



## **PLAN: Downtown Advisory Group Meeting #3**

Wednesday, May 22nd, 6:00 p.m.  
Location: Boston City Hall, BPDA Board Room

### **Advisory Group Attendees:**

- 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
- Gilbert Ho, Chinatown Main Streets
- Peggy Ings, Emerson College
- Jung Shen Kuo, Josiah Quincy Upper School & Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)
- Karen LaFrazia, St. Francis House - here
- Joshua Leffler, Beacon Hill Civic Association
- Angie Liou, Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)
- Lydia Lowe, Chinatown Community Land Trust
- Beatrice Nessen, Friends of the Public Garden
- Mary Ann Ponti, Saint Anthony Shrine
- Rosemarie Sansone, Downtown Boston Business Improvement District
- Rishi Shukla, DBRA
- Ann Teixeira, SpeakEasy Boston & New England Philharmonic
- Theresa Tsoi, Chinatown Business Association
- Tony Ursillo, DBRA
- Jason Wright, Suffolk University

### **Ex-Officio Attendees:**

- Captain Kenneth Fong, BPD
- Roger Mann, MBTA
- Peter Paravalos, MBTA

### **City of Boston Attendees:**

- Raul Duverge, BPDA
- Rosanne Foley, Boston Landmarks Commission, Environment Department
- Andrew Grace, Mayor's Office of Economic Development
- Marcus Mello, BPDA
- Kennan Rhyne, BPDA
- Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA
- Danchen Xu, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
- Corey Zehngebot, BPDA

### **PLAN: Downtown Consultant Team:**

- Kathryn Firth, NBBJ

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- Chris Herlich, NBBJ
- Alex Krieger, NBBJ
- Kyle Vangel, HR&A

**Public Attendees:**

11 members of the public

- Richard Chang, Boston Public Schools
- Karen Chen, Chinese Progressive Association
- Winnie Chen, Chinese Progressive Association
- Susan Clare, Resident
- Meilyn Huang, Resident
- Baolian Kuang, Chinatown Residents Association
- Stephen Laverty, Jumbo Capital Management
- Z.H. Ling, Resident
- Feng Yao, Resident
- Wayne Yeh, Chinese Progressive Association
- Ying Zhou

**Advisory Group Members Unable to Attend:**

- Rob Adams, Boston Society of Landscape Architects
- Arturo Gossage, Chinatown Residents Association
- Chuck Labins, Tufts Medical Center
- Susanne Lavoie, Wharf District Council & Greenway Conservancy Board
- Herb Lozano, Roxbury Innovation Center
- Seth Riseman, Boston Society of Architects
- Joyce Sanchez, Boston University

**PLAN: Downtown Website:** [bit.ly/plandowntownboston](http://bit.ly/plandowntownboston)

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

<http://www.bostonplans.org/news-calendar/calendar/2019/05/22/plan-downtown-advisory-group-meeting>

**Meeting Summary:**

On Wednesday, May 22nd, the third meeting of the PLAN: Downtown Advisory Group commenced at approximately 6:00 pm, with an introduction by Corey Zenghebot, BPDA Senior Architect/Urban Designer, at the BPDA Board Room at Boston City Hall.

Corey began by reviewing the agenda, providing a schedule update overview for three topic-based Advisory Group (AG) meetings that includes this meetings. She then followed-up on AG member comments from the last meeting.

Kennan Rhyne, BPDA Senior Planner, gave a summary of the visioning workshop and reiterated the five core themes that were discussed at the workshop (equity, resilience & preservation, mobility, identity & public realm, mixed-use core). Kennan then read the eight draft goals for PLAN:

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Downtown that emerged from this session along with ongoing conversations with the AG and other community members.

Kyle Vangel, HR&A, discussed the public benefits of growth specific to Boston and mentioned that the goal of the study is to determine how policies can be put into place to allow growth to benefit everyone. He reviewed the demographic components of downtown and the data methodology. Kyle continued by discussing how downtown residents get to work and what the primary kinds of jobs are downtown, and emphasized downtown's role as Boston's economic engine along with significant growth trends.

Kathryn Firth, NBBJ, presented the balancing act of maintaining downtown's cultural heritage and providing opportunities for growth. She discussed the importance of view corridors, juxtapositions of eclectic mixes, and clustering of land use types. Kathryn mentioned the presence of parking garages and surface parking, the concept of "missing teeth," and the problem of abandoned buildings.

### **Advisory Group Questions & Comments**

- An AG member raised the topic of the study area boundary and the importance of shadow legislation on the public spaces surrounding the study. She asked if there are shadow studies planned for both the Public Garden and the Common, and mentioned both the horticultural qualities and seasonal impacts of development. Kennan and Corey stated that the study is operating under the same shadow regulations that are already in place.
- An AG member questioned the demolition of poorly preserved buildings, and the need to hold owners of such properties accountable. She argued that a lot of buildings that aren't in good condition are still worthy of historic preservation and arguably should be kept. She also mentioned "glass hats," and the need to be careful of overbuilding and canyonizing human-scale spaces. She concluded by pointing out that there is a need to think of "historic" in a broad sense and to not box ourselves into what traditionally should be preserved according to existing guidelines.
- An AG member brought up the importance to keep the people in mind in terms of who is occupying the insides the buildings we are discussing.
- An AG member asked if development without displacement can be incorporated as a theme. She stated that the protection of cultural and neighborhood character could be interwoven with physical assets and intangible histories.
- An AG member complemented the phrasing of the PLAN: Downtown goals. He brought up Dock Square as an example of local communities resisting out-of-scale developments. He suggested that policies and incentives could be put into place to get vacant storefront owners to improve their properties.
- An AG member stated that their jobs on the AG are to create expectations to help developers start off in a better place, and that the community and developers both want more predictability through the development process.
- An AG member asked if there are studies that validate that luxury development relieves housing market pressure. Chris Herlich, NBBJ, mentioned a study completed in 2018 that demonstrates this in another community. Kathryn mentioned the desire to prevent a downtown that only the highest incomes can afford. Kennan mentioned the City's

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Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP), which requires private projects over a certain threshold to provide on-site affordable units or contributions towards the provision of units affordable to moderate to middle income households.

- o An AG member suggested considering a range of affordability levels.
  - o Another AG brought up the need for development to accommodate services and amenities associated with residential growth.
- An AG member brought up the need for economic growth to be done correctly in order to afford the benefits we want to see and preserve the economic success of Downtown.
- An AG member emphasized that we all agree that growth should happen. She brought up the need to connect luxury development to displacement, and the need to work at the lower end of affordability levels. She discussed the importance of protecting throwhouses in Chinatown and the possibility of pursuing a tenant option to purchase policy that could help prevent displacement.
- An AG member asked if guidelines will be put into place regarding climate change. Corey responded that this is the topic of the next AG meeting. Kennan elaborated that through the [Flood Resiliency Zoning Overlay District](#) process will provide architectural guidance to property owners within certain areas vulnerable to storm surge inundation.
- An AG member suggested penalties for vacant buildings. Another AG member mentioned that Councilor O'Malley was pushing for legislation to address vacant storefronts in 2018.

### **Public Questions & Comments**

- A member of the public suggested there are sometimes intentional vacancies and reiterated the need to think about penalties for vacant buildings. He also spoke about the parameters for preservation and how this could potentially help developers focus on how to allocate money.
  - o An AG member commented that a penalty could overburden owners who are having difficulty leasing spaces even more.
- Alex Krieger, NBBJ, mentioned the need to think about what will and should occupy the ground floors of buildings. He stated that in order for change to happen, some uses have to disappear, but that we also need to maintain the juxtaposition of Boston's complex building types and ages.
- An AG member mentioned the need to think about the experience of walking downtown, and that we need to prioritize developers who put time into balancing the old and new. She commented that we need to look at good examples, but also bad examples of what we don't want to repeat.
- A member of the public stated that he agreed with a lot of the points in the presentation. He stated that he does not want to see any more luxury housing towers and hotels in Chinatown. He feels there is a very different environment with the development forcing people to live in the shade without access to sunlight. He mentioned that the overabundance of shade is not a welcome experience, and that there is a lack of parking for residents as a result of recent development. He also stated that it is difficult to find areas for children to play in Chinatown. He wants to see stronger policies to prevent tall towers from going up adjacent to lower 8-story buildings. He said that he wants to see projects that Chinatown needs, such as affordable and elderly housing. He said that the planning study has good intentions but that it has to be implemented in a way that benefits people who need it.
- A member of the public complimented the work being done and thanked the city, consultants, and AG for the work they are doing.

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Corey wrapped up meeting and thanked everyone. The next Advisory Group meeting will be held on June 20, 2019 at 6:00.

The meeting concluded at 8:00 pm.

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