborhoods, and with Boston Common and the Public Garden.
- The quality of life in Chinatown should be improved by reducing traffic in the neighborhood and by eliminating crime and blight associated with the presence of the Combat Zone.

The new context is critically important because Chinatown is again confronting the challenge of change in nearby areas. The state is planning to

depress the Central Artery and build a new Seaport Access Road. The city is creating a new mixed-use downtown neighborhood in the Midtown area. The medical institutions are proposing continued growth, and the downtown office economy is poised to expand into underutilized areas near Chinatown.

The changes wrought by all of these forces must be assessed in the context of Chinatown's community-based planning program. If this principle is followed then Chinatown can be protected from further harm and the neighborhood will have the opportunity to benefit from the revitalization and transformation of surrounding areas.

### **Midtown Plan Benefits Chinatown**

As one of the first plans to be completed in accordance the new Chinatown policies, the Midtown Cultural District Plan embraces the goals of the Chinatown planning process. In addition, the Midtown Cultural District Plan establishes a number of policies that will support the goals and principles outlined in the Chinatown planning program. Specifically, the Midtown plan requires:

- Joint planning and review of all projects in the Midtown Cultural District.
- The production of at least 800 units of affordable housing for Chinatown residents. About 500 of the units will be built in Chinatown on publicly-owned land. At least 150 of the units will be built on the Hinge Block. The remaining units will be created in Chinatown and Midtown by the Midtown zoning plan.
- Targeting linkage money from Midtown developments to benefit Chinatown. The money will be used by Chinatown community groups to design, build, and manage new housing in the neighborhood. This will increase community development capabilities.
- Making all of the about 1,000 job training slots created by Midtown jobs linkage programs available to Chinatown residents.
- Marketing new retail space in large Midtown developments to Chinatown businesses, a move which will encourage the continued expansion of the Chinatown business community onto lower Washington Street and the Hinge Block.
- Creating opportunities for equity participation by Chinatown residents in new developments on publicly-owned land.
- The establishment of an \$18.6 million community development fund, capitalized by the development of the Kingston-Bedford parking garage site and Parcel 18 in Roxbury.
- Improving the public realm by blocking through traffic in Chinatown, constructing a major new public area on the Hinge Block, and allowing only appropriately-scaled developments on key parcels near the neighborhood.
- Reducing problems associated with the Combat Zone through city licensing policies and a police presence in the Combat Zone.
- Establishing an Asian arts center and the increased programming of Asian arts in other Midtown Cultural District facilities.
- Protecting the historic scale and character of Chinatown by establishing urban design and land use guidelines that only allow appropriately

scaled and designed new developments on key parcels near the neighborhood such as the Hinge Block, by protecting historic buildings near the neighborhood, and by encouraging the renovation of historic buildings in and near the neighborhood.

- Ensuring that the Chinatown community continues to be an active participant in evaluating the benefits and trade-offs during the implementation of the Midtown Cultural District Plan.

The concurrent planning for Chinatown and the Midtown Cultural District will strengthen Chinatown's historic role as a residential, commercial and cultural center for New England's Asian community while enhancing the repertoire of entertainment, activities, and cultural events offered in the Midtown Cultural District. Through community efforts, the distinct identities and functions of the two districts will be respected, and the common concerns and needs of the areas will be addressed. Ultimately, the dual success of enhancing and preserving the historic Chinatown neighborhood and revitalizing the Midtown Cultural District will transform Boston's midtown area into a vital urban nucleus distinguished by its historic resources and cultural diversity.

### **The Critical Turning Point**

The policies established by the Chinatown Community Plan and the Midtown Cultural District Plan mark the first time in Chinatown's history that the neighborhood's needs have been systematically addressed through a community-based planning process.

Credit for turning around planning policies for Chinatown goes to the community, its business, social, and cultural leaders, and the neighborhood

council. Although today's bottom-up efforts were initiated by the community, the necessity of this approach was expressed more than 30 years ago by Boston's visionary planner, Kevin Lynch, in his 1955 study on the potential expansion of the New England Medical Center (NEMC). Lynch opened the study, which was done for the NEMC board, by noting that: "The New England Medical Center is faced with a problem of growth and its neighborhood, the South Cove, with a problem of decay. Both problems are connected. Not only must the Medical Center understand its neighborhood so that it may find the space it needs for expansion, not only must it help reconstruct it so that its own environment be improved, but indeed as the strongest force in the area, it bears a responsibility for rebuilding that goes across its own property lines. Unhappily or otherwise, it must look beyond its internal preoccupation to other issues that surround it."

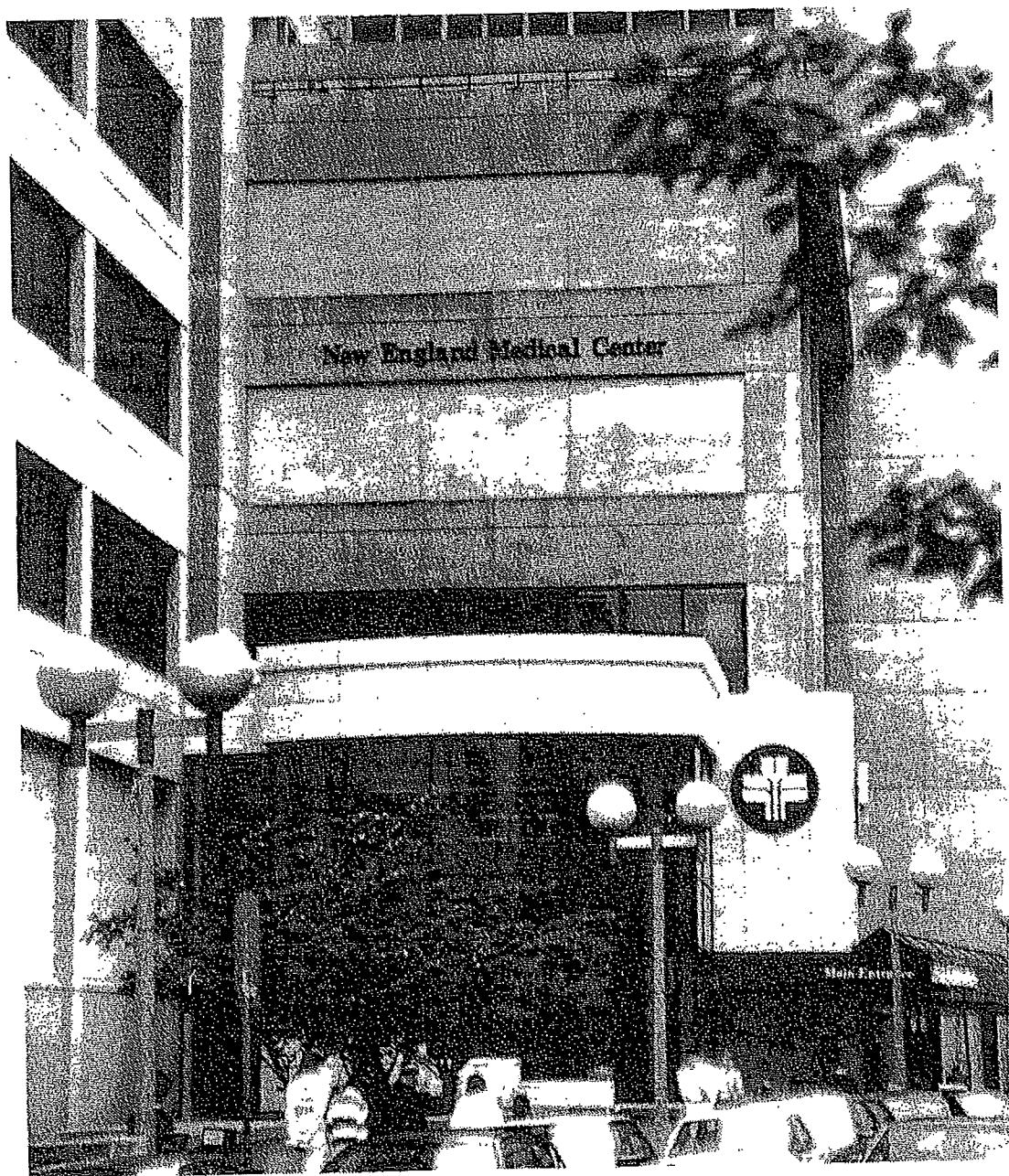
Writing not long after the state had taken part of Chinatown to construct the Central Artery, Lynch observed that "the takings for the new expressway will demolish many Chinese-occupied dwelling units and leave the community disturbed and pressed for housing. Their principal desire at the moment is to be left alone."

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*The policies established by the Chinatown Community Plan and the Midtown Cultural District Plan mark the first time in Chinatown's history that the neighborhoods have been systematically addressed through a community-based planning process.*

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Lynch further noted that the Chinatown community was "isolated, lacking in social or economic oppor-



tunity, and housed in an inadequate supply of very bad dwellings. Despite some outward movement, the community is anchored here and has an obvious need for decent housing and adequate recreation in the vicinity."

But the community's need for "decent housing and adequate recreation" facilities was never really addressed. Instead, institutions expanded in accordance with the city's 1965 South Cove Urban Renewal Plan. In addition to the Central Artery, the neighborhood lost land to the construction of the Southeast Expressway in the late 1950s and then to the construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike extension in the early 1960s. The growth of the Combat Zone on lower Washington Street during the late 1960s and the 1970s was incompatible with Chinatown's family character and cut off the neighborhood from the rest of the city and from the Boston Common and the Public Garden. City planning projects, such as the ill-fated 1971 Park Plaza urban renewal plan, proposed little to help the neighborhood. The Park Plaza plan called for high rise buildings, such as a 450-foot high rise luxury, mixed-use building on the Chinatown side of lower Washington Street. The final result of these changes was that the neighborhood lost more than half of its land to institutional expansion and highway construction, and was increasingly isolated from the rest of the city.

Many of these projects were bitterly fought by Chinatown, but with little success. New housing was built in Chinatown during the 1970s, much of it to replace units lost to institutional expansion. But almost no housing has been built in the 1980s.

*But the community's need for "decent housing and adequate recreation" facilities was never really addressed.*

The housing construction has not kept pace with the growth of the neighborhood. First during the 1960s when U.S. immigration laws were finally changed to make it easier for Asians to immigrate to America, and later in the late 1970s and early 1980s when a wave of immigrants from Asia and southeast Asia came to the United States, the neighborhood grew in size. The combination of these changes has resulted in the neighborhood's population more than tripling in size since 1950, making Chinatown the most crowded neighborhood in the city today.

A key event for the neighborhood was the creation of the Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council in 1985. The council was established by the Flynn Administration, as part of a new focus on the needs of the neighborhoods.

The conflicting forces of neighborhood needs and institutional expansion collided over a 1986 NEMC proposal to build a \$9 million, 600-car parking garage on a Chinatown site that was partially owned by the city. That proposal was vehemently opposed by the neighborhood council. In March 1987, after more than a year of meetings between the community and the hospital, the council voted to discontinue negotiations and to oppose the garage plan. The city supported the neighborhood's position.

A June 1987 BRA report noted that: "A previous planning analysis about the NEMC garage came to the wrong conclusion about land uses in Chinatown because it failed to shape the policy questions appropriately. With respect to NEMC's garage proposal, the central issues in formulating the decision framework were not where to locate a garage, how to finance it, or how large it should be."

The report continued: "Rather, the appropriate planning principles were to maintain and improve the quality of life in Chinatown, and to strengthen its residential character. This analysis represents a change in the perspective which held that land use decisions in Chinatown should be analyzed in the context of institutional expansion plans. A shift to the community needs and values as the standard of reference changes both the nature of the questions posed, and the resulting answers. On a broader level, this analysis shows a need for a community-based comprehensive planning process to guide future land use decisions in Chinatown."

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The planning program started with a survey of community conditions including the Chinatown Housing Survey. After numerous meetings, the neighborhood council approved the draft plan in February 1988. The draft plan was ratified by the community in March 1988. Community members are now working on ways to implement the plan's goals and objectives in a final plan for the neighborhood.

The shift in policy for Chinatown establishes the planning context for the relationship between the Midtown Cultural District Plan and the Chinatown community. The Midtown plan offers an opportunity to reinforce the new Chinatown policies and to address the neighborhood's needs and aspirations.

### **Chinatown Community Plan**

The historic Chinatown planning effort begun in 1987 established new policies regarding the neighborhood. The planning process was further strengthened by the city's September 1987 Downtown Interim Zoning Plan which required the development of a community-based comprehensive development plan for Chinatown and South Cove before final zoning could be enacted for the neighborhood. This process has already resulted in the passage of a draft Chinatown Community Plan. While the community plan is being finalized the city has established a number of interim policies and programs concerning institutional expansion, use of new and existing public land, and the creation of affordable housing.

### **Institutional Expansion**

For more than 30 years institutions in the Chinatown/South Cove neighborhood have grown, often with the support of the city and the state. To ensure the integrity of the community-based planning process, further institutional expansion will be allowed only in accordance with the neighborhood master plan adopted by the community and the city. Existing buildings will be the boundaries of the institutions until the plan is adopted. In the future, the Chinatown/South Cove community will participate in the review of all proposals for institutional expansion.

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#### Air Rights Development

Chinatown's residential areas should be expanded by developing affordable housing on air-rights over state roads built on land that was once part of Chinatown. Some of that land will become available at the end of the next decade when the state finishes developing the Central Artery, freeing up a site to the southeast of the Chinatown Gateway. Other land is already available on air rights over the Massachusetts Turnpike. The state should make this land available to the neighborhood, possibly by conveying the land to a neighborhood-based land trust. After a community-based planning process the land should be developed to help meet the Chinatown's need for housing, new business opportunities, and open space.

#### Chinatown Housing Improvement Program

As part of the Chinatown Community Plan, the BRA and the Chinatown community are jointly developing the Chinatown Housing Improvement Program (CHIP). This program will address the

neighborhood's overwhelming need for affordable housing

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*About 500 units of housing will be built on the five parcels of land in Chinatown that are owned by the city.*

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by reserving city-owned land in Chinatown for housing and community facilities, and using housing linkage funds to ensure that the housing is affordable. The plan sets a goal of building about 650 units of affordable housing. The program aims to break ground on 60 percent of these units by 1989.

About 500 units of housing will be built on the five parcels of land in Chinatown that are owned by the city. The sites include land bounded by Oak, Washington, and Marginal Streets (Parcels R-3 and R-3a); a site at Tyler and Hudson Streets (Parcel R-1); the Posner site (Parcel P-2); a site bounded by Oak, Nassau, and Washington Streets (Parcels P-3, P-4, and P-4a); and the Don Bosco parking lot site (Parcel P-12). Another 150 units will be built for Chinatown residents on the Hinge Block, which is bounded by Washington, Stuart, Tremont, and Boylston Streets. The program will also advance other primary goals identified in the Chinatown Community Plan, including neighborhood stabilization, improvement of open space and community recreation facilities, and community participation in the programming, design, development, and maintenance of Chinatown housing facilities.

Development of the first of the CHIP parcels has already started. In March 1988 the BRA issued a Request for Proposals to build a minimum of 220 units of housing on Parcels R-3 and R-3a. A minimum of 50 percent of the units will be developed for large families, and at least 25 percent of the units will be set

aside for the elderly. The South Cove YMCA will also be relocated to the site. Development proposals for the 80,000 square foot site were due on June 14, 1988. The BRA has received two proposals, one from the Asian Community Development Corporation and the other from the Chinese Economic Development Council. The proposals are being reviewed by the community.

This project is especially significant because it is the first major housing project built in the neighborhood in a decade. Equally significant, the project sets a precedent for direct and active community participation in the various phases of housing production, from programming to development and management. In addition, the project testifies to the function of the community master plan as a guide for future actions affecting Chinatown.

### Community Planning

The historic joint Chinatown community planning effort aims to build a broad-based consensus on critical issues facing the neighborhood. Ultimately, the process will result in a blueprint for the future that will outline set of programs and policies to:

- Stabilize the neighborhood and allow it grow;
- Create affordable housing opportunities;
- Develop business and service opportunities;
- Diversify Chinatown's economy;
- Create better job opportunities;
- Build community access, capacity, and resources;

- Improve traffic and parking conditions;
- Preserve Chinatown's historic and cultural heritage; and
- Enhance the environmental quality of Chinatown.

The plan is being conducted in two phases over a twelve month period. The draft Chinatown Community Plan, which concluded Phase I, was adopted by the CNC on February 22, 1988 and was ratified by the community at a public meeting on March 29, 1988. The draft plan outlines the community's consensus on overall goals, objectives, and policies in five areas of concern: housing, community services, land use, business and economic development, and traffic and transportation.

*The historic joint Chinatown community planning effort aims to build a broad-based consensus on critical issues facing the neighborhood.*

Phase II of the planning process is focusing on feasibility studies of alternative actions and strategies, public discussions, and inter-community agreements. As a first step in developing these strategies, a design studio at MIT's department of urban studies and planning produced a report for the neighborhood council entitled Chinatown 2000, which examines ways to meet the neighborhood's varied needs. The final Chinatown Community Plan will be completed in the summer of 1988 and will be reviewed by the community before it is presented to the city for formal adoption as the master plan for Chinatown. The plan's recommendations will form the basis of new zoning for the neighborhood.

## A Vision Of Growth

The draft Chinatown Community Plan was derived from a shared vision of Chinatown's continued growth as a local residential neighborhood and as a regional center of commerce and culture. As envisioned, Chinatown's future growth will branch out in many directions. Chinatown looks toward the revitalized Midtown Cultural District primarily for the continued development of neighborhood businesses, employment opportunities, housing, community services, and cultural facilities. The neighborhood looks toward the South End and air rights over the Massachusetts Turnpike primarily for affordable housing and open space. A third area for growth will be the future "gateway site" that will be created east of the Southeast Expressway through the Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project. This area should be used for affordable housing, open space, industries that will support the diversification of the Chinatown economy and work force, community-controlled commercial developments, and other uses that will complement the core Chinatown area to the west of the Expressway.

*Chinatown looks toward the revitalized Midtown Cultural District primarily for the continued development of neighborhood businesses, employment opportunities, housing, community services, and cultural facilities.*

### Housing

Preserving and expanding the supply of housing, particularly affordable housing in and near Chinatown, is essential to the continued growth of the Chinatown neighborhood. Existing housing stock should be upgraded, while new housing should be



built in and near Chinatown. In particular, there is a pressing need to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing for large households and for the elderly. Different housing types and alternative forms of ownership need to be expanded in order to create a stable and permanent base for a socially, economically, and environmentally viable neighborhood.

### Community Services

Community self-sufficiency will allow Chinatown to better meet the needs of its residents. Community awareness of how to utilize available services should be increased. Existing programs should be expanded and new programs should be developed to address the needs of the increasingly diverse com-

munity. Primary services such as those relating to housing, jobs, and health care should be supplemented with more services oriented towards recreation, entertainment, cultural enhancement, and community advocacy. The financial, physical, and human resources of community service agencies should also be improved.

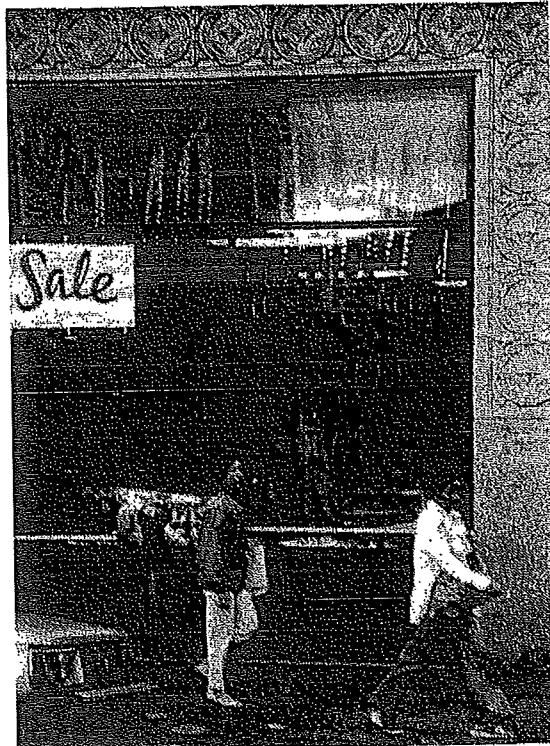
#### Land Use

The residential, commercial, cultural, and community service base of Chinatown needs to be preserved and expanded in order to serve the future growth and vitality of the area's Asian community. The residential and business core of Chinatown should be stabilized and expanded to allow for the creation of new housing, businesses, jobs, services, and open space. Existing land uses and resources need to be protected from institutional encroachment, gentrification, displacement, and detrimental impacts on the physical environment. In addition, the community must have a significant voice in monitoring and regulating downtown development and institutional expansion. In particular, the Chinatown community looks to establish its claim of the "gateway site" to restore land lost in the past to highway construction and institutional expansion. The quality of the neighborhood's physical environment should also be improved.

*The Chinatown community looks to establish its claim of the "gateway site" to restore land lost in the past to highway construction and institutional expansion.*

#### Business And Economic Development

Chinatown businesses should be strengthened and revitalized to facilitate their expansion into nearby areas such as the Midtown Cultural District and the



Leather District. In addition, the plan aims to diversify the neighborhood's economy by expanding the types of businesses in Chinatown and to improve working conditions and the status of the Asian/Chinatown labor force. Reinforcing the existing economy through diversification will allow the community to adapt to market fluctuations. Neighborhood-based businesses need to be encouraged and preserved. Employment options need to be upgraded and expanded into growth areas and opportunities created by downtown development. These measures will also improve worker conditions and status in areas such as wages, health insurance, work environment, employer/employee relations, and day care needs.

## Transportation And Traffic

The plan's major goals and objectives are to strengthen the connections within the neighborhood and with abutting districts; to upgrade Chinatown's pedestrian environment; and to improve traffic circulation patterns to serve residents, businesses, and service organizations. Traffic impacts on Chinatown generated by nearby development and transportation projects should be controlled and managed. Steps should be taken to reduce street congestion, noise, and air pollution caused by traffic and parking in and near Chinatown. Traffic circulation patterns should be designed in a way that provides for safe, convenient, and comfortable pedestrian movements in and around Chinatown. Better transportation services should be developed for Chinatown's residents, business patrons, service clients, and other visitors.

*Traffic impacts on Chinatown generated by nearby development and transportation projects should be controlled and managed.*

The impact of the many public works projects in and near Chinatown are of paramount importance to the neighborhood. These projects -- which include the depression of the Central Artery, the construction of the Seaport Access Road and the Third Harbor Tunnel, the installation of the replacement service for the old Orange Line, the proposed improvements to Herald Street, and the planned widening of Essex Street -- cannot result in further land taking from Chinatown, increase the neighborhood's isolation from the rest of the city, or create a negative environmental impact in the neighborhood.

## Chinatown Traffic Study

Chinatown is faced with a complex set of traffic and transportation issues that arise from the combination of existing traffic patterns, major overhauls of the regional transportation system and the downtown traffic network, and major developments planned for the adjacent downtown and midtown areas. To help evaluate potential impacts and develop options which will improve traffic conditions in Chinatown, a traffic consultant has been retained to work with the community and the city's Transportation Department on a transportation and traffic study for Chinatown.

*The study will develop concept plans for both vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns with the goal of producing a better street environment for pedestrians and a more efficient traffic system for the neighborhood.*

The study will develop concept plans for both vehicular and pedestrian circulation patterns with the goal of producing a better street environment for pedestrians and a more efficient traffic system for the neighborhood. In addition to addressing a key concern of removing through traffic from neighborhood, the study will propose ways to increase pedestrian safety at key intersections.

Street congestion created by the loading and unloading of trucks for the many wholesalers and retailers in Chinatown's business core will be examined in depth in order to identify measures that can reduce the congestion while maintaining needed services. The study will look into different options for the daily pick-up and drop-off of workers employed by restaurants in the suburbs. Parking problems will be

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examined in an effort to improve the efficient use of the neighborhood's parking spaces and to expand Chinatown's supply of parking. These measures will include policies and programs that can be used to review future development proposals.

The study will look at the possibility of closing Beach Street to create an open-air pedestrian mall without hindering deliveries and circulation on side streets. The mall could conceivably function as a much-needed neighborhood common for Chinatown residents, shoppers, and visitors.

Another site targeted for intensive study is Harrison Avenue between Essex and Kneeland Streets, including Phillips Square, at the intersection of Harrison Avenue and Essex Street. The square is the focal point where Chinatown is linked with the Midtown Cultural District. The study will identify improvements that will result in better circulation of cars, a more attractive streetscape, and a safer pedestrian environment. In addition, plans will be developed for a public plaza in the square where residents and visitors can rest, relax, and enjoy street activities.

#### **New Highway Connections**

New highway connections could also reduce through traffic in Chinatown. Under current configurations, Back Bay traffic would travel through the neighborhood on its way to the Central Artery and the Third Harbor Tunnel. Because this flow would convert Marginal Road into a major arterial route, the city's Transportation Department has proposed that the Back Bay traffic make its artery and tunnel connections through the Massachusetts Turnpike. Under the proposal, traffic from the Third Harbor Tunnel and the Central Artery destined for the Back Bay would travel west on the turnpike to a new Back Bay off-ramp at Berkeley Street. Cars from Back Bay would connect with the east-bound turnpike through a new ramp from Herald Street. This proposal would keep this regional traffic off Chinatown streets such as Kneeland Street, Marginal Road, and Essex Street.

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## **The Midtown Cultural District And Chinatown**

The Midtown Cultural District Plan supports the principles established in the Chinatown Community Plan. The Midtown Cultural District Plan will also develop compatible resources, direct the benefits of Midtown development toward Chinatown, and protect Chinatown from adverse impacts created by new development.

### **Housing**

About 800 units of affordable housing will be created for Chinatown residents by Midtown Cultural District Plan policies. The 800 units, represent more than 25 percent of the 3000 new units that will be built in the Midtown area. The new units will increase Chinatown's total supply of housing by over 50 percent. With the parallel efforts in preserving and upgrading the existing housing units and in expanding alternative forms of home-ownership, the new housing will contribute significantly to the stabilization of the residential base of the Chinatown community.

Projected office developments in the Midtown Cultural District will generate about \$25 million in housing linkage funds. These funds will help finance the Chinatown Housing Improvement Program's (CHIP) construction of 500 units of affordable housing in Chinatown and at least 150 units of affordable housing on the Hinge Block.

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*About 800 units of affordable housing will be created for Chinatown residents by Midtown Cultural District Plan policies.*

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In addition to 650 units created under the CHIP program, about 75 percent of the 200-to-250 affordable housing units built in the Midtown Cultural District or in Chinatown will be set aside for Chinatown residents. These units will be created through zoning guidelines that allow projects to receive density bonuses if the buildings are primarily used for housing and if either 10 percent of the units in the development are affordable or if affordable off-site units are created elsewhere in the Midtown Cultural District or in Chinatown. The number of off-site units must be equivalent to at least 20 percent of the total units in the project receiving the zoning bonus.

### **Neighborhood Business Opportunities**

The Midtown Cultural District Plan supports the continued growth of Chinatown/South Cove neighborhood businesses through a variety of measures that include requiring affirmative marketing of neighborhood commercial space, encouraging compatible uses, and improving the connections between downtown retail center and the Chinatown commercial core. With the opportunities provided through these measures, neighborhood businesses that meet the everyday needs of the growing Chinatown/South Cove community can continue to expand onto lower Washington Street and nearby streets. More than 40 Asian-owned businesses are currently operating in these areas. In addition, the plan creates opportunities for equity participation in new Midtown developments and encourages the use of minority business enterprises in the construction of the new developments.

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To protect and promote neighborhood business opportunities and to mitigate the potential effects of displacement and gentrification, major developments in the Midtown Cultural District will be required to take definitive affirmative actions to create and market opportunities for the Chinatown/South Cove neighborhood businesses to lease commercial space.

The Midtown Cultural District Plan also helps Chinatown businesses through proposed zoning regulations that will allow the inclusion of only active uses on the ground floor of all new or substantially renovated Midtown Cultural District buildings. An active retail environment will be further supported by a general upgrading of the public realm in the Midtown area.

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As a result, Chinatown's business core will be better connected with the city's downtown retail area. In this process, the China Trade Center, which is housed in the renovated Boylston Building on one corner of the Hinge Block, could be reinforced as a focal point for the area. Chinatown businesses will be further aided by an increased clientele drawn from the new office workers and residents in Midtown as well as from the people using the Midtown Cultural District's cultural facilities. The presence of 800 more units of housing

for Chinatown residents will also help support the growth of neighborhood businesses.

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*The Parcel-to-Parcel I development project is being developed by a joint venture of Metropolitan Structures, one of the country's largest developers, and Columbia Plaza Associates, a partnership of businessmen from Boston's communities of color.*

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Neighborhood businesses can also benefit from the revitalization of the Midtown area though development guidelines for city-owned land or for projects receiving substantial public assistance. A model for this approach is the Parcel-to-Parcel I development program that links the development of a city-owned site in the Midtown Cultural District at Kingston, Bedford, and Essex Streets with the development of Parcel 18 at the intersection of Tremont and Ruggles Streets in Roxbury. The project is being developed by a joint venture of Metropolitan Structures, one of the country's largest developers, and Columbia Plaza Associates, a partnership of businessmen from Boston's communities of color. Other minority businessmen, as well as Chinatown and Roxbury community groups, have been given the opportunity to become limited partners in the project.

The joint partnership has set a goal of employing minority- and women-owned business enterprises for 30 percent of the work on the project and has agreed to set aside affordable space in the project for minority- and women-owned businesses. The developers are also capitalizing a community development fund and providing child care facilities for 200 children.

