



**PLAN: Downtown
Advisory Group Meeting #1**
Thursday, March 7th, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Boston City Hall, BPDA Board Room

Advisory Group Attendees:

- Rob Adams, Boston Society of Landscape Architects
- Erica Blonde, Member of the Downtown Workforce
- Barbara Boylan, The Druker Company
- Paul Chan, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of New England
- George Coorsen, Downtown Boston Residents' Association (DBRA)
- Alison Frazee, Boston Preservation Alliance
- Arturo Gossage, Chinatown Residents Association
- Gilbert Ho, Chinatown Main Streets
- Peggy Ings, Emerson College
- Jung Shen Kuo, Josiah Quincy Upper School & Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)
- Chuck Labins, Tufts Medical Center
- Karen LaFrazia, St. Francis House
- Susanne Lavoie, Wharf District Council & Greenway Conservancy Board
- Joshua Leffler, Beacon Hill Civic Association
- Angie Liou, ACDC
- Lydia Liou, Chinatown Community Land Trust
- Herb Lozano, Roxbury Innovation Center
- Seth Riseman, Boston Society of Architects
- Joyce Sanchez, Boston University
- Rosemarie Sansone, Downtown Boston Business Improvement District (Downtown BID)
- Rishi Shukla, DBRA
- Theresa Tsoi, Chinatown Business Association
- Tony Ursillo, DBRA
- Jason Wright, Suffolk University

Ex-Officio Attendees:

- Captain Kenneth Fong, BPD
- Patrick Lyons, Office of State Representative Aaron Michlewitz
- Roger Mann, MBTA
- Peter Paravalos, MBTA

City of Boston Attendees:

- Jonathan Greeley, BPDA
- Phillip Hu, BPDA
- Mary Knasas, BPDA
- Kennan Rhyne, BPDA
- Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA

- Corey Zehngebot, BPDA

PLAN: Downtown Consultant Team:

- Kathryn Firth, NBBJ
- Rodrigo Guerra, NBBJ
- Chris Herlich, NBBJ
- Alex Krieger, NBBJ

Public Attendees:

7 members of the public

- Phil Boccalatte, Rockhill Management
- Keith Campbell, Next Phase Studios
- Ky Le, Rockhill Management
- Liren Ma, Student
- Bob & Joanne Paom, Residents
- Allan E. Taylor, Friends of the Public Garden

Advisory Group Members Unable to Attend:

- Beatrice Nessen, Friends of the Public Garden
- Mary Ann Ponti, Saint Anthony Shrine
- Ann Teixeira, SpeakEasy Boston & New England Philharmonic

PLAN: Downtown Website: bit.ly/plandowntownboston

Materials and the Presentation from the Advisory Group can be found here:

<http://www.bostonplans.org/news-calendar/calendar/2019/03/07/plan-downtown-advisory-group-meeting>

Meeting Summary:

On Thursday, March 7th, 2019, the first meeting of the PLAN: Downtown Advisory Group commenced at approximately 6:00 pm, with an introduction by the PLAN: Downtown co-leads Kennan Rhyne, BPDA Senior Planner, and Corey Zehngebot, BPDA Senior Urban Designer and Architect, at the BPDA Board Room at Boston City Hall.

Advisory Group members introduced themselves and responded to one icebreaker question projected on the screen, such as a favorite place or restaurant downtown. PLAN: Downtown staff and the consultant team also introduced themselves.

Afterward, Kennan and Corey began the presentation. They first introduced the roles of the Advisory Group. Then, they explained the PLAN: Downtown planning process progress to-date. Finally, they described the next steps and an expected process timeline as well as mapped out future Advisory Group meetings and general public engagement.

Kennan and Corey invited the Advisory Group followed by members of the public to comment and ask questions.

Advisory Group Questions & Comments

- Based on discussion and a poll distributed to members future Advisory Group meetings will be held in the BPDA Board room and typically take place on Wednesday or Thursday evenings.
- An AG member asked how the group could have access to the notes from the information-sharing session between the BPDA, NBBJ, and other City Agencies. They noted that the information would be useful for the process. Corey responded that the planning team has regular interface with other City agencies, and the team would create a summary for the AG & public as a resource.
- An AG member asked if there is a list of sub districts for the planning study. Corey responded that potential sub districts are still being analyzed and that the planning team would welcome feedback from the AG and public when an initial draft is shared.
- An AG member asked for clarification on the end product and purpose of the planning study. Kathryn Firth, NBBJ, responded that the resulting Plan would include guidelines for the future of Downtown and present a sense of clarity to future development.
- An AG member asked how the planning team could share data with the AG to better understand who lives Downtown. Kennan responded that the planning team would gladly share all the data the planning team has from census data. She explained that the census boundaries do not align neatly with the PLAN: Downtown Study Area boundary. A summary of the round table discussions with different stakeholder groups would also be shared before the next AG meeting.
- An AG member commented that the identity of Downtown is difficult to pinpoint and that it is multi-layered. The Midtown Cultural District and Chinatown are distinct from the rest of Downtown. A sense of neighborhood is hard to quantify.
- An AG member asked whether the planning recommendations would be codified into zoning. Kennan and Corey responded that the planning team hopes that zoning changes will ultimately become a result of the process but cannot make any guarantees this early in the process. They explained that development guidelines could take different forms. Regardless of the form, the guidelines will guide future development, with a strong emphasis on shaping the public realm. They added that different areas, whether they are “preserve” areas or “growth” areas, of the Study Area might require different approaches.
- An AG member asked how the resulting guidelines would be enforceable. Kennan and Corey responded that the planning team would also prefer that the guidelines ultimately will be translated into zoning. Once the BPDA Board approves the Plan, all projects that undergo the Article 80 review process will be evaluated against the guidelines within the Plan.
- An AG member commented that from their experience with past planning, many of the recommendations that become the basis for zoning were ultimately surpassed. They asked that the group consider other ways to ensure the Plan will be implemented. Kennan added that the planning team would welcome any specific suggestions that they have not considered and are very open to new ideas.
- An AG member asked to what extent would future City funding be directed to the recommendations from the Plan. They also asked for clarification on how economic and

feasibility studies will be done. Kennan responded that the planning team will work with HR&A, the project's financial feasibility consultant, and present draft economic analyses for the scenarios. Corey added that the planning team works closely with other departments with capital budgets and part of the planning process will also include identifying medium- to long-term projects.

- An AG member commented that they hoped that the planning process and resulting recommendations would have accountability and transparency during implementation. Corey added that the planning team has similar goals.
- Multiple AG members asked how existing plans, urban renewal areas, and other overlays would coordinate with any new planning from this process. Corey responded that the planning team examined past planning studies and identified elements of those plans that remain relevant today but that Downtown has transformed significantly since those plans were written. Because of a changing context, the recommendations from PLAN: Downtown would likely override past planning and extend the recommendations that remain relevant.
- An AG member commented that the planning process should emphasize preserving the pleasant quality of life while living, working, and shopping downtown.
- A resident asked how urban renewal areas would dovetail with the planning process. Corey explained that there are a series of urban renewal plan areas that intersect with the PLAN: Downtown Study Area that will need renewal. This renewal process will be a separate community process from the PLAN: Downtown planning process. The BPDA keeps some urban renewal areas active to ensure proper disposition of properties still owned by the BPDA.
- An AG member asked for clarification on the decision-making role of the AG and what parameters limit the scope of the planning process and AG. Kennan responded that the intent of the AG is as a recommending body.
- Multiple AG members expressed an interest in seeing a compilation of past planning efforts and related plans. Kennan said the planning team will provide an overview of past plans as well as direct links to the original plans to both the AG and the general public.
- An AG member stated that he/she hoped that the Plan that emerges from this process could streamline some of the discrepancies and outdated recommendations. Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA, added that while some of the recommendations from the Plan may be codified through zoning, other recommendations could possibly result in further policy interventions. She added that it too early in the process to establish what mechanisms will be considered. Corey added that the goal of the process is to come up with one comprehensive that considers how the current planning process can be an opportunity to build off and refresh still-relevant aspects of past plans.
- An AG member commented that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is working with Tufts University to study public health impacts to residents and encouraged the team to consider how these plans can work in parallel and coordinate. Kennan responded that the planning team has connected with the MAPC team and welcomes further coordination to make sure both processes share information.
- An AG member explained that the Downtown BID has also partnered with UMass to help the Downtown BID do research on the business composition of the Downtown area.

- An AG member asked how this Plan will dovetail with the current master planning process for the Boston Common. Lauren replied that the planning team would coordinate with the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, as they are part of the multiple agencies with which the planning team has regular contact.
- An AG member commented that they would be interested to learn more about the work of the Downtown BID and whether more BIDs could be considered as a result of the process. Kennan replied that if the Downtown BID is welcome to present at future AG meetings and that another BID was recently formed, the Greenway BID.

The meeting concluded at 7:50 pm once no questions or comments remained from AG members or members of the public.