

PLAN: Charlestown General Comments Received 7/28/23 - 9/6/23

Date	Comment				
8/15/2023	If there is a more concrete recommendation for where public art should be installed or areas within the neighborhood that are community points of interest for public art installations, it would be helpful to name these.				
8/15/2023	There should be some recommendation for affordable commercial rent built into the plan in order to support locating small businesses in the neighborhood, especially in light of zoning changes that speak to creating more opportunity for ground floor retail.				
8/15/2023	If we have any data about commercial rent projections that should be included				
8/15/2023	We should callout/identify recommendations that can be associated with mitigation projects related to the casino. (city has money that needs to be spent)				
8/17/2023	<p>Aimee, in regard to item #4 (copied below) of your recent email about the PAC meeting update, I wanted to share this related thread in case it's helpful or critical to the efforts. Trish and I met with Gail Hackett from the City's Finance Dept at her request a few weeks ago to update her on the work of PLAN: Charlestown -- Gail helps oversee mitigation monies for the Community Impact Fund from Wynn.</p> <p>#4 We should callout/identify recommendations that can be associated with mitigation projects related to the casino. (city has money that needs to be spent)</p> <p>Gail asked that PLAN: Charlestown present at an upcoming Managing Committee meeting (comprised of Charlestown's Elected Officials and various city dept heads) to begin to discuss ways where these funds can implement planning recommendations. The meeting is tentatively set for Monday, September 25 at 2:00 PM.</p>				
	Bulleted list of all changes? (executive summary?)				
	I think the coloring on this graph could be changed to make it easier to read				
	On page 28 I think this chart would actually be complimented very well by a chart showing population DENSITY over time, because it would show the rapid decline and slow increase of density over time, rather than telling the story of just housing unit increases over time (which people use as argument to avoid added density)				
	Related, on p. 29, the inclusion of this sentence doesn't make sense to me: "Even with this increase in housing units, Charlestown will remain nearly 5 times less dense than Beacon Hill."				
	On Page 35, it says "4. Prioritize the creation of larger housing units with 3+ bedrooms to create opportunities for families in new development. Units with fewer bedrooms are also needed, as many of Boston's most cost-burdened households are smaller, but developers often don't meet demand from larger households because doing so is not always economical." In my own work I find that while people at community meetings often say the neighborhood needs more large units, that isn't actually demonstrably true if you look at wait lists for affordable housing. Can you get the data on the 1, 2, 3, and 4 BR waitlists either for public housing or for the specific housing projects in Charlestown? I would love to see the BPDA actually take a stance / offer research based insight on BR sizes that are needed by the market, rather than simply suggest 3+ BR based on feedback from people who probably don't need that housing themselves.				
	P. 37: I'm surprised by the inclusion of a "music shop" as a missing amenity? That doesn't seem like a serious need...				
	<p>P. 39 - you're missing a bunch of convenience stores that have definitely been there for a while (so it's not that they weren't around whenever data was gathered).</p> <p>A-1: https://goo.gl/maps/TQakDgfU7MycxgKa6 Triple Seven: https://goo.gl/maps/4793KvQksW2YigxY9 7-11: https://goo.gl/maps/uCJGKRmdMqEwFvC58 Dollar Tree: https://goo.gl/maps/JPhT3q2UJ5TqqJgF7 and probably some others that I'm not thinking.</p>				

	<p>Page 88 Recommendations re bikes: one of the issues for people like me who live in small historic core buildings is that we don't have bike storage in our buildings and never will. I would love to see locked, covered, public bike storage available to any resident, throughout the neighborhood. This could be similar to the T's bike storage at stations like Lechmere, but scaled down to a small neighborhood scale. I'd be happy to pay for such a service. Having the bike network doesn't help unless people actually have the ability to store bikes, which in Charlestown is impossible in many rentals/condos. Another point that may help on this front: the Boston landlords /rental requirements might note that landlords NOT be allowed to ban residents from keeping bikes and/or locking them outside a building. (I've had that on multiple leases in Charlestown.)</p>				
	<p>Recommendations re EV: I didn't actually see a recommendation that EV charging be installed in the street grid and that cars be fined for running cables across sidewalks. I think both things should be addressed. I have a bunch of pictures of the trip hazards created which I'm happy to share with you all if helpful.</p>				
	<p>Street parking: it seems like a lot of streets are being recommended for reevaluation of directionality and/or width. I am a household with one car and I actually really dislike the saturation of resident parking signage. It makes it very difficult to have visitors and in-home care situations (nannies, nurses, etc). For example: when I became a new mom my mother came to stay with me from Western Mass and we were able to have her park in the Edwards school spots, but now those are gone so we have to move her car around all the time, which is very challenging to do when she is supposed to be caring for my child (because childcare in Charlestown, like everywhere is impossible to find - my kid is off a waitlist in January 2024 that we put him on in August 2022!!!). When the configuration of streets are changed significantly, could the default permit parking signs be removed and then make streets re-petition for the addition of new signage? I actually bet a lot of our neighbors have the same laments even if they're not the loudest voices in the room. Can we also please purposely preserve areas for non-resident parking, especially in the newly proposed street grids?</p>				
	<p>P. 99 - I know it refers to the Clogherly pool coming in 2024/2025, but I think people would like to see something more forceful in here saying in the recommendations that there is a NEED for a pool in the area, and that hopefully the renovation of the existing pool happens and brings it back on line and satisfies that need, but if for whatever reason it doesn't, then we need a replacement pool.</p>				
	<p>P. 117 - I think it's important to note more clearly that 1st floor commercial is allowed in the "Residential" Zone.</p>				
	<p>P. 160 - "Avoid partially covered parking" - I do not understand this recommendation from the BPDA. If community members are going to be able to continue to demand or hold up projects with parking requests (which is what happens), then going against partially covered parking just increases costs by having to fully enclose parking. Paradoxically - this means that as the City pushes for the reduction of parking it actually makes projects spend more money on parking, thereby prioritizing it financially. I find this recommendation counterproductive and unhelpful. Can you explain why this recommendation exists?</p>				
	<p>P.161 - I find the 5 ft setback on roofs from all roof edges a little silly and overly burdensome, unless its a building code thing, which I assume it is not. If the issue is visibility from the street, then just make the setbacks the distance from the street-side-roof-edge, and if the issue is safety, then I think we ought to defer to the building codes. Otherwise, as a resident of a dense neighborhood that went through COVID together, why would I ever want to prevent my neighbor from maximizing possible outdoor space? I did a quick view on google Earth of my own block and here are a bunch of roofs I cannot see from the street that take up their full roof spaces once they set back from the street side. Good for them! I applaud letting our neighbors maximize outdoor space.</p>				
	<p>P. 198 - I just want to applaud the recommendation for ground floor conditional for residential in order to support first floor retail. Well done! I know it's something Charlestown Preservation Society would have liked to see re the Bunker Hill St developments last year.</p>				

	<p>P 203 or thereabouts: I'd love to see an explicit invitation / allowance of spiral staircases to connect decks to backyards. Again, if its not a building code issue, and its not visible from the street, and it allows for residents to more thoroughly enjoy and build up their outdoor space, I think the City should be encouraging owners to make the best use of their small property to maximize outdoor area.</p>				
	<p>Re: Little Mystic Channel - I'm on the Steering Committee w MWRA. I didn't see anywhere in the PLAN a specific recommendation regarding the reconfiguration and improvement of the Little Mystic Channel boat ramp area - maybe I missed it. I think this is an important piece of the "green loop" and I think its important that the PLAN include and build on what that group has already accomplished there.</p>				
	<p>Re: affordable housing production. Trish said something on the call about market viability of density bonuses re: affordable housing not actually providing the boost sufficient for people to build it, and the challenge that she wanted a solution that didn't only work for non profits. I have a few points in response:</p> <p>density bonuses for affordable housing aren't really about making it a better deal for market rate developers to build affordable housing. If you look at what has happened in Cambridge with the zoning upgrades associated with affordable housing projects it does two important things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) it allows all-affordable developments a clear zoning path which eliminates a lot of risk and uncertainty in the development process - I cannot overemphasize how important that alone is but 2) it actually allows affordable-only projects (whether by a for profit or a non profit, I don't actually care!) to compete on PRICE for acquisition because it allows those proposed developments to be able to pay MORE in acquisition than a market-rate development since they can expect to spread acquisition costs over more units in the denominator than the market-rate-IDP-only development. That's HUGE in getting affordable-only projects in the game for site acquisition and development in expensive neighborhoods. 				
	<p>Regarding more specific Use definitions, the physical requirements of each tenant vary, but all are more robust in infrastructure than "Office" and some range up to a more traditional "Lab" type space. As zoning language is drafted for the areas designated in PLAN: Charlestown as "Mixed-Use" along Rutherford Avenue, Roland Street, and the Cambridge Street corridor, we hope that these R&D uses are brought forward and supported with the new code, rather than relegated as grandfathered uses or eliminated outright. Continuing the acceptable use of Light Manufacturing and Research Laboratory is critical to the ongoing growth of this environment, and we hope that language in any future zoning code accounts for that need.</p>				
9/1/23	<p>This draft lacks meaningful long-term comprehensive planning for neighborhood services required of City departments. Each section describes what the neighborhood has now, and makes recommendations for future planning initiatives as the population grows. There is no real planning for infrastructure improvements or the neighborhood services that we need NOW (example a second ambulance bay.) The recommendations suggest further planning at various intervals, with no trigger, and reliance on public oversight to "hold the city accountable." (Page 18, Neighborhood Needs)</p>				
9/1/23	<p>Bunker Hill Mall and the Original Peninsula: I am pleased that the BPDA has agreed to remove the Mall from the Plan's Zoning Study Area and keep it where it geographically sits in the Original Peninsula. However I continue to have concerns about what the zoning recommendations will be. A future process that involves the developer is a non-starter. The Plan should address it now rather than kicking it down the road. We have provided feedback already of what we think is appropriate for Main Street (50') as well as the Rutherford Ave. (70' or consistent with Gatehouse building) which serves as the gateway into Charlestown, and a maximum 2 FAR.</p> <p>Also because of the way the BPDA is applying the residential density bonus, the entire parcel qualifies for the bump even though only the Rutherford Avenue side is within the 1000' of public transportation boundary. We're told that the bonus can't be applied to just a portion of the site because it's all one parcel. But in the original Urban Renewal Plan, the site was comprised of 3 parcels. Perhaps one of those parcels (C-1B) can be reestablished so that the density bonus can be applied to the targeted area only.</p>				
9/1/23	<p>PDA's Everywhere: As we discussed at our 8/28 meeting with BPDA, we take issue with the zoning recommendation that all parcels within the Plan zoning area are eligible for PDA's. While I understand the BPDA's rationale- a PDA is the leverage needed to extract from proponents specific community benefits like the greenway and other roadway infrastructure the Plan proposes- it undermines the premise of the entire Plan and perpetuates the planning by parcel that the Plan was supposed to replace.</p>				

9/1/23	<p>Open Space, Someday: Most of the Plan's open space recommendations (5 of 7) are listed as long term goals, as in 30 years. If the community has made abundantly clear that it needs soccer fields now, for example, it makes no sense to wait until 2050 for the redevelopment of BHCC to deliver them.</p>				
9/1/23	<p>Transportation Infrastructure, Development Capacity and Public Safety: It appears from consultants' projections that the gateways in and out of Charlestown will be further compromised by their initial estimates for the area's development capacity. This is alarming given the community's long standing public safety concerns.</p> <p>The Plan's response is to reduce these projections by 10% and hope for the best- i.e. that residents, workers and visitors will decide to give up their cars and use an idealized public transportation system or ride their bikes rather than sit in gridlock. If only. And it does nothing to address emergency vehicles' ability to navigate through the projected gridlock.</p> <p>Given how much of the roadway's traffic is pass-through, these assumptions are naively optimistic. As this is a 30+ year plan, perhaps a better and more realistic response is to lower the allowable development square footage to current infrastructure capacity and reevaluate at a future date when and if these assumptions bear out.</p>				
8/23/23	<p>"Highest level" item 1:</p> <p>"Adding 10+ million more square feet than a 2019 regional planning study used as a basis for planning mobility in the region. A 2019 Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study indicated that Charlestown could add eight million square feet, this plan greatly exceeds that."</p> <p>Comment on Item 1: 8M sqft is 80% of 10M sqft — not very different. Since 2019, regional planning for mobility has been changed by the pandemic and recent weather concerns.</p>				
8/23/23	<p>"Highest level" item 2:</p> <p>"Doubling the existing building heights on Main Street (at the Bunker Hill Mall) from 35' (3-stories) to 70', 90' (8-stories) on Austin St and School St and 150' (14-stories) on Rutherford Ave. Previous drafts proposed 50' along Main Street and 90' on Rutherford, and the community clearly stated that the proposed heights were too tall for the abutting context of the historic neighborhood."</p> <p>Comment on Item 2: This represents a small portion of the Bunker Hill Mall on Rutherford Ave where other tall nearby structures already exist, including the enclosed Ice Hockey Rink (on a hilltop across Austin St), Gatehouse Apartments (on the opposite side of School St), and the new Bristol Myers Squibb building (at Cambridge Crossing overlooking the Orange Line Station platform). East Cambridge, near Rutherford Ave, also has historic neighborhoods at MIT where its community lives and works.</p>				
8/23/23	<p>"Highest level" item 3:</p> <p>Increasing the building heights between Medford Street and the Mystic River (below historic Doherty Park) from what is now 55' to 180' (taller than the historic Schrafft's tower). Previous drafts proposed a max building height of 50-120' (the scale of Charlestown's industrial waterfront.) The final draft raised the heights despite clear planning recommendations for 120' max and community concerns.</p> <p>Comment on Item 3: The Custom House Tower, built in Boston by the Federal Government in 1915 is 151' tall, with very pleasant architecture to view on the horizon. Boston foolishly passed an ordinance disallowing any new building to exceed the height of the Custom House Tower. This served no purpose and was subsequently overturned. Schrafft Tower height is no different —if new towers are taller, they will be appreciated if the architecture is pleasantly "uplifting".</p>				
8/23/23	<p>"Highest level" item 4:</p> <p>"The Plan's use of aspirational goals to reduce personal vehicle use by 50 percent. That number is not based on data, planning, or forecasting. The planning consultants have stated that even if this happens, traffic and gridlock will increase and back up into the neighborhood."</p> <p>Comment on Item 4: "...Not based on data, planning, or forecasting" is illogical. Given the chaos inflicted recently by rapid fluctuations in weather and its association with the use of fossil fuels, there are no past trends in data by which to plan and forecast the future. However, it is reasonable to believe private cars will become less desirable, with car sharing becoming more common so as to reduce personal vehicle use. This will also be encouraged with denser population centers, and this likely will occur with Plan Charlestown.</p>				

8/23/23	<p>"Highest level" item 5:</p> <p>The BPDA's lack of planning to support population growth. The PLAN spends 90+ pages summarizing what Charlestown has now, rather than outlining strategies to support the future, such as partnerships with the MBTA, Boston Public Schools and Boston Parks and Recreation. It states the need for support once the population grows, but does not plan for it.</p> <p>Comment on Item 5: BPDA does not have authority over the MBTA, Boston Public Schools, and Boston Parks and Recreation. Partnerships are the purview of City Hall.</p>				
8/23/23	<p>"Highest level" item 6:</p> <p>Inconsistent recommendations for approval of proposed developments that ignore the goals and recommendations for preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings. The 40 Roland Street project proposes to demolish two historic buildings: 128 Cambridge Street and 40 Roland Street. The BPDA is moving them forward for board approval despite clear PLAN recommendations for preservation and reuse. 1-2 Thompson Square addition was recommended for approval despite the project's requirements to demolish portions of the historic mansard roofline. The 10 Thompson Square project was recommended for approval with insufficient off-street parking required of buildings with over 6 units.</p> <p>Comment on Item 6: The 40 Roland Street project preserves the "Crosby Steam Gauge & Valve Building" at No. 24 Roland Street. It also might retain the south façade of "Puritan Brewery", but this façade is hidden from Roland Street and monies needed to do this might be better spent to ensure a sustainable replacement building for the next 135-yrs. The design of No.128 Cambridge Street is mindful and attractive. Nos.1-2 Thompson will preserve a mansard roof in front [odd for CPS to have any concern about this since in recent years they granted a CPS-plaque to a friend at No. 2 Monument Square even after its entire roofline was raised and modified, and its front windows replaced in a totally non-conforming style]. The 'non-preservation' attributes at No.2 seem significantly more important than CPS concerns about the back side of a mansard roof at Nos.1-2 Thompson. No.10 Thompson is a liquor store, which has "dedicated" angled parking spaces out front (these are isolated on a short one-way street between Warren Avenue and Main Street where no other store exists). These spaces could be designated by the City for 'Zip' cars for residents in the anticipated 12-unit condo.</p>				
9/1/23	<p>This draft lacks meaningful long-term comprehensive planning for neighborhood services required of City departments. Each section describes what the neighborhood has now, and makes recommendations for future planning initiatives as the population grows. There is no real planning for infrastructure improvements or the neighborhood services that we need NOW (example a second ambulance bay.) The recommendations suggest further planning at various intervals, with no trigger, and reliance on public oversight to "hold the city accountable." (Page 18, Neighborhood Needs)</p>				
9/1/23	<p>The draft does not consider what Charlestown IS, why residents today choose to call it home, and what makes it unique to the City of Boston. Instead the draft considers what Charlestown COULD be and prioritizes efforts to make it more like the rest of the City of Boston. (Page 21-26, Comparison Neighborhoods)</p>				
9/1/23	<p>The draft does not further the protection of the historic "original peninsula" and ignores previous architectural surveys that recommended additional protections such as landmark and architectural conservation districts. It also failed to include our most recent petition for an Industrial Architectural Conservation District that would preserve some of our heritage buildings for reuse. We need these mentioned in the PLAN so that we are eligible for funding the studies needed to establish districts. Recommendations to continue the districting process should be included in the implementation chart p 211 (Page 154, Urban Design Guidelines. Page 144, Adaptive Reuse.)</p>				
9/1/23	<p>The planning consultants retained by the BPDA stated that even if we met the idealistic assumptions to reduce personal vehicle use by 50% (Go Boston: 2030), and add the transit improvements recommended, the increase in building density will increase traffic gridlock on our neighborhood roads. Despite many public comments, the draft states that traffic is not a problem within the neighborhood. A responsible PLAN should not max out development based on assumptions for unpredictable behaviors that vary drastically from current behaviors. (Page 108-132, Area Planning Framework.) The BPDA removed mention of a critical transportation study (\$80,000 with Somerville, Medford and the MBTA) that found that personal vehicle use can be reduced by 5% (not 50% as the PLAN: Charlestown states), and that the Orange Line is already above capacity between the hours of 6-9AM between the Sullivan Square and State Street stations. This report also uses 8,000,000 square feet for planned growth in Charlestown. PLAN: Charlestown recommends more than triple that, rendering this joint planning effort obsolete</p>				

9/1/23	<p>The PLAN document contains new concepts that contradict the goals and intentions for PLAN: Charlestown in the following ways:</p> <p>*The Urban Renewal parcel of land (Bunker Hill Mall) was carved out of the “original peninsula’s” boundary. Maximum building heights allowed currently are 35’. This draft proposed a change that would double the height to 70’ on Main Street, nearly triple to 90’ on Austin St and School St and FIVE times that to 150’ on Rutherford Ave.</p> <p>*Building heights on land between Medford Street and the Mystic River (formerly a Designated Port Area) that abuts Doherty Park and 3-4 story residential buildings were raised from what is now 55’ to 180’. Previous scenarios recommended a building height max of 120’.</p>				
9/1/23	<p>The draft document is inconsistent in its recommendations in the following ways:</p> <p>*Building height maximums along Rutherford are not consistent along the West side. 90’ is stated between Austin Street and Sullivan Square while 180’ is stated at the corner of Austin and Rutherford at the Austin Lots.</p>				
9/1/23	<p>Excellent Inventory work was completed by Ed Gordon in 1987, revised in 1990. Charlestown’s Inventory has largely remained the same since this study report was completed. (Survey Project Completion Report by Ed Gordon.) While the inventory is mentioned in this section, it does not include the recommendations made for districts in the neighborhood. The PLAN needs to incorporate these recommendations, and an updated survey can be performed within the district approval process. This is the method used for the Monument Square Landmark District that is currently in process. (Page 56, Preservation)</p> <p>*The following recommendations made from the Study report should be included as recommendations in PLAN: Charlestown: “Residents should petition The Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) for a Town Hill Landmark District” “Residents should petition BLC for a Winthrop Square Landmark District.”</p>				
9/1/23	<p>The BPDA’s planning recommendations for development projects are not consistent with the changes to the Urban Design Guidelines in PLAN: Charlestown. Specifically when it comes to the placement of garage doors, minimum parking requirements for buildings over 6 units, and rear and side yard set backs. (Page 189, Urban Design Guidelines & Zoning to support design.)</p>				
9/1/23	<p>Mansard roofs are not appropriate for new buildings. Please delete the reference to mansard roofs as an “appropriate roof form.” (Page 168, Infill Development)</p>				
9/1/23	<p>The National Register district for Monument Square is larger than indicated. There was an expansion that was deemed eligible. Same for the Town Hill district expansion, and Phipps Burial Ground and Doherty Park needs to be indicated as an NR (Page 59, Image of Map)</p>				
9/1/23	<p>Please note that abutting / original sidewalk materials should be replaced in kind. Ie our brick sidewalks should be reset in place rather than sections filled with concrete or asphalt. (Page 177, Public Realm - Paving Materials.)</p>				
9/1/23	<p>We need further planning in the form of a Neighborhood-wide electrical plan to replace outdated and unsafe street lights. Please work with Boston Public Works for a recommendation to create a lighting and electrical plan for Charlestown that addresses safety, security, aesthetics, wellness, sustainability, and maintenance. This will lead to community stabilization, positive economic development, and increased tourism. There is little reference to lighting quality throughout the document, which is a lost opportunity to address and protect the issues mentioned above. In the instances where lighting is mentioned, such as with regards to street lighting (p. 178), the language used is inappropriate to ensure good lighting quality and several terms are misapplied. There is a misconception that higher light levels lead to safer conditions, but this is most often not the case. Excessively bright light fixtures (luminaires) often produce glare and stark contrasting areas of light vs. dark, which create situations where people avert their gaze and fail to see the pedestrian that is crossing the street or the obstacle that is in the road. Better lighting design would seek to produce appropriate light levels for the activities in the area, minimize contrast, and consider the direction of light travel with respect to viewers. Doing so can often reduce the amount of energy used and create a more aesthetically pleasing, safer environment. (Page 178, Street Lighting)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o This section calls for “arched pendant fixtures” to replace street lighting throughout Charlestown, which seems to be unfounded. Most areas in the Original Peninsula are cylindrical post-top gas lantern fixtures (shown on p. 179 as the Wells Bach Gas Lights). To replace them with arched pendant fixtures would be inappropriate, as pendants are typically mounted on higher pole heights with wider spacing and have a much different distribution that is not pedestrian-scale and are not intended for the same applications. o The statement that “arched pendant lights provide more light than other historic looking lights, such as acorn lights” is not accurate, as fixture appearance does not define its performance. More light may not be suitable or necessary with good uniformity and appropriate light distribution. There are too many instances throughout Charlestown where street lighting fixtures (particularly acorn-style fixtures) have been retrofitted with LED sources with poor optics, and the result is high glare and light that beams into bedrooms as high as 2nd and 3rd floors of homes across the street. These are irresponsible practices that create dangerous conditions for drivers and pedestrians, and annoyances for residents, in addition to wasteful energy consumption. 				

9/1/23	Resiliency strategies should include lighting design, as poor selection and application can adversely affect marine life, flora, and fauna. (Page 152, Sustainability & Resiliency)				
9/1/23	We do not support the reduction of the "rear yard setback" from 25' to 15'. This reduction increases the allowable building area on a site and reduces permeability and increases density in the historic neighborhood. Variance sought for 4 projects out of 2,098 in 3 years does not meet the threshold for a change in zoning. (Data produced through a public information request by CPS and available upon request.) (Page 181, Zoning to Support Design.)				
9/1/23	Avoid displacement, particularly of low-income residents and small business owners (thinking specifically about the bunker hill apartments remodeling) - long-term				
9/1/23	Ensure there is programming for LOTE (Languages Other Than English) older adults - long-term				
9/1/23	RE: last item under "Health and Safety": Why is BPD (and not BPHC) in charge of addiction services and programs? Is it because the framing of the section of the plan is by department, and this was listed as something for BPD to make sure to address?				
9/4/23	<p>Thanks again for letting me speak at the last community meeting. My husband Chris and I also attended the zoning meeting in August. I really appreciate the chance to hear out the argument for inclusion of the industrial parcels in the 'transition area' on the east side of Rutherford at Sullivan Square. I know quite a few folks from that end of town that feel the same way about hoping those parcels change and transition over time, but we just kind of quietly went to the meetings in the beginning and thought the comments would get incorporated along the way at some point, so we haven't been overly-vocal through the process. As we draw closer to the end (and realizing this may be a PLAN that actually changes zoning) hoping there might be a way to incorporate any of the thoughts that mixed use/ housing at a transitionally higher density could be beneficial to the urban design and housing objectives for the whole neighborhood. It just seems to make sense to have those parcels that are SO close to the T (closer than many of the other up-zoned parcels on the other side of Rutherford) be included and incentivized for mixed use/ housing.</p> <p>From a design standpoint, the open space and road ROW at Sullivan Square will be wide-open, and without a backstop, I do think there is a scale challenge and missing edges on the south-east side. I know the property owners in that section are mostly small families that have been in Charlestown a long time, not developers, and a mixed use/ housing density bonus strategy could encourage some of those buildings to transition from industrial, be less insular and redevelop as a more connected way with the community as the rest of the big-guys develop across the street. Also, I noticed that the most dense zone (FAR 5) is now immediately next to these left-out parcels, and doesn't make much sense to leave that slice as the only portion that is left industrial.</p> <p>Thanks again for continuing to consider this. I understand that there is a large group of folks against up-zoning, and I know you are up-against a tough challenge. As you well know, this is also the time to plan for the future and make sure the whole district makes sense from an urban-design standpoint, and it seems the Rutherford line for the zone doesn't make sense in a few areas, especially since the Whole Foods parcel is being included as well. If you think it might be helpful to have a short zoom call rather than an email exchange, please let me know. Also happy to help advocate from the position of past resident and current business owner for any other portions of the PLAN if that is helpful; this is a great place for density and the planned open space loop is laudable. Going to try to continue to stay deeply involved in the Rutherford Ave project as it moves forward (and any other open space projects that may come up.)</p>				

I have reviewed the PLAN: Charlestown Final Draft (7/28/23) document and have many comments. There is little reference to lighting quality throughout the document, which is a lost opportunity to address and protect the issues mentioned above. In the instances where lighting is mentioned, such as with regards to street lighting (p. 178), the language used is inappropriate to ensure good lighting quality and several terms are misapplied. There is a misconception that higher light levels lead to safer conditions, but this is most often not the case. Excessively bright light fixtures (luminaires) often produce glare and stark contrasting areas of light vs. dark, which create situations where people avert their gaze and fail to see the pedestrian that is crossing the street or the obstacle that is in the road.

Better lighting design would seek to produce appropriate light levels for the activities in the area, minimize contrast, and consider the direction of light travel with respect to viewers. Doing so can often reduce the amount of energy used and create a more aesthetically pleasing, safer environment.

I have listed some additional comments specific to the PLAN: Charlestown document at the end of this note.* In support of the PLAN: Charlestown initiative, LIGHT Boston would like to partner with the BPDA and Charlestown's organizations to create a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the development of a Lighting Master Plan, and to assist in the evaluation of those proposals. In addition, we are available to participate in community presentations, project reviews, design charrettes, and the like.

The analysis should address topics beyond lighting hardware and light levels, while considering qualitative topics such as glare, place-making, wayfinding, and energy efficiency. Proper lighting is a balance of many considerations, and when inadequate or excessive, it can have an adverse environmental impact.

Some topics that may be considered in developing a lighting master plan:

- Neighborhood character – highlight unique personality of Charlestown; promote architectural lighting of historic and/or significant buildings
- Luminous hierarchy – establish specific focal points and their relative importance to avoid visual chaos
- Attractiveness – create civic pride for residents and highlight points of interest for tourists; create beautiful nocturnal atmosphere; define and promote light festivals and temporary lighting installations
- Environmental impact – avoid light pollution and light trespass; consider equipment construction and energy consumption
- Health and wellness – respect circadian needs of people, flora, fauna
- Equity – provide lighting that is equitable and inclusive across the diverse neighborhood
- Security – increase safety and comfort of residents and visitors; consider multi-modal traffic patterns
- Energy savings – appropriate technology selection, use of smart controls, good design, appropriate light levels
- Cost savings – reduce initial cost, as well as ongoing operational and maintenance burden

We are hopeful that this would be the beginning of a process that could serve as an example to all of Boston's neighborhoods of how responsible development should proceed. Please let me know if you would be interested in starting a discussion regarding how LIGHT Boston can support these efforts.

This letter is in response to the Final Draft of PLAN: Charlestown. We are the owners of buildings located at 78-90 Cambridge Street, 92-100 Cambridge Street and 116R / 116 Cambridge Street.

Our properties are located just down Cambridge Street from the Sullivan Square MBTA station, an area that has been industrial for the last 100 years. We are immediately adjacent to Rt. 93., an area that has been cited as the best location for higher elevation buildings. Across the street from our properties are several smaller commercial properties (small restaurant, law office, Dunkin' Donuts) and up the hill are residences (the so-called Lost Village). Immediately behind our property on Roland Street is a Rise development with FAR 4. Across Rt. 93 on Cambridge Street are Fallon and Rise projects with FAR 5.

We believe that FAR 4 for our 100 Cambridge Street property and FAR 5 for our 90 Cambridge Street property would be fair.

According to the PLAN, we stand to be assigned an FAR that is effectively 0 (green space) for part of our 100 Cambridge Street building (leased as headquarters for a robotics company), and an FAR of 3 for the remainder of that parcel. We were assigned an FAR of 4 (an increase from the earlier assignment of FAR 3) for our 90 Cambridge Street property—thank you for listening to our plea for equity in a letter and Zoom meeting. We feel that our properties were made to bear the brunt of less potential permitted development so that other nearby properties could gain higher FAR's.

Furthermore, our properties were not included in the area mapped out in the PLAN as being within 1000 feet of the MBTA station and therefore eligible for a 1.0 FAR bonus. Since our properties DO lie within this 1000 foot radius, our eligibility for a bonus of 1.0 FAR seems clear, and consonant with the goal of PLAN Charlestown to encourage future housing development near public transportation, particularly given our proximity to not only the Sullivan Square MBTA station but also multiple bus stops and Route 93.

Our lower FAR and the assignment of Greenspace to our property will limit our ability to invest in the property in future years as the economics of any project are considerably less favorable. The failure to include our property in the FAR bonus seems an oversight that fails to promote the goals of increased housing, better commercial development and access to public transportation.

The Parisi's have been part of the Charlestown community for 43 years. In 1980 we purchased a property that had been vacant for 11 years. We renovated a vandalized building to be the home for our family bookbinding business. In 1984 we doubled the size of the building as our business grew. In 1996 we expanded again growing our labor force and filling out the property. In 2022 we relocated the bookbinding business and improved the buildings to allow new tenants—an adult day care facility and two robotics companies. John and Paul have been active employers, managers, and investors in the property and the neighborhood. Our five children, who live in greater Boston, will carry on this legacy.

The zoning and FAR characterizations of our property stand to curtail its potential in a manner inconsistent with neighboring properties. We hope the final PLAN will correct this inconsistency and provide us the both the proximity bonus and increased FAR. As stated above, we believe that FAR 5 for our 90 Cambridge Street property and FAR 4 for our 100 Cambridge Street property would be fair.

Thank you for considering our position. And thank you for your service to Charlestown and Boston in your roles at BPDA. We have enjoyed getting to know you via walks in Charlestown and on Zoom meetings.

8/31/23

9/6/23	<p>My family and I reside on Washington Street in Charlestown, where we have lived since 2021; prior to that, we lived on Bartlett Street just off the Bunker Hill Monument. My husband and I moved from the Back Bay to Charlestown in 2011 before we welcomed our first child, and three (3) kids later, we have chosen to stay in the city and raise our family.</p> <p>Our family is very much entangled in Charlestown; I am a member of the Charlestown Design Review Committee and have been a member of the Charlestown Preservation Society. Overall, we truly love our decision and being a part of Charlestown and all it has to offer - my children attend Boston Public Schools, play town sports and frequent the sights and sounds. I also have a business in Charlestown that operates out of City Square. We are thrilled to be a part of Charlestown, specifically, as it continues to grow and other families choose and make the same decision we've made relative to remaining here.</p> <p>However, we were saddened to learn recently that the current plan for Charlestown is not at all what was previously presented. We fear that if the current release plan for Charlestown, if allowed to move forward, many families like us will choose to flee the city as we just are too small to accommodate such rapid growth and density, particularly in terms of schools. We have supported the process and the prior proposals, but what went live is not that, which appears, at simplest form, to contradict the original goals and intentions. While we are not opposing the plan in its entirety, we ask that additional time and attention be given to the parameters and revisions made going back to prior versions that will allow Charlestown to maintain its feel and characteristics for families like ours. There is a way for Charlestown to grow and be developed, but not how it is currently proposed.</p>				
9/5/23	<p>> I am a Charlestown resident and I strongly oppose the Plan Charlestown. It is far too densely populated and unsustainable, among many other dire issues. The congestion that has occurred at Assembly Row is not at all appropriate for our precious and historic one-square mile. My Puffer ancestor fought in the Westminster Regiment at the Battle of Bunker Hill. I want our history and human-scale neighborhood preserved.</p> <p>> Please give us a more human-scale plan that is sustainable for people and the planet. I am happy to discuss. Feel free to contact me.</p>	school accomodation			
		less density			

I am writing to join the Charlestown Preservation Society in opposing the Plan: Charlestown development proposed by the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA). As a twenty-year resident of Charlestown, a parent, abutter of the project, and longstanding active member of the community, it is clear our neighborhood does not have the capacity to sustain such an immense plan.

I recognize and understand the importance of building more affordable housing throughout the city and region, which is why when I learned of your press conference announcing the plan (of which we knew nothing about prior), we proactively reached out to BPDA staff to engage in the process and offered our willingness to listen.

I know how important it is to you that all voices are heard with respect to decisions that impact your constituents and our community, which is why I am writing to make you aware that as one of the most impacted homeowners with respect to this development, our concerns have gone unaddressed. My husband and I participated in nearly every BPDA online public meeting and walking tour and provided what we felt like were constructive comments throughout the process. None were addressed in Plan: Charlestown.

The back of our home faces both Rutherford Avenue and the Austin Street parking lots. All day and night we are subject to the non-stop traffic congestion of commuters from Somerville, Cambridge, Everett, and Medford as they make their way into the city. With the Bunker Hill project housing redevelopment and other BPDA projects also adding thousands of residents to the Charlestown community, our primary concern has been how our neighborhood would be further paralyzed by traffic. And as a transit rider, you know firsthand that if the T isn't running on schedule or there is inclement weather (which is often in Boston), commuters will be forced to drive or take ride sharing vehicles, further compounding our traffic nightmare, increasing the emissions of idling cars for our neighbors and us.

As public meetings commenced and we listened to the greater Charlestown community, concerns regarding lack of open public space and public school options to meet the needs of current and future children living here became a central concern of ours as well. As I know you are aware, parents in Charlestown have been asking for more open space for sports for years. If you have the opportunity, look at this current plan knowing there isn't enough capacity for parent-run organizations to provide sports for kids in Charlestown now, and you will recognize it is wholly inefficient. In addition, with the closure of the Edwards School, leaving only the Warren Prescott and Harvard-Kent elementary schools, where are the hundreds, if not thousands of children (between the Austin Street and Bunker Hill developments) going to attend school? The current Plan: Charlestown takes a wait and see approach, which I know as a parent, you would whole-heartedly oppose. You can't raise a family in a community where you don't have a school for your children to attend.

The concerns mentioned above were all voiced by our families and others who respectfully participated in the public process with the understanding that our views would be incorporated into the final plan. What BPDA released as the current Plan: Charlestown is a rebuke of our time and input. No plan for traffic, no plan for schools and only pockets of open space. But most stunning is the degree to which it swings in the opposite direction of community input with its proposed high-rise buildings that there is absolutely no way this neighborhood can support. I know community input is central to your leadership philosophy, and therefore want to make sure you are aware that it is not reflected in this final plan. For example, not one individual on any meeting I participated in ever expressed a desire for high rise buildings. It is in fact, the opposite of what community members voiced throughout the public meeting process.

You are adamant (rightly so) that we need to create affordable housing in Boston. Our community has been active participants in communicating to BPDA what needs to be addressed in Charlestown for you to be successful. This proposal is the opposite. I began this correspondence by recognizing the city's need to create more affordable housing. But as I referenced in one of my comments somewhere along in this process: your goal is to add more housing units, but it is up to us to be community stewards on your behalf. We do this by being active in our schools, volunteering as coaches for parent run athletic activities (which are our only options in Charlestown) and organizing neighborhood-wide events to bring people together at no cost for residents. This plan does not allow for that in the future. It needs to be smaller, smarter, and encompass the city services to meet your vision of Boston that is inclusive and diverse.

During my 20 years in Charlestown, my husband and I have been active members in our community. We have been coaches, board members, supporters of our elected officials and most importantly voters. We respectfully ask that you oppose Plan: Charlestown in its current form and put forth a plan that meets the needs of future residents, as well as your constituents who live here now.

This email serves both as a follow-up to my longer email comments of October 1, 2022, and as my formal comments on the BPDA's Final Draft Plan. Please consider my October 1, 2022, comments and this email as part of the official record for the Final Draft Plan.

My bottom line is that the Final Draft Plan has too many flaws for me to support it in this form.

While I appreciate the many hours that went into the hosting of community meetings, the review of stakeholder comments and the drafting of prior proposals and the current Final Draft Plan — and while I support many of the goals of the Final Draft Plan—it does not comport with many significant points which the Charlestown neighborhood repeatedly stressed during this lengthy process, some of which I identified in my October 1, 2022 comments.

I will address a few of the most important problems with the Final Draft Plan here:

1) The Plan does not take into account the many cumulative impacts on Charlestown which the multiple development projects in the current pipeline will have. Vehicular traffic in a small neighborhood with few entry and exit points, the stresses on an already overburdened public transportation infrastructure, the need for public school seats and demands for city services all will increase exponentially as a result of the impending development projects, but the Final Draft Plan does not provide for adequate realistic solutions. In this sense the Final Draft Plan is not a comprehensive plan of the sort Charlestown — and every Boston neighborhood — needs and should develop.

2) Some development in Charlestown is inevitable — and indeed a positive reflection on its attractiveness as a business and residential destination. However, the proposed density of the multiple development projects in just the current pipeline will dramatically change the current neighborhood feel and ambience of Charlestown. The Final Draft Plan does not do enough to limit density and protect the historic neighborhood character of Charlestown. Charlestown is a very unique and special place. The Final Draft Plan threatens to overwhelm the neighborhood with large scale cookie-cutter developments. Again, in this sense the Final Draft Plan falls short of what the neighborhood needs and deserves.

3) The proposed height limits for the area around the Bunker Hill Mall are too extreme. The proposed heights will result in a wall at the entrance to Charlestown from Cambridge via the Gilmore Bridge and alter the scale of Main Street.

4) The proposed heights for the Flatley development in Medford Street are also too extreme. The buildings in that expected development should not exceed the height of the nearby Schrafts Building.

I urge the BPDA to require modification of the Final Draft Plan to address these objections, as well as those of the Charlestown Preservation Society and other residents with similar concerns.

9/5/23

more schools, traffic concerns, less density

As a nearly 20-year resident of Charlestown and a homeowner in the Town Hill area of the neighborhood abutting the Austin Street parking lots, I am writing to express my strong opposition to the draft PLAN: Charlestown ("Plan") document that was released by the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) and is open for public comment until September 6. The draft plan in almost no meaningful way addresses the concerns raised by Charlestown residents during the numerous community meetings I attended over the last several years. If implemented in its current form, the Plan will fundamentally alter a unique, historic neighborhood by adding more than 15,000 residents and tens of millions of square feet of residential and commercial space to a one-square mile peninsula. Once these spaces are developed, there is almost no planning for what these residents and businesses will bring: congestion on neighborhood streets; a need for more seats in public schools; increased emergency and public safety services; and athletic and cultural facilities for neighborhood residents and visitors.

Simply put, the Plan is a real estate developer's dream: the opportunity to build with almost no reasonable restrictions on height or number of units or requirements for the inclusion of community amenities. Once the buildings are built, the residents will have to deal with the aftermath of gridlock on our streets, lack of field and gym space for our already over-capacity youth sports programs; and decreased emergency response times. While I understand the need to increase the number of affordable units in Greater Boston, it seems like the Plan places a disproportionate burden on Charlestown to fulfill the City's housing goals. The neighborhood is already home to the largest public housing development in Massachusetts (Bunker Hill) as well as affordable housing at Mishawum Park, and the Newtown Cooperative, among others. According to the most recent data from the City, 25 percent of the housing in Charlestown is income restricted, making it the fifth highest percentage among Boston neighborhoods. In contrast, your neighborhood of Roslindale has just 13 percent of its housing listed as income restricted and several neighborhoods (Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Hyde Park and the Seaport, among others) have single digit percentages. Our neighborhood alone cannot solve the region's affordable housing shortage and I am not aware of any other neighborhood where proposed development is anywhere near the scale of that in the Plan - certainly not in the areas noted above. In addition, suburban communities must be forced to do their share and build multi-family and other affordable housing. This is a regional problem that demands regional solutions.

I am also deeply concerned that, as the Charlestown Preservation Society has noted in its comments, the Plan relies on "aspirational goals" rather than data driven recommendations. Essentially the City is saying, "trust us, we'll provide all the unplanned infrastructure and services after everything is built." Based on the City's and MBTA's prior performance, I find it difficult to believe that any promised changes or enhancements will materialize. We are in desperate need of increased services and amenities now, with our current population of just under 20,000 residents. Our youth sports programs already fight for field space and a new ambulance bay and more green space are sorely needed. Unfortunately, most of the pressing needs are listed in the Plan as having a "mid-term" or "long-term" timeline, which means that few of these issues will be addressed before hundreds of new residents arrive. The Plan also envisions reducing personal vehicle use by 50 percent - a number that is not based on any analysis, planning or forecasting. If this goal is not met, there is no plan to address what will happen. This seems like a critical omission in a document that is supposed to be guiding development for the next several decades and envisions a massive increase in population.

Over the last several years, we have been subjected to the seemingly never-ending reconstruction of the North Washington Street bridge (that was significantly delayed due to mistakes made by the contractors), the redevelopment of the Bunker Hill public housing development, numerous closures of the MBTA's Orange Line (including almost weekly shutdowns to accommodate another never-ending development at the City Hall garage), and greatly reduced bus service on the 92 and 93 lines that serve the neighborhood and provide a vital link to downtown Boston. In addition, traffic gridlock on Rutherford Ave and Austin Street/Gilmore Bridge has become nearly unbearable, with loud, sustained truck and vehicle traffic backed up for hours each day, limiting the ability of residents and emergency vehicles to get in and out of the neighborhood.

As an abutter to the Austin Street parking lots, I will focus the remainder of my comments on this section of the Plan. While the Plan purports to preserve and respect the character of the historic areas on the original peninsula, the City's desire to build as much housing as possible on the Austin Street lots does just the opposite. Buildings on Rutherford Ave at BHCC and towards Sullivan Square will be required to step down in height, with the tallest buildings sited next to I-93 and shorter buildings situated closer to Rutherford Avenue. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the Austin Street lots, where building heights of 150-180 feet will be allowed up to Rutherford with no step down. Add to that a proposed height of 150 feet for part of the redevelopment of the Bunker Hill Mall site and the area between City Square and the Gilmore Bridge will be one of the densest areas of development outside of downtown. The proposal is not respectful of the historic areas in Charlestown - in fact, the BPDA is willfully inconsistent in the building height requirements so that it can achieve its goals - not address the neighborhood's concerns. I also find it hugely problematic that the quotes in the Plan are cherry-picked and in no way represent the many comments I heard during the public meetings. The BPDA seems to have chosen only positive comments and not recognized the many legitimate issues and concerns raised by residents about the overdevelopment of the Austin Street lots.

Dear Mayor Wu and Mr. Jennison:

With profound distress about the BPDA and Mayor's Office's callow treatment of Charlestown residents, I oppose the Plan: Charlestown. I support your social goals for Boston, especially deeply affordable housing with a diverse population. But Plan: Charlestown as written is so deeply flawed in so many regards, after my own decades of work in preserving Boston's character and encouraging appropriate new development, I must oppose it.

The Charlestown Preservation Society and many of other active, respected, unpaid individuals and organizations, articulated many reasons for me to join in opposition.

Timing and Scheduling: for the past 3 + years, multiple planning and project meetings per week and months demanded residents' close attention. City Staff and political entities, and all developers and their agents, union representatives, and the like are paid or receive other compensation. We are all volunteers.

Yes, a 4-week extension has emerged; nonetheless, expecting residents to understand and believe the suggested zoning changes and their impacts within a few weeks is arrogant and dismissive on the part of City leadership and staff at all levels. Even those of us pretty well versed in zoning intricacies need several months, without developer meeting interruptions, to comment effectively. But the City now continues to overwhelm family and personal, even work, obligations with scheduled college parking lot meetings, during this extension for examining Plan: Charlestown. We miss Bill Lamb, quiet, happy-to-explain in common language, ever-present at things Zoning whether the 1980s neighborhood zoning changes or the continuous ZBA variance hearings; Bill read it all, understood the nuances, and was a respected voice. He died unexpectedly in 2019.

Holy Moly.

Terminology: Mayor Wu stood with several residents, and other city types on the parking lots and declared a "community-led" planning effort. She and BPDA leadership emphasized this - following squawks from CPS and others - when the BPDA staff omitted including the entire Charlestown Boundary only to focus on the industrial edges. Now, the "community-led" term is allegedly banned by City Hall.

In 2023, just what does community mean? When City staff use terms like community engagement specialists for titles, just who in the community does this mean? Who counts as important to be engaged? The team did spend a lot of time with residents for sure and worked hard on a complicated document. Senior City leadership may have heard, but certainly has not respectfully acted for the residential neighborhood aside from well-established and common-sense policies for the Original Peninsula and Beyond the Neck streets. For the final draft, Plan: Charlestown, engagement/hearing/respect/benefits applies ONLY to the developers and their many agents, union colleagues, and other vested interests in critical large non-residential areas, not neighborhood residents.

We have heard it explained that planners best represent the future people who might want to live in the Charlestown neighborhood. But who better to represent these people than those of us who love the place, know what makes it a great place to live, know its downsides and aim to correct these through extensive volunteerism over the decades? While some residents may have only self-interest in mind, the rest really want Charlestown to thrive for all. Why have we - not City employees - turned Warrant Prescott School into a desired neighborhood school, and created future college scholarships for Harvard Kent graduates, created the Sprouts and Gardens for Charlestown, Veterans with partners restored the 1791 Memorial Hall hosting Lacrosse Learning Center, and delved into the horrible substance abuse crisis - to name a tiny fraction of volunteer efforts.

We have heard and read between the vague lines, that Charlestown residents do not represent those who are key stakeholders in solving Mayor Wu's important social goals. Perhaps, City leadership should reverse that opinion and say: "hey, despite some pitfalls, the Urban Renewal goals of 1964 worked, Charlestown is certainly not blighted, it helps the City tax base just like Beacon Hill, Back Bay, South End, South Boston, etc., has a much more diverse population living in both very high valued dwellings and deeply affordable extant and planned projects, and crime and safety statistics aren't bad.Of course, traffic is not solved!" The City of Boston should thank the neighborhood residents collectively for making this a desirable neighborhood and not disenfranchise current residents in planning its future.

In past years, City leaders listened and acted affirmatively when along the Southwest Corridor, South End, Roxbury, JP residents, and more recently the Melnea Cass tree stakeholders demanded action on a good transportation system with appropriately scaled new development, which continues today. The Charlestown residential neighborhood deserves the same respectful treatment.

Lots of people move, two off-spring and gone, for easier schools, traffic, and amenities of the burbs. Many stick it out. Personally, I deplore those who have never heard of sweat equity: those of us old-timers painted, de-leaded, learned house rehab from books not U-Tube. We hammered, nailed, and never once had heard of a gym or a peloton.

We struggled through controversy about rehabilitation of the Bunker Hill Housing Project. Not because of the importance of providing great housing for

9/5/23	<p>Over the past week I have read portions of the PLAN:Charlestown in a binder copy in our local Charlestown library. Many issues to address but I will start with one close to home: 201 Rutherford as identified, but the Bunker Hill Mall, as known by those in the Town. The mall is in the historic part of Charlestown, steps from Thompson Square and across from Preservation Park. PLAN:Charlestown states in Why We Are Planning: A desire to enhance the existing neighborhood core (p. 10). Developing the mall with housing should not dwarf the scale of the surrounding neighborhood with increased height and mass. Anything that looks like Cambridge Crossing is not in keeping with Charlestown's historic character.</p> <p>I am an IAG member for this project and doubling the heights on Main Street from 3 stories/35 feet to 70 feet, presenting 8 stories/90 feet on Austin Street, and allowing 14 stories/150 feet on Rutherford Avenue were not the project plan presented to us 2 and a half years ago! There were many discussions (all recorded I am sure) about lack of parking spaces for building residents, denying resident parking permits, size of micro units, safety issues of vehicles passing through from Austin Street to building lobby and many other topics. Adding green space and improving Mall corridors were some mitigation topics. But.....</p> <p>Let me repeat. These were not the height numbers ever considered by the members of the IAG and at that time there was no plan to build on Main Street! At a later date we were told Main Street development may be considered but it was not identified as part of the Mall plan being submitted for review.</p>				
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I am very concerned with the current Charlestown development PLAN document for a multitude of reasons.

I will outline some of them here:

The current draft lacks meaningful long-term consideration of neighborhood services with no real planning for infrastructure improvements or the neighborhood services that are needed by the community.

The draft does not consider what makes Charlestown unique to the City of Boston. I moved into the Town for a reason, and I see its special character threatened by PLAN Charlestown.

The draft does not authentically protect the historic "original peninsula" and ignores previous architectural surveys that recommended additional protections, like landmark and architectural conservation districts. Notably, it failed to include our most recent petition for an Industrial Architectural Conservation District that would preserve some of our heritage buildings for re-use. These must be included in the PLAN.

The planning consultants retained by the BPDA stated that even if we met the idealistic assumptions to reduce personal vehicle use by 50%, and add the transit improvements recommended, the increase in building density will increase traffic gridlock on our neighborhood roads. Quite falsely, the draft states that traffic is not a problem within the neighborhood. A reference document uses 8,000,000 square feet for planned growth in Charlestown, while the PLAN: Charlestown recommends more than triple that figure. Apples to oranges. The parking situation and rotary traffic near Sullivan Square are unbearable and can be squeezed no further.

The PLAN document contains new concepts that contradict the goals and intentions for PLAN: Charlestown in the following ways:

The Urban Renewal parcel of land (i.e., Bunker Hill Mall) was carved out of the "original peninsula's" boundary. Max building heights allowed currently are 35'. This draft proposed a change that would double the height to 70' on Main Street, nearly triple to 90' on Austin St and School Street and five times that to 150' on Rutherford Avenue. These would destroy the quaint "low" building feel of the historic community of Charlestown and has not been approved by its people.

Building heights on land between Medford Street and the Mystic River that abuts Doherty Park and 3-4 story residential buildings were raised from what is now 55' to 180'. Previous scenarios recommended a building height max of 120'.

The draft document is inconsistent in its recommendations on building height - with maximums along Rutherford being inconsistent along the West side (i.e., 90' between Austin Street and Sullivan Square and 180' at the corner of Austin and Rutherford. One is double the other!).

Comprehensive inventory work was done by Ed Gordon in 1987 and revised in 1990 with recommendations made for districts in the neighborhood. The PLAN needs to incorporate these recommendations, and an updated survey should be performed within the district approval process. An example of this is found for the Monument Square Landmark District currently in process.

The following recommendations made from his report should be included as recommendations in PLAN: Charlestown:

"Residents should petition The Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) for a Town Hill Landmark District"

"Residents should petition BLC for a Winthrop Square Landmark District."

The BPDA's planning recommendations for development projects are inconsistent with the changes to the Urban Design Guidelines in PLAN: Charlestown (e.g., the placement of garage doors, min. parking requirements for buildings greater than 6 units, rear / side yard setbacks).

Mansard roofs are not appropriate for new buildings and any reference to mansard roofs as an "appropriate roof form" should be removed from the PLAN document.

The National Register district for Monument Square is larger than indicated despite there being an expansion that was deemed eligible. This is also true for the Town Hill district expansion, and Phipps Burial Ground and Doherty Park need to be indicated as an NR.

Please note that abutting / original sidewalk materials should be replaced in kind. Specifically, and importantly, our brick sidewalks should be reset in place rather than sections filled with concrete or asphalt. What makes Charlestown special and unique and feel historic - at it is! - are aspects of the place such as this, the original

I am writing to express some concern around proposed projects that, I believe, will negatively impact Charlestown: Helm on Third and PLAN Charlestown. I hope that your office will reconsider both projects as they will dramatically alter Charlestown.

My wife and I spent over a year looking around Boston to decide what community that we wanted to part of, and Charlestown spoke to us. We looked at most communities around Boston and no other area had the history, charm and architecture of Charlestown, along with diversity of people (e.g. age, race, economic background) and these projects are poised to have a great impact on all of that.

Helm on Third:

Charlestown has several subsidized housing developments and that is part of the diversity that we love, but the Navy Yard drew us to Charlestown. I commute to work via the ferry and enjoy the walk through the Navy Yard, talking to tourists and interacting with the men and women stationed there. This commute is clean and safe, being part of the National Parks Service Area, and walking your dog at any time of day makes us feel safe. This is what we feel is part of the historic charm of Charlestown and why we chose to move there. As in any community, we occasionally find used syringes around laying around or have minor issues, but all communities do. My concern is that Helm on 3rd will change the charm of the Navy Yard from a safe and clean environment to feel like every other part of Boston. The Navy Yard has come a long way and is continuing to thrive and other development plans may be impacted if we see that environment change.

PLAN Charlestown:

The recently announced PLAN Charlestown has the potential to alter the historical nature of Charlestown forever. I believe the Charlestown Preservation Society (CPS) had been working closely with the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) but they have now pulled their recommendation for this plan and that is very concerning. CPS is for progress but not for losing site of what makes Charlestown unique. The proposed plan for Charlestown overreaches on certain areas, like proposing building heights accommodate 8 - 14 story buildings, dramatically altering the historic nature of the surrounding community, while providing few insights on how infrastructure will accommodate some of these changes (e.g. MTBA and public school expansion/improvement). We don't want to stop growing, but we don't want to grow by destroying the history of what brought us to Charlestown.

I have copied a recent letter from the CPS (below) highlighting several key points that I feel will negatively impact why we chose to move to Charlestown over every other community around Boston. I am always happy to discuss this letter and encourage you and your office to reconsider both projects as they stand today.

9/5/23

Hi Trish & Jason- Thanks again for all you work on PLAN Charlestown. I know the final completion and zoning will be tricky with all of the preservation folks looking for lower development, and wish you the best of luck negotiating. Of course, this is opportunity in the larger conversation of 'smart growth' in Massachusetts as whole; older infill industrial (and many contaminated!) parcels near the T are the right place to put high density. Oye! I wish you the best negotiating.

Thanks again for letting me speak at the last community meeting. My husband chris and I also attended the zoning meeting in August. I really appreciate the chance to hear out the argument for inclusion of the industrial parcels in the 'transition area' on the east side of Rutherford at Sullivan Square. I know quite a few folks from that end of town that feel the same way about hoping those parcels change and transition over time, but we just kind of quietly went to the meetings in the beginning and thought the comments would get incorporated along the way at some point, so we haven't been overly-vocal through the process. As we draw closer to the end (and realizing this may be a PLAN that actually changes zoning) hoping there might be a way to incorporate any of the thoughts that mixed use/ housing at a transitionally higher density could be beneficial to the urban design and housing objectives for the whole neighborhood. It just seems to make sense to have those parcels that are SO close to the T (closer than many of the other up-zoned parcels on the other side of Rutherford) be included and incentivized for mixed use/ housing.

From a design standpoint, the open space and road ROW at Sullivan Square will be wide-open, and without a backstop, I do think there is a scale challenge and missing edges on the south-east side. I know the property owners in that section are mostly small families that have been in Charlestown a long time, not developers, and a mixed use/ housing density bonus strategy could encourage some of those buildings to transition from industrial, be less insular and redevelop as a more connected way with the community as the rest of the big-guys develop across the street. Also, I noticed that the most dense zone (FAR 5) is now immediately next to these left-out parcels, and doesn't make much sense to leave that slice as the only portion that is left industrial.

Thanks again for continuing to consider this. I understand that there is a large group of folks against up-zoning, and I know you are up-against a tough challenge. As you well know, this is also the time to plan for the future and make sure the whole district makes sense from an urban-design standpoint, and it seems the Rutherford line for the zone doesn't make sense in a few areas, especially since the Whole foods parcel is being included as well. If you think it might be helpful to have a short zoom call rather than an email exchange, please let me know. Also happy to help advocate from the position of past resident and current business owner for any other portions of the PLAN if that is helpful; this is a great place for density and the planned open space loop is laudable. Going to try to continue to stay deeply involved in the Rutherford Ave project as it moves forward (and any other open space projects that may come up.)

9/4/23

Appreciate your time and continued thoughts.

This letter is in response to the Final Draft of PLAN: Charlestown. We are the owners of buildings located at 78-90 Cambridge Street, 92-100 Cambridge Street and 116R / 116 Cambridge Street.

Our properties are located just down Cambridge Street from the Sullivan Square MBTA station, an area that has been industrial for the last 100 years. We are immediately adjacent to Rt. 93., an area that has been cited as the best location for higher elevation buildings. Across the street from our properties are several smaller commercial properties (small restaurant, law office, Dunkin' Donuts) and up the hill are residences (the so-called Lost Village). Immediately behind our property on Roland Street is a Rise development with FAR 4. Across Rt. 93 on Cambridge Street are Fallon and Rise projects with FAR 5.

We believe that FAR 4 for our 100 Cambridge Street property and FAR 5 for our 90 Cambridge Street property would be fair.

According to the PLAN, we stand to be assigned an FAR that is effectively 0 (green space) for part of our 100 Cambridge Street building (leased as headquarters for a robotics company), and an FAR of 3 for the remainder of that parcel. We were assigned an FAR of 4 (an increase from the earlier assignment of FAR 3) for our 90 Cambridge Street property—thank you for listening to our plea for equity in a letter and Zoom meeting. We feel that our properties were made to bear the brunt of less potential permitted development so that other nearby properties could gain higher FAR's.

Furthermore, our properties were not included in the area mapped out in the PLAN as being within 1000 feet of the MBTA station and therefore eligible for a 1.0 FAR bonus. Since our properties DO lie within this 1000 foot radius, our eligibility for a bonus of 1.0 FAR seems clear, and consonant with the goal of PLAN Charlestown to encourage future housing development near public transportation, particularly given our proximity to not only the Sullivan Square MBTA station but also multiple bus stops and Route 93.

Our lower FAR and the assignment of Greenspace to our property will limit our ability to invest in the property in future years as the economics of any project are considerably less favorable. The failure to include our property in the FAR bonus seems an oversight that fails to promote the goals of increased housing, better commercial development and access to public transportation.

The Parisi's have been part of the Charlestown community for 43 years. In 1980 we purchased a property that had been vacant for 11 years. We renovated a vandalized building to be the home for our family bookbinding business. In 1984 we doubled the size of the building as our business grew. In 1996 we expanded again growing our labor force and filling out the property. In 2022 we relocated the bookbinding business and improved the buildings to allow new tenants—an adult day care facility and two robotics companies. John and Paul have been active employers, managers, and investors in the property and the neighborhood. Our five children, who live in greater Boston, will carry on this legacy.

The zoning and FAR characterizations of our property stand to curtail its potential in a manner inconsistent with neighboring properties. We hope the final PLAN will correct this inconsistency and provide us the both the proximity bonus and increased FAR. As stated above, we believe that FAR 5 for our 90 Cambridge Street property and FAR 4 for our 100 Cambridge Street property would be fair.

Thank you for considering our position. And thank you for your service to Charlestown and Boston in your roles at BPDA. We have enjoyed getting to know you via walks in Charlestown and on Zoom meetings.

8/31/23

<p>6/11/23</p>	<p>Thank you both for speaking with Maggie and me on Friday, and thanks to Trish for carving out vacation time for us.</p> <p>Our family has submitted responses to the Plan Charlestown survey. Thanks for extending the survey window to include the weekend. We did not understand that the window for consideration of our input to Plan Charlestown actually closed months or years ago. We learned on Friday that we are late to submit our input, to our detriment. It is unfortunate that a property like ours, in the heart of the area slated for development in Plan Charlestown adjacent to Route 93 and the Sullivan Square T stop, did not get a one-on-one meeting early enough in the process for us to have our position made clear. I'd like to share some history of development in the Roland St. and Cambridge St. area.</p> <p>Many developers had a plan to acquire multiple properties in the Sullivan Square area, and to present a master plan to the BPDA including all of their acquired real estate. We were approached by many of these developers to be a limited partner or perhaps the landlord of a decades-long land lease, but we declined. The sticking point was that we did not want to sell our property. We were happy to be an investor in a larger project, but only if we could continue to be an owner. All scenarios we were shown included the ultimate buyout of our interest when the projects were completed and fully leased. We then were asked by RISE if our property could be included in RISE's Roland St. master plan, being assured that it was NON-BINDING, so we agreed.</p> <p>We have great respect for our neighboring landowners, but have come to realize that our property has been devalued by being presented as the place for green space and less development while their adjacent property got higher FAR. Across a busy 4-traffic-lane Cambridge Street from our building is a Dunkin Donuts, a triangular piece of land-currently a law office and two fenced houses at the bottom of a hill, that sit below houses that are much higher up the hill, all adjacent to an underpass below Route 93 and the Sullivan Square T stop. Given the extreme industrial nature of this part of Cambridge St., assigning our property an FAR of 3 is inconsistent with the goal of having higher FAR sites be adjacent to Route 93 and a public transportation hub at Sullivan Square.</p> <p>If the current FAR 3 scenario is adopted, our family will be forced into the expensive and likely unsuccessful job of seeking a variance from proposed zoning when the time comes to develop our property. A higher FAR—consistent with other adjacent sites, makes our property a viable development site that we can finance and complete.</p> <p>Our Charlestown property is the center of our family legacy. We have been members of the Charlestown community for 43 years and want to continue to be long-term stakeholders. Our four children, all of whom reside in various nearby Boston communities—East Boston, Jamaica Plain, Cambridge and Charlestown, know and value this connection.</p> <p>We would like to make more significant investments in our property for generations to come. These future investments will be drastically affected by BPDA's determination of the appropriate use and density of our property. We hope that our case will be reconsidered and a higher FAR assigned to be consistent with surrounding properties.</p> <p>Thank you for your time and consideration of our request.</p> <p>And thank you for your service to Charlestown and Boston in your roles at BPDA. We have enjoyed getting to know you via walks in Charlestown and on Zoom meetings.</p>				
<p>9/3/23</p>	<p>We do not support PLAN: Charlestown.</p> <p>From the BPDA website, the goal of PLAN is to determine how to accommodate new contextually appropriate growth while preserving the character of its existing residential areas. The PLAN falls short of this stated goal. The PLAN allows buildings with height and density that clearly negatively impact the character of the existing residential areas, allows growth that is detrimental to the existing community and does not fully address the infrastructure required to support such a large increase in residents.</p> <p>Similar feedback against the height, density, and lack of infrastructure has been overwhelmingly shared in the raw survey data as well as the comments and feedback in the PLAN meetings. It is clear for those who live here - we do not want this.</p> <p>Please come up with a PLAN that meets BPDA's stated goal that the community supports. This version is not it.</p>				

<p>9/3/23</p>	<p>The residents of Charlestown oppose this PLAN Charlestown. It is unacceptable.</p> <p>Our concerns lie within the PLAN's inability to protect the historic character of our neighborhood, its use of "aspirational goals" rather than data-backed recommendations, the City of Boston's and the MBTA's inability to responsibly plan necessary infrastructure and services, and its disregard of previous regional planning processes.</p> <p>At the highest level, our concerns include:</p> <p>Adding 10+ million more square feet than a 2019 regional planning study used as a basis for planning mobility in the region.</p> <p>A 2019 Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study indicated that Charlestown could add eight million square feet, this plan greatly exceeds that.</p> <p>Doubling the existing building heights on Main Street (at the Bunker Hill Mall) from 35' (3-stories) to 70', 90' (8-stories) on Austin St and School St and 150' (14-stories) on Rutherford Ave.</p> <p>Previous drafts proposed 50' along Main Street and 90' on Rutherford, and the community clearly stated that the proposed heights were too tall for the abutting context of the historic neighborhood.</p> <p>Increasing the building heights between Medford Street and the Mystic River (below historic Doherty Park) from what is now 55' to 180'. (Taller than the historic Schrafft's tower)</p> <p>Previous drafts proposed a max building height of 50-120' (the scale of Charlestown's industrial waterfront.) The final draft raised the heights despite clear planning recommendations for 120' max and community concerns.</p> <p>The PLAN's use of aspirational goals to reduce personal vehicle use by 50 percent. That number is not based on data, planning or forecasting.</p> <p>The planning consultants have stated that even if this happens, traffic and gridlock will increase and back up into the neighborhood.</p> <p>The BPDA's lack of planning to support population growth.</p> <p>The PLAN spends 90+ pages summarizing what Charlestown has now, rather than outlining strategies to support the future, such as partnerships with the MBTA, Boston Public Schools and Boston Parks and Recreation. It states the need for support once the population grows, but does not plan for it.</p> <p>Inconsistent recommendations for approval of proposed developments that ignore the goals and recommendations for preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings.</p> <p>The 40 Roland Street project proposes to demolish two historic buildings: 128 Cambridge Street and 40 Roland Street. The BPDA is moving them forward for board approval despite clear PLAN recommendations for preservation and reuse.</p> <p>1-2 Thompson Square addition was recommended for approval despite the project's requirements to demolish portions of the historic mansard roofline.</p> <p>The 10 Thompson Square project was recommended for approval with insufficient off-street parking required of buildings with over 6 units.</p> <p>The residents of Charlestown have lost faith in the planning process and our comments have been ignored. Charlestown deserves a thoughtful, well considered plan that meaningfully seeks to preserve, grow and enhance the neighborhood, its infrastructure and services responsibly. This draft is not that plan.</p>				
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<p>9/2/23</p>	<p>I have the following concerns with the PLAN: Charlestown. Impressive as this document is, it misses the mark</p> <p>The PLAN contains new concepts that contradict its original goals and intention to positively shape the future of our neighborhood, it disregards the many comments CPS and others have submitted around the protection of historic Charlestown, and discounts the need for supportive infrastructure and services to underpin growth.</p> <p>My concerns lie within the PLAN's inability to protect the historic character of our neighborhood, its use of "aspirational goals" rather than data-backed recommendations, the City of Boston's and the MBTA's inability to responsibly plan necessary infrastructure and services, and its disregard of previous regional planning processes.</p> <p>At the highest level, our concerns include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding 10+ million more square feet than a 2019 regional planning study used as a basis for planning mobility in the region. o A 2019 Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study indicated that Charlestown could add eight million square feet, this plan greatly exceeds that. • Doubling the existing building heights on Main Street (at the Bunker Hill Mall) from 35' (3-stories) to 70', 90' (8-stories) on Austin St and School St and 150' (14-stories) on Rutherford Ave. o Previous drafts proposed 50' along Main Street and 90' on Rutherford, and the community clearly stated that the proposed heights were too tall for the abutting context of the historic neighborhood. • Increasing the building heights between Medford Street and the Mystic River (below historic Doherty Park) from what is now 55' to 180'. (Taller than the historic Schrafft's tower) o Previous drafts proposed a max building height of 50-120' (the scale of Charlestown's industrial waterfront.) The final draft raised the heights despite clear planning recommendations for 120' max and community concerns. • The PLAN's use of aspirational goals to reduce personal vehicle use by 50 percent. That number is not based on data, planning or forecasting. o The planning consultants have stated that even if this happens, traffic and gridlock will increase and back up into the neighborhood. • The BPDA's lack of planning to support population growth. o The PLAN spends 90+ pages summarizing what Charlestown has now, rather than outlining strategies to support the future, such as partnerships with the MBTA, Boston Public Schools and Boston Parks and Recreation. It states the need for support once the population grows, but does not plan for it. • Inconsistent recommendations for approval of proposed developments that ignore the goals and recommendations for preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings. o The 40 Roland Street project proposes to demolish two historic buildings: 128 Cambridge Street and 40 Roland Street. The BPDA is moving them forward for board approval despite clear PLAN recommendations for preservation and reuse. o 1-2 Thompson Square addition was recommended for approval despite the project's requirements to demolish portions of the historic mansard roofline. o The 10 Thompson Square project was recommended for approval with insufficient off-street parking required of buildings with over 6 units. <p>The BPDA is closing out the PLAN: Charlestown process prematurely in order to approve development projects. Public comments are due by Sept. 6th, a "close-out" meeting is scheduled for Sep 11th and zoning amendments produced from the PLAN will go in front of the BPDA board for approval Sep 16th.</p> <p>I have lost faith in the process and so many comments have been ignored. Charlestown deserves a thoughtful, well considered plan that meaningfully seeks to preserve, grow and enhance the neighborhood, its infrastructure and services responsibly. This draft is not that plan.</p>				
<p>9/1/23</p>	<p>I must share my frustration and upset at the presented PLAN presented by BPDA Director of Planning Aimee Chambers. The issues in question have ALWAYS been in question by the residents and our voices must have been unheard, or just ignored. We are a small area with over 19 thousand people and the plan is to have us grow to 35 thousand!!!! It is already difficult to find a place to park if you come home after 7pm as there are no spaces left. When we cannot park on street cleaning days we have to drive around until the work is done. We have all screamed about the number of mature trees being lost and it seems there are no changes. We've complained that buildings shouldn't be higher than our zoning limits, and it seems to be ignored. Hosting a ZOOM meeting and claiming that there has been sufficient feedback and chance for the RESIDENTS to respond is NOT sufficient. Talk to anyone at the grocery store or at the playground, and people will tell you that this plan is NOT the town we chose to live in and bring up our children. I think the developers have had their way with this group and it's time to end their winning ways! PLEASE LISTEN TO THOSE OF US THAT HAVE ELECTED YOU EXPECTING A GOOD LISTENER OF HER PEOPLE.</p>				

9/1/23	<p>I oppose this plan Please reject this plan. In my opinion, this is not in the best interest of the Charlestown residents, which I am one. Charlestown deserves better.</p>				
9/1/23	<p>I have appreciated your commitment to an inclusive process in developing the PLAN: Charlestown through the BDPA. After purchasing my first home here as a young adult over 30 years ago, I also especially appreciate your efforts to increase the affordable housing in our cherished neighborhood. More people should enjoy the benefits of living in this historical gem.</p> <p>I am writing today to express my deep disappointment and outrage regarding the recent developments in PLAN: Charlestown. The rushed finalization of the plan with the surprise abrupt changes in building heights and density are more than disheartening. These changes lay out a solution that disregards the quality of life for all who live here now and will live here in the future.</p> <p>Last-minute decisions to increase building heights and population density carry significant repercussions that cannot be ignored. While the BDPA and associated transportation studies promise reduced car usage, the reality of increased traffic congestion is inevitable. The development in both Sullivan Square and Assembly Square, and the potential for even more people cutting through our neighborhood to access the casino and a potential sports stadium in Everett will only increase the number of cars moving from the highway through Charlestown on the street level. A plan that disregards these realities will displace many current residents, forcing them to seek solace and relief from congestion elsewhere. That's a result antithetical to the values of inclusivity and diversity you and I agree we should achieve. You will change the culture into a less livable place.</p> <p>Also, neglecting to account for exit strategies and fire protection during catastrophes- like the Lahaina fire in Maui- or ignoring what may occur when torrential rains cannot be absorbed by the land, exhibits a lack of foresight and prioritizes short-term gains over the safety and wellbeing of the residents of your city. The taller buildings will also increase wind and cut off our access to the sky and the sun, all important elements in human wellbeing.</p> <p>While I support the need for affordable housing, I respectfully request you don't let developers dictate our quality of life. Our historic neighborhood is not a blank canvas for developers to exploit for their benefit, it is an important space that deserves careful consideration and respect for the people who live here now and will live here in the future.</p> <p>Please, consider the long-term impact of the density and heights proposed in what is called the Final Draft of PLAN: Charlestown. Our community's historic character, the well-being of its residents, and the safety of its inhabitants are not commodities to be traded.</p> <p>Let us work together to find balanced solutions that expand opportunities for affordable living in our neighborhood, preserve our history, enrich our lives, and ensure a safe, sustainable future for generations to come. Please, don't rush to solutions. Give the process enough time for people to come together and make good decisions. After all, we will have to live with this solution for generations. A few short weeks will be forgotten.</p>				
9/1/23	<p>Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.</p>				

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the final draft of Plan: Charlestown. As an original and former member of the Plan's Advisory Group I have participated in more than 3 1/2 years of meetings and study. Though I no longer am a resident of Charlestown, I maintain a keen interest in the long term future of a community I have loved for over 40 years and where my grandchildren live.

My comments below include reflections on the modifications to the draft that the BPDA has already made based on community comments to date.

1. Bunker Hill Mall and the Original Peninsula: I am pleased that the BPDA has agreed to remove the Mall from the Plan's Zoning Study Area and keep it where it geographically sits in the Original Peninsula. However I continue to have concerns about what the zoning recommendations will be. A future process that involves the developer is a non-starter. The Plan should address it now rather than kicking it down the road. We have provided feedback already of what we think is appropriate for Main Street (50') as well as the Rutherford Ave. (70' or consistent with Gatehouse building) which serves as the gateway into Charlestown, and a maximum 2 FAR.

Also because of the way the BPDA is applying the residential density bonus, the entire parcel qualifies for the bump even though only the Rutherford Avenue side is within the 1000' of public transportation boundary. We're told that the bonus can't be applied to just a portion of the site because it's all one parcel. But in the original Urban Renewal Plan, the site was comprised of 3 parcels. Perhaps one of those parcels (C-1B) can be reestablished so that the density bonus can be applied to the targeted area only.

2. PDA's Everywhere: As we discussed at our 8/28 meeting with BPDA, we take issue with the zoning recommendation that all parcels within the Plan zoning area are eligible for PDA's. While I understand the BPDA's rationale- a PDA is the leverage needed to extract from proponents specific community benefits like the greenway and other roadway infrastructure the Plan proposes- it undermines the premise of the entire Plan and perpetuates the planning by parcel that the Plan was supposed to replace.

3. Open Space, Someday: Most of the Plan's open space recommendations (5 of 7) are listed as long term goals, as in 30 years. If the community has made abundantly clear that it needs soccer fields now, for example, it makes no sense to wait until 2050 for the redevelopment of BHCC to deliver them.

4. Transportation Infrastructure, Development Capacity and Public Safety: It appears from consultants' projections that the gateways in and out of Charlestown will be further compromised by their initial estimates for the area's development capacity. This is alarming given the community's long standing public safety concerns.

The Plan's response is to reduce these projections by 10% and hope for the best- i.e. that residents, workers and visitors will decide to give up their cars and use an idealized public transportation system or ride their bikes rather than sit in gridlock. If only. And it does nothing to address emergency vehicles' ability to navigate through the projected gridlock.

Given how much of the roadway's traffic is pass-through, these assumptions are naively optimistic. As this is a 30+ year plan, perhaps a better and more realistic response is to lower the allowable development square footage to current infrastructure capacity and reevaluate at a future date when and if these assumptions bear out.

Thank you again for this opportunity to voice my thoughts and concerns. Throughout this process I've appreciated the commitment and efforts of staff to listen to the community. I also recognize the challenge of doing so constructively while addressing the City's broader agenda. But we each have our role and it's imperative that we continue to speak out and push back because the stakes are so great.

<p>9/1/23</p>	<p>Dear Mayor Wu - I hope you are able to enjoy the end of summer with your family amidst your unrelenting schedule. It is unlikely you remember me, but we met several years ago when you still lived in the South End at Renee and Patrick's (they are dear friends).</p> <p>I am writing to register my significant disappointment with the rushed decisions and forced conclusion of Plan Charlestown by the city. While others may write about the specific deficiencies of recent unfathomable recommendations by city planners — such as inordinately tall building permissions, scant consideration of urban density and wilful ignorance of public services and transportation needs — my unhappiness has to do with the terrible process of community engagement that has been followed.</p> <p>I was thrilled when you campaigned on a mayoral platform that strove for community-driven planning over commercially-driven development. I campaigned vigorously for Plan Charlestown and voted happily for you to bring it to a successful end. Our community of Charlestown was bleeding from a hundred paper cuts of developer-driven variances and exceptions, and Plan Charlestown felt like the right planning vehicle to align future development with the interests of the neighborhood. Unfortunately that is not the case. Under the guise of speeding up an inherently slow process, in recent months the city agencies are clearly putting considerations like citywide housing capacity ahead of the much broader set of needs of this neighborhood.</p> <p>I want to be clear that I appreciate the city's efforts to overcome the disruption / slowdown caused by the pandemic with a steady flow of community Zoom calls and forums in recent months. However, while this shows an adherence to bureaucratic following of the letter of the law, it does not display any empirical evidence that the thousands of opinions and concerns voiced were ever incorporated — the spirit of the exercise itself. It feels like you are all patiently hearing us and waiting out a clock that you yourselves control, without actually listening to what we have to say. Comment periods for the community following drafts of the plan this summer (when so many are away or on vacation) are so brief as to be laughable and could not possibly gather nor incorporate the careful study and feedback that is demanded. Recommendations have appeared at a steady clip that bear no resemblance to the content and tone of the conversations that preceded them, and without explanation or rationale for why they were made. Can you show us how we got here? I fear broken recommendations are being built upon the foundations of earlier broken recommendations. With respect, show us your work.</p> <p>I myself run strategy and planning for a large local employer, and I am pained by the tactics being used by the city here. They seem geared towards the optics of community engagement and appeasement of commercial developer interests without the much harder work of incorporating input from multiple competing stakeholders. This should be the very essence of strategic planning. Having a series of meetings purporting to gather input from several factions, but railroading through preordained decisions that reject the majority of those inputs is not just a flawed planning process, but an untrustworthy one. It would not pass muster at my firm, and it should not fly here.</p> <p>Please do not break the faith the Charlestown community has placed carefully in your hands. Please show us the rationale behind the recommendations of Plan Charlestown and prove that they are not founded on flawed hypotheses, speculative data, and vested interests. Above all, do not conclude the process on an artificially sped-up timeline. It is particularly suspicious that Sep 28, the scheduled date for approval of Plan Charlestown by the BPDA Board, also happens to be when two major Charlestown developments (which are contingent on the plan's recommendations) are also up for approval. Please adhere to the integrity and original intention of the plan.</p>				
<p>9/1/23</p>	<p>As a 30-year resident of Charlestown, I'm reaching out to express my opposition to the most recent plan to support the City and Charlestown neighborhood's growth.</p> <p>I'm all for increasing housing, though am concerned about</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excessive increase in building heights that have the potential to ruin the historic nature of the community 2. The goal to reduce person vehicle use. That is simply impractical given lack of safe, reliable and accessible public transportation. 3. Plan to add 10+ million more square feet than a regional planning study that indicated the community could add 8 million. The current proposal is excessive. <p>I ask as a concerned resident, to please consider the needs of existing residents - those who have supported this community - before bowing to developer and unrealistic (and impractical) goals.</p>				

While I feel this letter will fall upon deaf ears, I must express my opinion as to why I oppose PLAN Charlestown. My first thought after viewing the online BPDA Mission statement which reads "to plan Boston's future while respecting its past" made me cringe. Respecting the past? Anyone who knows the history of the destruction of Charlestown by the BRA (now BPDA) knows there was no respect of our history or of any residents who were displaced. Mayor Wu's comments on the BPDA state over and over again that BPDA is about ensuring public land for public good focusing on Resilience, Affordability, and Equity? How? By respecting the past? No! By "updating and modernizing the zoning code" which is just another way of saying removing any limitations or restrictions that may be in the way of developers plans and scavenging any land that can be used to bring more revenue for the developer and the BPDA coffers - soon to be merged with the City Cooffers. The BPDA mission has never been about anything other than money, more money, and revenue. You cannot seem to understand the frustration of residents trying to preserve one square mile of history and homes that can NEVER be replicated with the BPDA and City's constant need to make payroll. The never ending years of planning meetings hoping to wear us down. The constant changes even after the meetings have ended and you think the plans were something you could live with. There is nothing in PLAN Charlestown about preserving our history, it is about the self-preservation of the BPDA/City. In my mind it is a blatant conflict of interest when - if you don't have a parcel to develop you don't get paid. If you look at past practices of the City planners, our viable storefronts were taken and city zoning laws allowed them to be changed to housing units. The heart of any town is its main street. Our town mall rents are so unaffordable its hard to keep tenants. (somebody gets to write that off) We top the city for the most affordable number of low income residential housing units and elderly units in Boston, yet we must still be bombarded with need for more housing, and towers of housing. Why? To overcrowd us and take away from our quality of life? The sheltering of the pandemic should prove to you that people do not do well in overcrowded cities. When stores close and you must shop local and there is nothing here and too many people it causes people to be depressed and angry. The plan to turn us into another Manhattan, (as Mayor Marty Walsh said) just creates more of what I call the "new urban blight" the same as every big city across this country. Nothing special or different just tons of steel and concrete towers and project housing created in the name of modern urban societal living. Not real homes - hotel like homes - if you've seen one you've seen them all. Boston is considered the cradle of liberty, Charlestown the birthplace of revolutionary freedom. HISTORY is what brings tourists here, not towering businesses and housing. Charlestown is a favorite pick for developers because it's safe and convenient unlike other areas across the city that could be developed but won't attract the same young professional execs that Boston needs for spending and tax purposes. Finally, Charlestown is not downtown, and the planners should stop trying to merge us with the city. We prefer to remain small and haven-like - away from the big city towers that loom above us. I for one am surprised that things like rising tides and water supplies do not scare away developers? Is it because once they build it and leave they don't care what happens to it? I am guessing this is the case, to take the money and run, leaving the land barons (BPDA/city) to collect on everything sold. Again - I know its all about money but I do oppose what you intend to do.

9/1/23

	<p>As a long time Charlestown resident I am writing to express my dismay regarding the Plan Charlestown process and the eating away at the height and zoning restrictions in order to facilitate overzealous development.</p> <p>I firmly oppose any increase in height limits. They allow for excess density and detract from the character of a wonderful neighborhood. High buildings also block light. Also, once one exception has been made it sets a precedent for other exemptions from zoning restrictions.</p> <p>I firmly oppose the significant increase in density. Charlestown has limited road access into Boston and Cambridge. The traffic is overwhelming. New dwellings and offices means additional cars. This is not only a problem for workers, but for our community's children who face onerous travel regimens getting to school.</p> <p>I object to a planning process that is flawed. Why is it that development has not been halted while the plan is being made? Why is it that the City is not following its own precedent process of creating a Master Plan? Why is it that the city is drafting the documents without representatives in the room discussing the height limits? This should be a collaborative process- Not Government officials publishing quasi-final documents without agreement from the local parties participation in the consensus parameters. I suggest that the document be turned over to Plan Charlestown to prepare the next iteration and then the city can respond.</p> <p>I vote. It is disheartening to see the candidate that won my ballot lead an administration that has abandoned my neighborhood. The interests of developers seem to outweigh those of the citizens who put you into office.</p> <p>It encourage you to step up and employ your authority to derail this development freight train that is being railroaded through this community. Just because there is a modicum of space available and there is a lot of money made from jamming as much into it as possible, does not mean that it is a good thing to do.</p> <p>If you would like to discuss this situation, I would be happy to meet with you. Let us schedule something at 8:30 AM or 4:30 pm in Charlestown and you can experience the traffic issues first-hand on the way over.</p>				
9/1/23	<p>I am very dismayed and disappointed in the Plan Charlestown that has been released for review recently. As a long time resident of Charlestown, voter, tax payer and owner of several properties in Charlestown, I have a keen interest in development in Charlestown, as do my adult children and husband.</p> <p>I welcome planned, sensible growth in Charlestown; it keeps the neighborhood vibrant. Despite the fact that many Charlestown residents, including me, have voiced concern about the amount and type of growth the BPDA is proposing, they seem deaf to our input. The developers and tradespeople, most of whom do not live or work in Charlestown currently, seem to have a much more significant platform. And, there appears to be very little interest in historic preservation; building more seems to be the only goal.</p> <p>The major issues with the plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Proposed building heights, especially in the Bunker Hill Mall area. These create a significant barrier to entering Charlestown and disregard the current character of the area. * Density- the number of new units planned and the increased in density is unrealistic given the constraints with getting in and out of the neighborhood, consistent challenges with the T, and traffic from Cambridge, Somerville, Everett, Medford, etc., coming into Charlestown and already contributing to extreme challenges with commuting. * Having the comment period restricted to a time when many residents are on vacation, getting kids settled into the school year, etc. This is disrespectful and uses the same fast track technique that the BPDA is using to push these developments thru. * Historic preservation- very little attention to this in the Plan. * Available support services- police, fire, ambulances, schools, etc. We heard that these would be evaluated as the population increases. What are the guarantees or tipping points to ensure that these services expand appropriately. <p>I have personally attended many of the planning meetings and some of what we see in the Plan are building heights that were increased only when the draft final plan was released.</p> <p>The Plan needs revision and further considered input from the residents of Charlestown, I remain very concerned about this Plan moving forward.</p>				

<p>9/1/23</p>	<p>My main comment regarding the Charlestown PLAN is that it lacks the details to address the growth in the area specifically related to parking and transportation. If the intent is to increase the square footage available in ctown for housing and commercial space, the PLAN needs to account for parking. Parking will be needed for the current residents, future residents, and any commercial customers visiting business establishments.</p> <p>Parking in Charlestown is already an issue for residents that live here. There are times when I park blocks away from my house. This is not ideal, but doable at this point in my life. However this problem of finding a space will become exacerbated if parking needs are not addressed. Furthermore, while reducing personal vehicle use is a worthwhile goal for climate change and the city of Boston, the reality is that residents buy and live in Charlestown because of its close proximity to 93 and how easy it is to get on the highway to get out of the city. This plan assumes residents are going to give up their cars- this will not happen. While residents may make better use of public transport if it is improved especially during the work week, residents will still own cars and will want to use them on the weekends, which means residents will need a space for parking. The city cannot assume as we move forward, Charlestown residents will cease using their cars. This means the PLAN must account for parking even if it means the PLAN contains resident only parking garages.</p> <p>Finally, I applaud the goal to increase transportation options, but the other reality is the orange line is ridiculously crowded and will only continue to be more crowded if the population increases. For Charlestown residents to utilize sullivan square t station and community college t station better, the city must make pedestrians safety priority. Walking from Charlestown to sullivan square t station is like taking your life in your own hands. The lighting is terrible, all the bike cones have been hit and no longer exist, the lanes and pedestrian crossing markings on the road are practically non existent, and the speed of cars in and around the circle is high. All of these factors make walking to sullivan square to take the subway a dangerous choice. This plan must account for the anticipated pedestrian traffic increase by making pedestrian friendly changes including an above ground bridge that could connect Charlestown to the subway station.</p> <p>As the city moves forward, it needs to consider the impact an increase and growth of population will have on both parking and transport. The plan must include solutions for residents to have parking and a safer way to walk to other transportation options.</p>				
	<p>Thank you for your public service and your consideration of comments.</p>				

<p>9/1/23</p>	<p>The Boston Planning and Redevelopment Authority [BPDA] has developed Plan Charlestown, one of many plans for districts across Boston. Plan Charlestown is thorough and comprehensive. BPDA is working with private developers and citizens to improve the environment of Charlestown.</p> <p>During past decades, Charlestown has “risen from the ashes”, fostered by BPDA restoration. This restoration created a framework for preservation, officially the responsibility of the Boston Landmarks Commission, but which required restoration be done first. Charlestown was unkempt, dilapidated, and torn apart by elevated railways and highways. Admirably, today, it is a mecca for tourists.</p> <p>Take a moment to review some facts, or not. In 1972, the Boston Redevelopment Authority resurrection in Charlestown was evident from the restoration of the Warren Tavern at No.105 Main Street, and later the building of condominiums by the “Thompson Green Association” at Nos.100-102 Main, the “Constitution Co-op” for the elderly at No. 42 Park Street (corner of Main), the “No. 47 Harvard Condominiums” (extending from the old Harvard Hill School down to Main Street), the “No.108 Main Street Condominium” (near St. John’s Chapel on Devens Street), the restoration of the “Timothy Thompson House” at No.119 Main, the “Round Corner House” at No.121 Main Street, the re-imagining of No. 84 Warren Avenue next to the Warren Tavern, the privately affordable “Crescent Condominiums” at Nos. 5 to 53 Main, and building the “Residences at Thompson Square Condominium” at No.1 Thompson Square (at the fork of Main Street and Warren Avenue). The ‘crown jewel’ is the park at City Square, with I-93 placed underground, a lawn and ‘Dolphin Fountain’, plaques of remembrance, and, most importantly, a Cenotaph honoring Sacrificed Soldiers and Homecoming Veterans who safeguarded America during World War II. Perhaps, this list of accomplishments is too long to digest, or not.</p> <p>Today BPDA is undertaking a comprehensive Plan Charlestown to bring unused and antiquated industrial lands of Charlestown into the residential fold to serve needs of the City and State. If done, this will bring people to Charlestown at an affordable cost. It may allow a younger generation to remain in Charlestown, rather than being driven away from their family land. Affordable housing also will be an opportunity for transformative diversity.</p> <p>Some Charlestown organizations deceptively demand preservation of escalating home prices. Some fearful activists advocate a regressive status quo. Sometimes puffery is used to suggest wide-spread political backing. Hopefully, the City, State, and District of Charlestown can find a way to stay the BPDA Plan Charlestown course, coming together to benefit current and future residents with planned urban development.</p>				
<p>8/31/23</p>	<p>I'm disappointed by both the magnitude of development in PLAN Charlestown and the way in which the BPDA has engaged the community. I'm particularly sad because there was a huge middle ground here that would have brought the community together - increasing housing supply while balancing the historic characteristics and community feel that makes Charlestown special.</p> <p>The last round of increased heights at the Bunker Hill Mall and short comment period are most recent, but this has been a charade from the outset - from the two base scenarios with outlandish 300+ tall heights, the hybrid scenario that was a combination of two initial scenarios the community rejected (instead of a new scenario grounded in the community input), and the addition of the bunker hill mall into scope in the late stages after all of the promises to protect the original peninsula. The BPDA had decided what it was going to do to Charlestown long ago, it just needed the window dressing from community input to tick boxes.</p> <p>The latest changes are indicative of a broader cultural problem within the department - the dismissal of community input when it does align with your planning aspirations.</p> <p>I understand that you're walking some of that back, but punting the Bunker Hill Mall down the road gives me no confidence that the BPDA won't show up in 3 years with plans of a developer in hands and be just as out of touch with the community. That parcel should not be carved out, it is part of the core with buildings on three sides from historic Charlestown.</p> <p>It is hard not draw comparisons to the approach to the Healm on Third - instead of engaging the community in a real discussion from the outset you attempted to rush it through without community input. In the end it put people's backs up and hurt the chances that much needed services like this get developed (and if they do, people will not be accepting).</p> <p>We deserve better from our elected officials and their appointees.</p>				

8/31/23	<p>Mayor Wu, We are writing to respond to PLAN Charlestown development proposals that would increase the height and density of Charlestown without regard to input from the community. I am asking for a 30-day extension to include a comment period after the next draft of the PLAN document as substantial changes must be made and we as a community will need time to review.</p> <p>This draft lacks meaningful long-term, comprehensive planning for neighborhood services required of City departments. Each section describes what the neighborhood has now, and makes recommendations for future planning initiatives as the population grows. There is no real planning for infrastructure improvements or the neighborhood services that we need NOW (example a second ambulance bay.) The recommendations suggest further planning at various intervals, with no trigger, and reliance on public oversight to "hold the city accountable." (Page 18, Neighborhood Needs).</p> <p>We in Charlestown welcome smart development. However, this plan has been developed and fast-tracked for approval and leaves too many critical public safety issues unanswered, endangering the essence of what makes Charlestown a great place to live for residents today, and those that will call Charlestown home in the future.</p> <p>Thank you for your assistance in this matter.</p>				
8/31/23	<p>I am writing to oppose the current draft plan for the future of Charlestown. The current draft contradicts counsel and guidance from the neighborhood, and will significantly diminish the experience of living in Charlestown, inclusive of overcrowding, limiting access and visibility of historic aspects of Charlestown, as well as the waterfront. Charlestown deserves a thoughtful, well considered plan that meaningfully seeks to preserve, grow and enhance the neighborhood, including its infrastructure and services, while keeping in mind the needs of those who currently live here in addition to planning for new residents.</p>				
8/31/23	<p>I was very disappointed to see that little of the community's concerns were listened to in the course of the planning process. I stand behind the Charlestown Preservation Society's concerns. We have a special place in Charlestown. Let's not ruin everything that makes it special. Too dense, too tall, insufficient infrastructure. It is all wrong, flies in the face of all previous studies and shows no reflection of the community concerns. You stand on the platform of making Boston more livable. This plan does not reflect that in any way. Still time for you and your team to correct this. Thank you,</p>				
8/31/23	<p>This letter is to draw your attention to the final draft of PLAN Charlestown. It is heavily weighted with intentions that are good for developers and bad for the neighborhood despite years of community effort to make the PLAN work for people who live here. We who have to live with the results of city planning deserve to participate in the plans and to have those plans honored. The latest version of PLAN Charlestown includes major alterations and additions that were made without BPDA consultation with Charlestown representation. Please put this PLAN on hold and require reliable cooperation between the BPDA and the residents of Charlestown.</p>				

8/29/23	<p>The residents of Charlestown oppose this PLAN Charlestown. It is unacceptable. Our concerns lie within the PLAN's inability to protect the historic character of our neighborhood, its use of "aspirational goals" rather than data-backed recommendations, the City of Boston's and the MBTA's inability to responsibly plan necessary infrastructure and services, and its disregard of previous regional planning processes.</p> <p>At the highest level, our concerns include:</p> <p>Adding 10+ million more square feet than a 2019 regional planning study used as a basis for planning mobility in the region.</p> <p>A 2019 Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study indicated that Charlestown could add eight million square feet, this plan greatly exceeds that.</p> <p>Doubling the existing building heights on Main Street (at the Bunker Hill Mall) from 35' (3-stories) to 70', 90' (8-stories) on Austin St and School St and 150' (14-stories) on Rutherford Ave.</p> <p>Previous drafts proposed 50' along Main Street and 90' on Rutherford, and the community clearly stated that the proposed heights were too tall for the abutting context of the historic neighborhood.</p> <p>Increasing the building heights between Medford Street and the Mystic River (below historic Doherty Park) from what is now 55' to 180'. (Taller than the historic Schrafft's tower)</p> <p>Previous drafts proposed a max building height of 50-120' (the scale of Charlestown's industrial waterfront.) The final draft raised the heights despite clear planning recommendations for 120' max and community concerns.</p> <p>The PLAN's use of aspirational goals to reduce personal vehicle use by 50 percent. That number is not based on data, planning or forecasting.</p> <p>The planning consultants have stated that even if this happens, traffic and gridlock will increase and back up into the neighborhood.</p> <p>The BPDA's lack of planning to support population growth.</p> <p>The PLAN spends 90+ pages summarizing what Charlestown has now, rather than outlining strategies to support the future, such as partnerships with the MBTA, Boston Public Schools and Boston Parks and Recreation. It states the need for support once the population grows, but does not plan for it.</p> <p>Inconsistent recommendations for approval of proposed developments that ignore the goals and recommendations for preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings.</p> <p>The 40 Roland Street project proposes to demolish two historic buildings: 128 Cambridge Street and 40 Roland Street. The BPDA is moving them forward for board approval despite clear PLAN recommendations for preservation and reuse.</p> <p>1-2 Thompson Square addition was recommended for approval despite the project's requirements to demolish portions of the historic mansard roofline.</p> <p>The 10 Thompson Square project was recommended for approval with insufficient off-street parking required of buildings with over 6 units.</p> <p>The residents of Charlestown have lost faith in the planning process and our comments have been ignored. Charlestown deserves a thoughtful, well considered plan that meaningfully seeks to preserve, grow and enhance the neighborhood, its infrastructure and services responsibly. This draft is not that plan.</p>				
8/29/23	<p>Please do not approve this plan. It has been forced on us by the BPDA with no open public meetings. Everything has been scheduled on ZOOM where they control the meetings and have been able to block public dissent. Apartments at the Austin St lots will be torn down soon after they are built due to excessive noise and pollution. This is a waste of taxpayer money and a crime against the expected tenants,</p>				

<p>8/29/23</p>	<p>We are writing to you in response to an email that we received from the Charlestown Preservation Society regarding the changes to PLAN Charlestown. We are both strongly opposed to the most recent version of this plan.</p> <p>Donna and I have lived in Charlestown for 10 years and our daughter and family for 15 years. We moved here for the sense of community, diversity, history, small locally-owned businesses, and access to the greater Boston area.</p> <p>By allowing building square footage to increase by 25%, allowing building heights to double and triple, allowing the demolition of historic buildings, and failure to plan for the necessary infrastructure does nothing for the community. It will only create more traffic and congestion (try to get through Sullivan Square anytime during the day), increase parking woes, reduce sunlight, change the historic character of the area, diminish views, and reduce the livability of the area for all residents.</p> <p>In my businesses, aspirational goals were vital as part of the initial conceptual process, brainstorming and gathering varied ideas. From there we developed clear plans blending our business needs with the existing building and zoning codes as well as the needs of the greater community. When "aspirational goals" are used in the later stages of planning, unplanned and unwanted outcomes result. This essentially gives the developers permission to do whatever they envision, with no consideration to the larger community. The only goals that will prevail are those of the developers. They will be the only beneficiaries.</p> <p>Having been involved in both distribution and commercial real estate throughout a lengthy career, we do understand business and business owners' need and desire to profit. Giving developers and businesses approvals that exceed the original plans and stretch or exceed the zoning codes only enriches the developers. It does nothing for Charlestown as a community and historic area, nothing for the residents, and nothing for the livability of the area.</p> <p>We both ask that you stop this new version and return to the original plans. Reduce the square footage, reduce the building heights, preserve the historic building, and respect our community.</p>				
<p>8/29/23</p>	<p>As a 25+ year resident of Charlestown I would like to express my opposition to the proposed PLAN CHARLESTOWN.</p> <p>The proposal includes over 10 million additional square feet of building space over the 2019 regional plan. How was this significant increase added?</p> <p>The new buildings height has also been increased significantly. The original proposal limited new buildings around the Bunker Hill mall to 3 stories and 5 stories on Austin St. and Rutherford Ave. Also, the Medford St. plans show building heights over 120' which is more than planning recommendations. How were these increases justified?</p> <p>Another aspect of the plan is a personal vehicle reduction of 50%. A significant reduction of this magnitude is not realistic. Again, what study or data supports this reduction.</p> <p>Charlestown is one square mile. We cannot support population growth as significant as this plan proposes. The roads in and out consist of only 3. Two are single lane and no speed limit is over 30 MPH.</p> <p>The BPDA has issued inconsistent recommendations for approval of proposed developments that ignore the preservation of historic buildings. Examples include:</p> <p>The 40 Roland Street project proposes to demolish two historic buildings: 128 Cambridge Street and 40 Roland Street. The BPDA is moving them forward for board approval despite clear PLAN recommendations for preservation and reuse. 1-2 Thompson Square addition was recommended for approval despite the project's requirements to demolish portions of the historic mansard roof line. The 10 Thompson Square project was recommended for approval with insufficient off-street parking required of buildings with over 6 units.</p>				

<p>8/28/23</p>	<p>A brief review of Charlestown's experience with Boston's city planners:</p> <p>In the 1960s, The BRA planned to tear down much of Charlestown in the name of urban renewal. Many houses were demolished but the town rose up and stopped this process. As a result, one of the most attractive and sought-after neighborhoods in Boston was preserved.</p> <p>In the early 1970s, various design proposals for the shopping center in a part of Charlestown that was torn down were submitted to the neighborhood for a vote. A plan with rooflines reflecting houses in Charlestown won the vote but a different design with no architectural relationship to the town was chosen, with shops that open onto a parking lot, turning their backs to Main Street.</p> <p>In the late 1980s the BRA approved a Thompson Square plan for townhouses on Main and Warren Streets, and reconstruction of the liquor store at the corner. The townhouses were built, and at a town meeting the BRA representative clearly stated that there would be no certificate of occupancy for the townhouses until the plan was completed at the liquor store property. Shortly afterward, the townhouses were occupied and the rest of the plan has still not been done.</p> <p>Now, in 2023, Charlestown had reason to hope that this kind of thing would never happen again, however.....</p> <p>This month the final draft of Plan: Charlestown was released. In spite of the community's concern that previous drafts permitted higher building heights than appropriate, the building heights on Main Street, Austin Street, School Street, Rutherford Avenue and other areas were increased dramatically beyond the earlier proposal</p> <p>The 2019 Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study indicated that Charlestown could add 8,000,000 ft.² but this plan adds more than 10,000,000 ft.² without planning for increased population growth.</p> <p>We urge that the BPDA step back and reconsider the plan and begin to take the concerns of the people who live here seriously.</p>				
<p>8/27/23</p>	<p>I am hopeful that you will work to revise the current BPDA intentions for increasing the population, density, and character of Charlestown.</p> <p>Please consider the following: Charlestown is currently one to the densest neighborhoods in Boston. Increasing the population by 50% does little to benefit Boston or the neighborhood. There is literally little space for more residents (or their automobiles). Public transportation options are limited to only two bus lines and one T stop that is not convenient for most residents.</p> <p>In addition, Charlestown already has the highest proportion of public housing of any of the neighborhoods in Boston. I am very much in favor of mixed income communities (one of the reasons I love in Charlestown), but expecting a large, dense, mixed income housing development to subsidize its low-income renters is simply not realistic.</p> <p>The BPDA plan must be scaled back in terms of increasing the number of residents in Charlestown. The number of residents has increased substantially in the past decade; increasing that even more, as proposed, is unrealistic. Doing so invites social and economic disfunction. Charlestown's historic character and its tourist attractions contribute to Boston should be used to benefit Boston, not diminished by overcrowding and lack of common (public) resources. In addition, expanding the economic base, not its population, would further strengthen Charlestown's contribution to the City of Boston.</p>				

8/26/23	<p>As long standing members of the Charlestown community we would like to inform you of the many concerns we have with the PLAN Charlestown as presented by the Boston Planning and Development Authority.</p> <p>We oppose this PLAN for the following reasons:</p> <p>Although it contains many positive ideas for the creation of affordable housing, open space and new development the PLAN as presented contains new concepts that contradict its original goals and intention to positively shape the future of our neighborhood. It totally disregards the many comments presented by the Charlestown Community around the protection of historic Charlestown, and discounts the need for supportive infrastructure and services to underpin growth. Growth without infrastructure is unsustainable. The development should be driven by the capacity of access points. Access to Charlestown is permanently limited by the three narrow bridges that are the main entry and exit points in and out of Charlestown.</p> <p>Our other important concerns lie within the PLAN's inability to protect the historic character of our neighborhood, its use of "aspirational goals" rather than data-backed recommendations, the City of Boston's and the MBTA's inability to responsibly plan necessary infrastructure and services, and its disregard of previous regional planning processes.</p> <p>Our efforts during the over 40 years in Charlestown has always been the protection of its historic character, green space and architecture. We believe the BPDA's PLAN: Charlestown does NOT take this into serious consideration.</p> <p>Please reference the Charlestown Preservation Society's letter on this subject for particulars as we agree with their comments fully. The BPDA's draft is not the plan we all hoped for. We ask that you, the Mayor, join us in opposing PLAN: Charlestown as it is currently constituted.</p> <p>The BPDA is closing out the PLAN: Charlestown process prematurely in order to approve development projects. The BPDA as an Authority has always had a built in conflict of interest between development revenue and the community best in thoughtful planning. This is an issue that was addressed when you ran for Mayor. We understand your office is working on changing the structure of the BPDA but, this doesn't help us NOW. This appears to be a last ditch effort by the BPDA to gain revenue for its self on the back of the people of Charlestown.</p> <p>We have lost faith in the process and our comments have been ignored. Charlestown deserves a thoughtful, well considered plan that meaningfully seeks to preserve, grow and enhance the neighborhood, its infrastructure and services responsibly.</p>				
8/25/23	<p>Hello Mr. Ruggiero. I am writing to you to oppose the Charlestown Plan. I'm in disagreement with the heights of all new building I believe they should not be higher 55' or over 2 stories on Medford st. Below Doherty Park we have little green space and now you are taking away air space. We are overcrowded as it stands now there is no parking and we can not get out or in to town at different times. We can't get emergency services in during rush hours. The North End has a problem with flooding with all the new construction and high building we are a small neighborhood stop the greed. We are not the City of Boston proper. We do not need to be packed in , It's all too much for one square mile build in west Roxbury or Jamaica Plain we they have room leave us out of the building zone, so we can breath or get medical help in time. I appreciate you attention to this matter.</p>				
8/25/23	<p>There are so many things wrong with this proposal. Why don't we get the infrastructure in place prior to all of the development? Why should we, who are currently living here, suffer and wait years for transportation help? Why has everything been altered for more floors in the buildings than were originally proposed? How much of this housing is "affordable" and is there a real definition of what affordable really is? Affordable for whom?</p> <p>Again, propose transportation, and fund it prior to allowing developers to build.</p>				

<p>8/25/23</p>	<p>As a 20 year resident and homeowner in Charlestown, it is with great disappointment and frustration that I write to ask that your Administration OPPOSE the recently released final draft of PLAN:Charlestown. The latest version of the PLAN ignores the historic character of the Charlestown neighborhood. It also ignores the hard work, time, effort and thoughtful comments of so many residents of Charlestown who weighed in over this planning process. The latest version of the PLAN ignores facts, projections and data for "aspirational" goals especially with respect to traffic, parking and cars. This new version of PLAN:Charlestown will not be good for the neighborhood and will drive many of the residents, like me, who love Charlestown to consider moving away.</p> <p>I am a daily public transportation commuter into downtown Boston. I walk or take the 93 bus. The 93 bus runs sporadically at best. The bus is unreliable to the point that it is often more practical and quicker to drive into downtown Boston and pay to park than it is to wait for a bus that runs late or does not show up. I have the luxury of turning to my car if I need to do so, many of my neighbors who rely on the 92 (which might be discontinued) or 93 buses do not have that luxury. The population growth that will result if PLAN:Charlestown is adopted cannot be supported by the public transportation options offered by the Commonwealth of MA now or in the foreseeable future. It is naïve at best to think or believe that young families and residents of Charlestown will reduce their use of personal vehicles by 50 percent. Data show that the number of vehicles registered in Charlestown has increased exponentially in recent years. Families need cars and families with the means to live in Charlestown will have cars until it is too unpleasant or difficult to find parking spots. Then they will leave.</p> <p>The new PLAN proposes increasing building heights in parts of the Bunker Hill Mall area and along parts of Medford Street to heights that are not supported by the neighborhood and go even further and higher than previous proposals that neighbors strongly opposed. The proposed heights are not consistent with the historic nature of the neighborhood</p> <p>It also seems that the BPDA is rushing to close-out this review process prematurely and rushing the process during summer vacation weeks when people are away and not focused on BPDA activity. After years of conversations, the BPDA schedule calls for comments due right after Labor Day on September 6, followed by a meeting on September 11 and approval by September 16. This timeline does not reflect the commitment to openness and transparency so often espoused and embraced by the Wu Administration.</p> <p>Please delay the comment period and please reconsider and scale back on the magnitude of pro-development changes the PLAN:Charlestown proposes for the historic, residential neighborhood of Charlestown.</p>				
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I hope this email finds you well. I am a proud resident of Charlestown and am writing to you today regarding the OUR plan Charlestown initiative. I purchased a home in Charlestown in 2021 after living in the Back Bay, South End, Seaport, and the West End over the last 10+ years. Throughout my life, I've also lived in four other states and various countries around the world. Charlestown is the most community-oriented neighborhood that I've ever called home. I feel lucky every day to live in Charlestown and am deeply concerned about the impact that these plans will have on this remarkable neighborhood. I firmly oppose the current plan for our neighborhood (PLAN: Charlestown).

Importantly, I am an advocate of creating affordable house and open space and I, like many others in our community, stand ready to help solve these important community needs. However, the current version of the PLAN contains new concepts that contradict its original goals and intention to positively shape the future of Charlestown. At the highest level, my concerns include:

Adding 10+ million more square feet than a 2019 regional planning study used as a basis for planning mobility in the region.

A 2019 Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study indicated that Charlestown could add eight million square feet, this plan greatly exceeds that.

Doubling the existing building heights on Main Street (at the Bunker Hill Mall) from 35' (3-stories) to 70', 90' (8-stories) on Austin St and School St and 150' (14-stories) on Rutherford Ave.

Previous drafts proposed 50' along Main Street and 90' on Rutherford, and the community clearly stated that the proposed heights were too tall for the abutting context of the historic neighborhood.

Increasing the building heights between Medford Street and the Mystic River (below historic Doherty Park) from what is now 55' to 180'. (Taller than the historic Schrafft's tower)

Previous drafts proposed a max building height of 50-120' (the scale of Charlestown's industrial waterfront.) The final draft raised the heights despite clear planning recommendations for 120' max and community concerns.

The PLAN's use of aspirational goals to reduce personal vehicle use by 50 percent. That number is not based on data, planning or forecasting.

The planning consultants have stated that even if this happens, traffic and gridlock will increase and back up into the neighborhood.

The BPDA's lack of planning to support population growth.

The PLAN spends 90+ pages summarizing what Charlestown has now, rather than outlining strategies to support the future, such as partnerships with the MBTA, Boston Public Schools and Boston Parks and Recreation. It states the need for support once the population grows, but does not plan for it.

Inconsistent recommendations for approval of proposed developments that ignore the goals and recommendations for preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings.

The 40 Roland Street project proposes to demolish two historic buildings: 128 Cambridge Street and 40 Roland Street. The BPDA is moving them forward for board approval despite clear PLAN recommendations for preservation and reuse.

1-2 Thompson Square addition was recommended for approval despite the project's requirements to demolish portions of the historic mansard roofline.

The 10 Thompson Square project was recommended for approval with insufficient off-street parking required of buildings with over 6 units.

I recognize you have a difficult problem to solve and are exploring every option. The PLAN: Charlestown as it stands is not the solution. The Charlestown community remains ready and willing to partner with you, as we have from the beginning of this process. Our comments to date have been ignored. Charlestown deserves a thoughtful, well considered plan that meaningfully seeks to preserve, grow and enhance the neighborhood, its infrastructure, and services responsibly. Please oppose the PLAN: Charlestown in September and protect our future.

Last evening the Charlestown Preservation Society (CPS) issued an email entitled "URGENT: Oppose PLAN: Charlestown". It was sent to the CPS public address list, with a 3-paragraph introduction:

"As many of you know, over the last several years, the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) has been developing a comprehensive planning initiative to shape the future of our neighborhood: PLAN Charlestown. The Charlestown Preservation Society (CPS) has supported the process and goals of the PLAN from the beginning. The release of the final draft is now live, and with a heavy heart, we are asking you to oppose the current plan.

The document is an impressive body of work with many strong ideas for the creation of affordable housing, open space and new development. We are proud to have supported and advocated for these very important needs in the community, however, the PLAN contains new concepts that contradict its original goals and intention to positively shape the future of our neighborhood, it disregards the many comments CPS and others have submitted around the protection of historic Charlestown, and discounts the need for supportive infrastructure and services to underpin growth.

Our concerns lie within the PLAN's inability to protect the historic character of our neighborhood, its use of "aspirational goals" rather than data-backed recommendations, the City of Boston's and the MBTA's inability to responsibly plan necessary infrastructure and services, and its disregard of previous regional planning processes."

These 3 introductory paragraphs are self-conflicting. The email then goes to state "At the highest level, our concerns include... [6 items]". These 6 "highest-level concerns" appear superficial and conflated. My purpose here is to comment on these CPS "highest level" thoughts.

"Highest level" item 1:

"Adding 10+ million more square feet than a 2019 regional planning study used as a basis for planning mobility in the region. A 2019 Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study indicated that Charlestown could add eight million square feet, this plan greatly exceeds that."

Comment on Item 1: 8M sqft is 80% of 10M sqft — not very different. Since 2019, regional planning for mobility has been changed by the pandemic and recent weather concerns.

"Highest level" item 2:

"Doubling the existing building heights on Main Street (at the Bunker Hill Mall) from 35' (3-stories) to 70', 90' (8-stories) on Austin St and

School St and 150' (14-stories) on Rutherford Ave. Previous drafts proposed 50' along Main Street and 90' on Rutherford, and the community clearly stated that the proposed heights were too tall for the abutting context of the historic neighborhood."

Comment on Item 2: This represents a small portion of the Bunker Hill Mall on Rutherford Ave where other tall nearby structures already exist, including the

8/23/23	<p>A resident of Charlestown for 13 years, I am very disappointed that resident needs, wants, and concerns were ignored in the plan. I OPPOSE Plan Charlestown as proposed. My concerns:</p> <p>Doubling the existing building heights on Main Street (at the Bunker Hill Mall) from 35' (3-stories) to 70', 90' (8-stories) on Austin St and School St and 150' (14-stories) on Rutherford Ave.</p> <p>This is the main entrance to historic Charlestown, How modern, massive and unattractive</p> <p>The PLAN's use of aspirational goals to reduce personal vehicle use by 50 percent. That number is not based on data, planning or forecasting.</p> <p>Traffic and gridlock exist today, who wants to live here when the traffic condition is worse?!</p> <p>Adding 10+ million more square feet than a 2019 regional planning study used as a basis for planning mobility in the region</p> <p>Increasing the building heights between Medford Street and the Mystic River (below historic Doherty Park) from what is now 55' to 180'. (Taller than the historic Schrafft's tower)</p> <p>The BPDA's lack of planning to support population growth.</p> <p>The PLAN spends 90+ pages summarizing what Charlestown has now, rather than outlining strategies to support the future, such as partnerships with the MBTA, Boston Public Schools and Boston Parks and Recreation. It states the need for support once the population grows, but does not plan for it.</p> <p>Inconsistent recommendations for approval of proposed developments that ignore the goals and recommendations for preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings.</p> <p>1-2 Thompson Square addition was recommended for approval despite the project's requirements to demolish portions of the historic mansard roofline.</p> <p>The 10 Thompson Square project was recommended for approval with insufficient off-street parking required of buildings with over 6 units.</p>				
8/24/23	<p>I was involved in this initiative when it began approximately four years ago, but Covid and the expansion of my family resulted in my stepping away from an active role. I'm disappointed to learn about the outcome and hope that this is merely a bump in the road and not a final decision. My wife, Kate, and our 17-month old son, Teddy, believe we have a long term future in Charlestown. From discussions with other families with children Teddy's age, we know we are not alone.</p> <p>I hope you will consider reopening the planning process and encouraging others with whom you work to adopt a similar stance. We strongly oppose the current plan.</p>				

<p>8/23/23</p>	<p>I am a longtime resident of Charlestown- since 1987. I OPPOSE the suggested plan for Charlestown - biggest concerns are listed below. It is obvious that we residents have not been heard and the Boston government and developers are just jamming their agenda into our community. This is unfair and terrible for our community. It will destroy our area! Beverly Gottlieb - registered voter - who has never missed an election since legally able to vote!</p> <p>Please see below</p> <p>Adding 10+ million more square feet than a 2019 regional planning study used as a basis for planning mobility in the region. A 2019 Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study indicated that Charlestown could add eight million square feet, this plan greatly exceeds that. Doubling the existing building heights on Main Street (at the Bunker Hill Mall) from 35' (3-stories) to 70', 90' (8-stories) on Austin St and School St and 150' (14-stories) on Rutherford Ave. Previous drafts proposed 50' along Main Street and 90' on Rutherford, and the community clearly stated that the proposed heights were too tall for the abutting context of the historic neighborhood. Increasing the building heights between Medford Street and the Mystic River (below historic Doherty Park) from what is now 55' to 180'. (Taller than the historic Schrafft's tower) Previous drafts proposed a max building height of 50-120' (the scale of Charlestown's industrial waterfront.) The final draft raised the heights despite clear planning recommendations for 120' max and community concerns. The PLAN's use of aspirational goals to reduce personal vehicle use by 50 percent. That number is not based on data, planning or forecasting. The planning consultants have stated that even if this happens, traffic and gridlock will increase and back up into the neighborhood. The BPDA's lack of planning to support population growth. The PLAN spends 90+ pages summarizing what Charlestown has now, rather than outlining strategies to support the future, such as partnerships with the MBTA, Boston Public Schools and Boston Parks and Recreation. It states the need for support once the population grows, but does not plan for it. Inconsistent recommendations for approval of proposed developments that ignore the goals and recommendations for preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings. The 40 Roland Street project proposes to demolish two historic buildings: 128 Cambridge Street and 40 Roland Street. The BPDA is moving them forward for board approval despite clear PLAN recommendations for preservation and reuse. 1-2 Thompson Square addition was recommended for approval despite the project's requirements to demolish portions of the historic mansard roofline. The 10 Thompson Square project was recommended for approval with insufficient off-street parking required of buildings with over 6 units.</p>				
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8/23/23	<p>I am writing you as a 23 year resident of Charlestown greatly concerned about the recently revealed development plan.</p> <p>When my wife and I moved to Boston in November 2000 we spent months looking throughout the neighborhoods of the city before falling in love with the gaslit streets and Monument-dominated skyline of Charlestown. After renting for awhile, we purchased a two-family in 2002 and once our children were older we converted our home to a single family. Over the years we went from being the newcomer "Toonies" to being the old timers with grown college and high school aged kids and with our family woven into the quilt that is our small town within Boston.</p> <p>We've spent a lot of time doing the research on our home. As someone who grew up in Ohio it's amazing to me that I live in a home that is literally older than the towns and cities I grew up in and just a few years younger than the entire state! Our home - 112 High Street - was built by an escaped slave who went on to be a successful brewer (Samuel Fowler) and his wife Bathsheba who was a prominent abolitionist in Boston in the mid 1800s. Nearly every home has a similar story to discover and Charlestown is one of the last remaining neighborhoods in Boston where you can SEE the history of our great city.</p> <p>The Seaport, West End, Fenway area have all seen massive development and the past has been erased...and your decisions are going to have the same thing happen here in Charlestown if this level of development is allowed to go forward.</p> <p>Recently I took the ferry from the Aquarium and overheard tourists talking about how the view of Charlestown must have been nearly the same 100 years ago as the Monument stood tall and unobstructed and the brownstone and wood houses dotted Breeds and Bunker hills. Looking back the North Church similarly dominated the North End skyline. Those views ARE Boston and preserving them should be a sacred vow of our city.</p> <p>Don't get me wrong, there are parts of Charlestown that are ripe for development along 93 and on the Mystic, but the core of the town along Main and Bunker Hill streets should be kept as close to their current heights and usage as possible. Getting in and out of the Town is already a challenge at certain times of the day and I fear that the kind of massive development this plan is allowing is going to create massive problems here.</p> <p>Please reconsider this bad decision for Charlestown. You're going to destroy something that cannot be brought back and take something away from the city of Boston forever.</p>				
8/22/23	<p>I'm writing to oppose the proposed plan for Charlestown. These are not the plans we as a neighborhood gave our feedback on. These proposals are too big for a historical neighborhood. We don't have the infrastructure to support them. Please go back and revisit these with feedback from our community. This is completely unfair to us. I pay a pretty penny to live and work here in Charlestown and have loved this place for the last 25 years. This is forcing me to reconsider living in Boston. Please consider listening to this community as we are concerned this is going to look as ridiculous as the Seaport.</p>				
8/23/23	<p>This is not good for Charlestown or the people who live here.</p>				
8/22/23	<p>Charlestown residents have been lied to and misled by BPDA officials on numerous occasions. "No new projects or zoning changes will be approved until Rutherford Ave and Sullivan Square are figured out" and "not allowing the height increase at 425 Medford Street constitutes a taking under MA property law and would open up the City to a lawsuit" are just two examples of such lies. As City Officials and employees, you have a duty to be honest and not mislead the public. We relied on your words and to our detriment you put forth a Plan that an overwhelming majority of people in Charlestown oppose. The only people who are in favor of these zoning height and density changes are out of town developers or people who are in the pockets of these developers.</p> <p>Where is the Zoning Commission? Where are our City lawyers? Who is looking out for the best interests of the residents?</p> <p>You should do better! This is not just a Charlestown issue! Citywide, neighborhoods are being changed against the wishes of the people who live there!</p>				

8/22/23	<p>I have recently been informed that BPDA is closing out the PLAN: Charlestown process prematurely in order to approve development projects. I am writing to voice my disapproval and ask that a sensible plan in line with the historic architecture of Charlestown be considered. The PLAN includes demolishing historic buildings, adding 10+ million more square feet than the past regional planning study, building heights out of line with existing architecture, and an overall lack of planning of supportive infrastructure to support the people AND the parking situation here.</p>				
8/24/23	<p>I oppose the PLAN Charlestown draft based for the following reasons: Adding 10+ million more square feet than a 2019 regional planning study used as a basis for planning mobility in the region. A 2019 Lower Mystic Regional Planning Study indicated that Charlestown could add eight million square feet, this plan greatly exceeds that. Doubling the existing building heights on Main Street (at the Bunker Hill Mall) from 35' (3-stories) to 70', 90' (8-stories) on Austin St and School St and 150' (14-stories) on Rutherford Ave. Previous drafts proposed 50' along Main Street and 90' on Rutherford, and the community clearly stated that the proposed heights were too tall for the abutting context of the historic neighborhood. Increasing the building heights between Medford Street and the Mystic River (below historic Doherty Park) from what is now 55' to 180'. (Taller than the historic Schrafft's tower) Previous drafts proposed a max building height of 50-120' (the scale of Charlestown's industrial waterfront.) The final draft raised the heights despite clear planning recommendations for 120' max and community concerns. The PLAN's use of aspirational goals to reduce personal vehicle use by 50 percent. That number is not based on data, planning or forecasting. The planning consultants have stated that even if this happens, traffic and gridlock will increase and back up into the neighborhood. The BPDA's lack of planning to support population growth. The PLAN spends 90+ pages summarizing what Charlestown has now, rather than outlining strategies to support the future, such as partnerships with the MBTA, Boston Public Schools and Boston Parks and Recreation. It states the need for support once the population grows, but does not plan for it. Inconsistent recommendations for approval of proposed developments that ignore the goals and recommendations for preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings. The 40 Roland Street project proposes to demolish two historic buildings: 128 Cambridge Street and 40 Roland Street. The BPDA is moving them forward for board approval despite clear PLAN recommendations for preservation and reuse. 1-2 Thompson Square addition was recommended for approval despite the project's requirements to demolish portions of the historic mansard roofline. The 10 Thompson Square project was recommended for approval with insufficient off-street parking required of buildings with over 6 units.</p> <p>Charlestown deserves a thoughtful, well considered plan that meaningfully seeks to preserve, grow and enhance the neighborhood, its infrastructure and services responsibly. This draft is not that plan.</p>				
8/22/23	<p>In a recent email to members, the Charlestown Preservation Society urged them -- us, as we're members -- to oppose this plan. After carefully reviewing their arguments, for and against, we concur. This, to be straightforward, is a mess: especially the ignoring of inputs from the CPS; and most of all, the reliance on "aspirational goals" rather than actual data. "Aspirational goals" is an empty term, allowing anyone to advocate for anything, no matter how silly, without needing to have any evidence. You can have your "aspirational goals" and I can have mine, and there's no basis for judging which is the stronger argument; instead, it's just a matter of rhetorical fashion and gross political power. Shame on the City of Boston and the MBTA for coming to such a sad outcome in this exercise!</p> <p>I must say we supported Anne Kelleher, many years ago now, when she began circulating petitions in support of developing this PLAN, although I remember saying to her at the time that this had a very good chance of getting co-opted by the most foolish and destructive of our bureaucrats and politicians. Sadly, it looks like that's what's happened, at least to this point.</p> <p>Although we rarely write emails to our political representatives, in this case we felt we should, given the importance of the matter. We urge you to oppose this plan, and please, prevent it from passing in its present form.</p>				
8/22/23	<p>I am a 23 resident of Charlestown with three children and I oppose PLAN Charlestown for all of the reasons stated by the Charlestown Preservation Society and others for the past several years. The BPDA has sadly mismanaged this process and shown a complete lack of attention to the needs of the actual residents here. We want a true master plan for the neighborhood and not the piecemeal overdevelopment pushed by the BPDA and its representatives at its empty community meetings.</p> <p>This will be a major -- if not the top issue for residents -- in the next election.</p>				

8/22/23	<p>I write to you as a deeply concerned resident of Charlestown, alarmed by the current draft of PLAN: Charlestown. While recognizing the initiative's intentions, I find that the recent changes contradict both the community's values and our city's rich heritage.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive Building Expansion: The proposal to add over 10 million more square feet, greatly exceeding regional planning recommendations, threatens to create unbearable traffic congestion, especially on Austin Street, where backups are already a daily concern. Height Increases and Historic Preservation: The doubling of existing building heights on Main Street, Austin Street, School Street, and Rutherford Ave is incompatible with our historic neighborhood. These changes would dwarf landmarks like the Phipps Burying Ground and diminish the prominence of the Battle of Bunker Hill Monument. Community Consultation: Despite numerous inflection points where opposition to tall buildings was clear, the final draft disregards these community inputs, reflecting an alarming disconnect with residents. Disregard for Charlestown's Unique Character: The charm and quaintness of Charlestown are a treasure. Disrespecting these qualities repeats historical planning mistakes, akin to Urban Renewal, eroding the very attributes that make our neighborhood special. Aspirational Goals Without Planning: The goal to reduce personal vehicle use by 50 percent without data-backed planning may lead to increased gridlock, worsening our existing traffic issues. Lack of Support for Growth: The PLAN lacks strategies to support future population growth, such as partnerships with the MBTA, Boston Public Schools, and Boston Parks and Recreation, leading to potential strain on essential services. Inconsistent Recommendations and Preservation: Proposed developments like the 40 Roland Street and 10 Thompson Square projects ignore clear recommendations for preservation, threatening our historic buildings. Recommendations for Consideration: I believe that new buildings should be of the same scale as existing ones with comparable use. Thoughtful planning that respects Charlestown's historic fabric is essential. <p>I implore you to reconsider the proposal for PLAN: Charlestown with these multifaceted concerns in mind. The stakes are high, and only careful and considerate planning can preserve the integrity of our beloved community.</p> <p>Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I look forward to the assurance of action to address these pressing issues.</p>				
8/22/23	<p>I just received notice of this "final" draft closeout meeting with its huge increase in BPDA-allowed building heights, without it calling any attention to the huge changes of allowed building heights from those discussed previously between the City of Boston and the Charlestown neighborhood that it proposes which would drastically alter the character and the quality of life in our historic town center, Boston's original settlement area.</p> <p>This last-minute, unsignalled change in what Charlestown has worked on, in good faith, with City authorities for years now (PLAN:Charlestown), to articulate and record agreements on future development in Charlestown CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO PROCEED in this form.</p> <p>It, CANNOT BE CONSTRUED TO CONVEY THE AGREED-ON WILL, OR VISION OF CHARLESTOWN FOR ITS FUTURE. THIS CALLS INTO QUESTION THE ABILITY OF THE B.P.D.A., OR THE CITY OF BOSTON as a whole, to communicate honestly with, or work effectively with, this one of its historic neighborhoods.</p>				

8/22/23	<p>I am writing to inform you of my extreme disappointment in you and the city of Boston.</p> <p>The "new" PLAN: Charlestown proposal (which has undergone years of study) is deplorable. It is far too aggressive and does NOT take into consideration the years of actual planning that occurred or the feedback received.</p> <p>This is a greedy takeover by you and the BPDA which does not reflect the needs and desires of the neighborhood or the city. Building heights are out of control, density is far too great, open space is lacking, traffic patterns are extreme and overall this does NOT work for Charlestown. We must revise this. Facts are truth and what you are trying to quickly push through is for your own personal gain, not for the city of Boston or the neighborhood of Charlestown.</p> <p>Shame on you, Mayor Wu, and the city too.</p>				
8/22/23	<p>Thanks for writing this long email back. All good words, but they do not change the actual actions of the BPDA. This entire process was disingenuous. This was a failure in civic engagement and indicates a cultural problem within the BPDA. Your note below is indicative of that problem. Our public agencies should do better.</p> <p>You certainly spent a lot of time talking to the community. You took many suggestions around the margin like people wanting fields in the greenspace and shuttles, and you dressed PLAN Charlestown in them. The core of your proposal though dismisses the public input. As even your own survey results make clear, the community overwhelmingly said this was too much density, too tall, particularly in the core peninsula. The BPDA has ignored that (yes per your note below it wasn't universal, but it is overwhelming in the survey results and in every public meeting).</p> <p>The August comment period and last minute changes to the Bunker Hill Mall are a symptom of that culture - dismissing the public when it doesn't align with your top down vision.</p> <p>You wasted an inordinate amount of the community's time. This would have been a more transparent and respectful process if you were honest from the outset - the BPDA does not want input on zoning or buildings, its leadership knows what is best for the community. You should have held a couple coffee chats on whether people wanted to see more parks vs. fields, or shuttles vs. bikeways, and moved on.</p> <p>I know you personally didn't make all these decisions, but I hope that your leadership is held accountable in the community and at the polls.</p>				
8/22/23	<p>I watched the replay of Thursday's meeting. Thank you for all of the effort. Marching out there to make those presentations must be grueling.</p> <p>Honestly, I'm at a loss. Put aside my concerns with the overall scale of the plan and healthy debate about what's too tall. I don't understand how the city can invite community feedback, hear that the number one comment is that buildings are too tall and too dense, and then show up in the very last meeting and jam massive development into the core of Charlestown (particularly on the Bunker Hill Mall). 70 feet along main street is entirely out of scale with the neighborhood, never mind the higher heights proposed.</p> <p>Compounding that is that this change wasn't proactively raised as a major topic of discussion (instead a detail oriented commenter raised it in the last few minutes). It was also incredibly disappointing to hear that clearly developers knew this was coming and 3 days after your released this draft they had proposals approved along these lines.</p> <p>The Mayor, Head of Planning, and Deputy Chief of the BPDA may have made a political calculation that they would like to slide this through (similar to the initial approach to the Helm). It may also be why the public comment period is so short and during a period when many in the community are out of town.</p> <p>Instead of bringing the community together this approach amplifies differences, stirs up distrust, and undermines our civic process. Charlestown deserved better.</p> <p>Jason you closed the meeting saying the city really cares about community input. The BPDA's actions speak for themselves. You do not.</p>				