



PLAN: Downtown Advisory Group Meeting #4

Thursday, June 20th, 6:00 p.m.

Location: Boston City Hall, BPDA Board Room

Advisory Group Attendees:

- Rob Adams, Boston Society of Landscape Architects
- Barbara Boylan, The Druker Company
- Paul Chan, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of New England
- George Coorsen, Downtown Boston Residents' Association (DBRA)
- Alison Frazee, Boston Preservation Alliance
- Arturo Gossage, Chinatown Residents Association
- Gilbert Ho, Chinatown Main Streets
- Jung Shen Kuo, Josiah Quincy Upper School & Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)
- Chuck Labins, Tufts Medical Center
- Angie Liou, Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)
- Lydia Lowe, Chinatown Community Land Trust
- Beatrice Nessen, Friends of the Public Garden
- Mary Ann Ponti, Saint Anthony Shrine
- Seth Riseman, Boston Society of Architects
- Rosemarie Sansone, Downtown Boston Business Improvement District
- Rishi Shukla, DBRA
- Tony Ursillo, DBRA
- Jason Wright, Suffolk University

Ex-Officio Attendees:

- Roger Mann, MBTA

City of Boston Attendees:

- Alisha Pegan, Environment Department
- Areen Andrew, BPDA
- Raul Duverge, BPDA
- Katherine Eshel, Environment Department
- Joe Christo, BPDA
- Hangsoo Jeong, BPDA
- Dwan Packnett, Mayor's Office of Economic Development
- Natalie Punzak, BPDA
- Kennan Rhyne, BPDA
- Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA
- Vanessa Toro Barragan, Environment Department
- Danchen Xu, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
- Corey Zehngebot, BPDA

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PLAN: Downtown Consultant Team:

- Rodrigo Guerra, NBBJ
- Chris Herlich, NBBJ
- Brian Swett, ARUP
- Katie Wholey, ARUP

Public Attendees:

6 members of the public

- Erin Chow, Chinese Progressive Association
- Mark Liu, Chinese Progressive Association
- Janet Maloof, Neighbor
- Nick Trocki, Business Owner
- Wayne Yeh, Chinese Progressive Association
- Daniel Yu, Chinese Progressive Association

Advisory Group Members Unable to Attend:

- Captain Kenneth Fong, BPD
- Peggy Ings, Emerson College
- Karen LaFrazia, St. Francis House - here
- Susanne Lavoie, Wharf District Council & Greenway Conservancy Board
- Joshua Leffler, Beacon Hill Civic Association
- Herb Lozano, Roxbury Innovation Center
- Peter Paravalos, MBTA
- Joyce Sanchez, Boston University
- Ann Teixeira, SpeakEasy Boston & New England Philharmonic
- Theresa Tsoi, Chinatown Business Association

PLAN: Downtown Website: bit.ly/plandowntownboston

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

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

Meeting Summary:

On Thursday, June 20th, the fourth meeting of the PLAN: Downtown Advisory Group commenced at approximately 6:10 pm with an introduction by Kennan Rhyne, BPDA Senior Planner, at the BPDA Board Room at Boston City Hall.

Kennan began by reviewing the agenda of the meeting, the future schedule of the Advisory Group (AG) meetings, and a review of the comments made at the previous AG meeting where the topic was preservation and growth in Downtown. Tonight's meeting focused on climate and resiliency.

Joe Christo, a Senior Resilience and Waterfront Planner at the BPDA, provided an overview of projected climate impacts and planned mitigation measures. The City has recently completed several climate mitigation and adaptation plans like Carbon Free Boston, Climate Ready Boston,

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Resilient Boston Harbor. In addition to the resilience components of plan initiatives like PLAN: Downtown, the City of Boston is also working on flood resilient zoning overlays and coastal resilience guidelines for all waterfront neighborhoods. Downtown's waterfront study is ongoing, and Joe presented a timeline of current climate change projects for the coming year.

Katherine Eshel from the Environment Department explained the Carbon Free Boston report, which studied current contributions to carbon emissions and offers strategies to achieve Boston's goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. Buildings in Boston currently create two-thirds of carbon emissions; PLAN: Downtown has an opportunity to deploy carbon-neutral strategies and model district-wide resilience implementations.

Building resilience and impact strategies have been outlined with measures like the Building Energy Reporting & Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO) and case studies of new construction and building retrofits. Katie Wholey from ARUP, a consultant to PLAN: Downtown, presented these examples. To accomplish carbon neutrality downtown, building energy efficiency needs to be improved and emissions reduced, primarily through retrofitting existing buildings.

Next, Climate Ready Boston Coordinator with the Environment Department, Alisha Pegan, provided an overview of Climate Ready Boston. Climate data predicts that the sea level will rise by three feet by 2070. Climate Ready Boston has spurred deeper study of short- and long-term strategies to mitigate flood impacts and pathways across the city in all waterfront neighborhoods. The Coastal Resilience Solutions for Downtown study is underway, focusing on the most vulnerable flood pathways in the Wharf District and Fort Point Channel.

Joe and Katie returned to wrap up the presentation, restating that each neighborhood plan works to build awareness and a tangible actionable list for climate mitigation. Climate Ready South Boston is complete and models the approach for each subsequent neighborhood. In addition to carbon mitigation and coastal resilience, Downtown in particular needs to study the impact of rising temperatures and extreme precipitation in a highly impervious area.

Advisory Group Questions & Comments

- An AG member raised the topic of the social/spatial impacts of cars downtown; reducing car travel would benefit not only car emissions, but enhance the pedestrian experience.
- An AG member asked for clarification on specific measures utilized to measure/implicate carbon emissions created by cars/SUVs.
- An AG member emphasized that building retrofits will have spatial implications on the quality and character of neighborhoods, specifically of historic quality. Specific measures need to be outlined to maintain the spatial character and history of downtown
- An AG member brought up the need to include the Boston Common from the perspective of tree canopy, open space, and public health amenities for climate evaluations.
 - Katherine, Environment Department: Data often does not take the Common into account because the relief on climate impact does not reach all of the downtown area. The city's goal through PLAN: Downtown is to better connect downtown to the Common with more tree canopy and less impervious surface.

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- An AG member asked if there are maps that show what the flood risks and impact will be if we implement planned resiliency strategies.
 - Joe, BPDA: Currently, no such map exists, but proposed strategies are modeled and analyzed through each Climate Ready study.
- An AG member mentioned that uneven sidewalk conditions create undesirable runoff and localized flooding, which in turn affects pedestrian flow and safety even with normal rainfall.
 - Kennan, BPDA: Areaways beneath the sidewalks are a major impediment to improving street and sidewalk conditions downtown. An areaway is an underground vault that is privately owned and has a public sidewalk above it. We'll be looking at this in more detail through PLAN: Downtown.
- An AG member restated the need to consider human equity impacts of climate change. Low income people of color tend to be the most vulnerable to climate events. The member also mentioned ongoing feasibility planning by the Chinese Progressive Association for a microgrid in Chinatown.
- An AG member asked for more information regarding flood pathways and mechanisms for flood prevention.
- An AG member brought up Boston's Smart Utilities Policy. The Smart Utilities Project in its pilot stage, born out of a need for coordinated utility infrastructure planning at the earliest stages of development review processes. The AG member emphasized the importance of alternative strategies for energy creation/use at a district-wide scale.
- An AG Member stated that PLAN: Downtown should closely study where trees will be most viable downtown to leverage future development and create cohesive advantageous corridors. Street trees are not always conducive on a case-by-case basis. Jurisdiction over maintenance depends on location. Green infrastructure, road diets, and utility coordination together can provide increased tree canopy downtown.
- An AG Member emphasized that we should be selective about demolition. Some buildings today are built for a short lifespan, and this plan should consider how we can build today for a longer lifespan or adaptation so that we are not demolishing newer structures in the near future. Embodied energy in buildings hasn't always been captured in climate impact studies, nor are the considerations of carbon release from demolition.

Public Questions & Comments

- A nearby resident explained her concern with proposed transportation impacts of carbon neutrality. For example, Boston residents are charged a tourist tax when renting cars and offered little incentive to forgo car ownership. The resident suggested that the city consider incentives for car sharing and focus on how our city-wide initiatives will function regionally across the state and country.
- A member of the public asked for more detail about who is responsible for implementing resiliency strategies. He emphasized that strategies must also consider equity of small owners and preservation of affordable housing.
 - Brian Swett, ARUP: The district-wide scale of PLAN: Downtown creates opportunity for different financial tools and trade offs.
 - Joe, BPDA: The city is undergoing a resiliency financing study right now.
 - An AG member added that Chinatown has considered retrofit strategies for some buildings in the neighborhood, and added that funding is not always easy for these kinds of projects.

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Kennan concluded the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance and participation. The next Advisory Group meeting will be held on JULY 17, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting concluded at 7:45 pm.

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