

# PLAN: Downtown Overview of Past Plans

This document provides an overview of past planning completed in the Downtown & Chinatown areas. This is not a comprehensive list but provides an overview of the most salient plans. Links are provided to the original planning documents on each page.

# 1

## Past Planning in Downtown and Nearby Areas



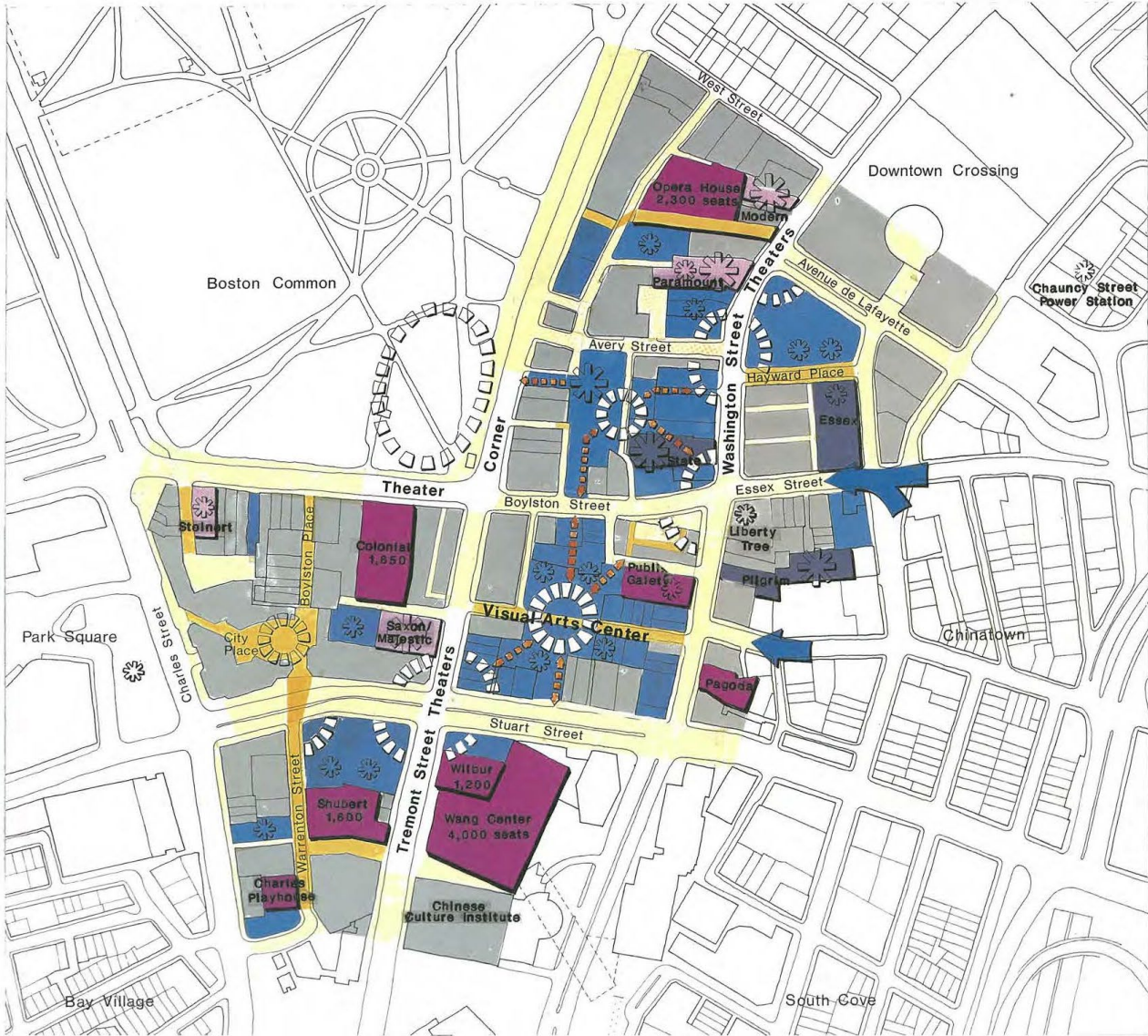
# Midtown Cultural District Plan, 1985-8

## A Plan to Manage Growth

- Transform Boston's historic theater district into a multi-faceted Cultural District.
- Create a vibrant mixed-use district by directing the office economy into underutilized areas and expanding the downtown residential population.
- Focused on the physical & social connections between the Midtown Cultural District and the rest of the City.
- Fund affordable housing in Chinatown through linkage money from new office buildings.
- Enhance the character of the district by preserving the historic scale and character of the district.
- Upgrade and maintain the area's open space network.



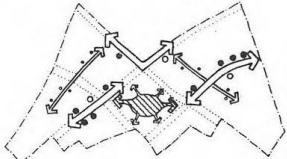
# Midtown Cultural District Plan, 1985-8



## CULTURAL DISTRICT CONCEPTUAL PLAN

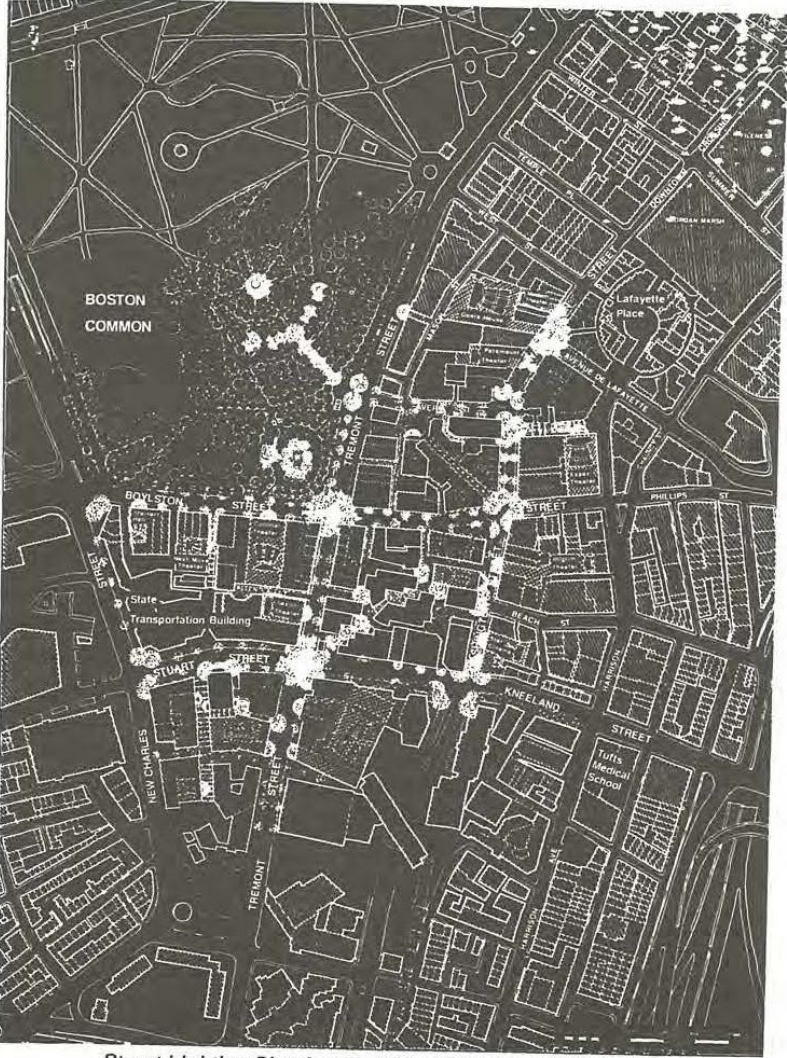
Boston has the highest concentration of historic theaters of any American city outside of New York. In addition to its active theaters, Midtown's vacant theaters and development sites offer the opportunity to add a cluster of small new cultural facilities which will be accessible and affordable. Combined with restaurants, shops open into the evening, night-clubs, cabarets, sidewalk cafes, and public art, they will transform the historic theater district into a multi-faceted Cultural District.

- Theater Boulevards - segments of main streets with major theaters; like "A Great White Way" in character.
- Theater Alleys - small pedestrian ways with small and experimental theaters and nightclubs; like "off-Broadway" in character.
- New through block connectors.
- Existing active theaters
- Vacant theaters - worthy of preservation
- Vacant theaters - substantially altered
- Anticipated development sites
- Potential sites for new performance and visual arts facilities
- Potential public spaces for art installations, public performances, sitting areas, and sidewalk cafes
- Expansion of Chinatown to Washington Street



- THEATER BOULEVARD
- THEATER ALLEY
- VISUAL ARTS CENTER
- CULTURAL FACILITIES

# Midtown Cultural District Plan, 1985-8



Street Lighting Plan for the Midtown Cultural District by Benjamin Thompson Associates

Creative use of lighting will add to the character and life of the Cultural District. It will provide human-scale street furnishings during the day. At night it will enhance the atmosphere of public ways through lamp posts and shopfronts and the special effects of lit facades, trees, and artworks.

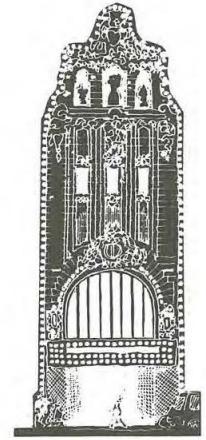
Lighting Visions  
by Benjamin Thompson Associates



lights of celebration form a luminous ceiling mediating space and stimulating activity



artistry of the sign for color and light on the street



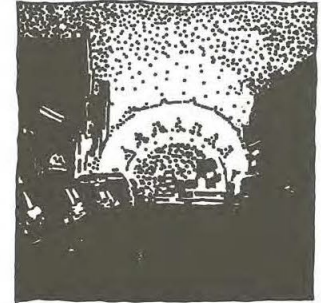
buildings of special illumination become points of reference, energy, and excitement



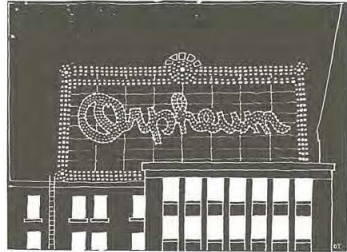
restaurants and cafe's activate and light the street-edge



light and texture change at thresholds are an invitation



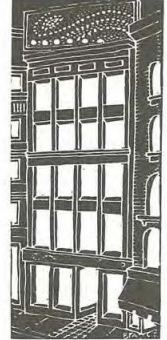
ILLUMINATED GATE



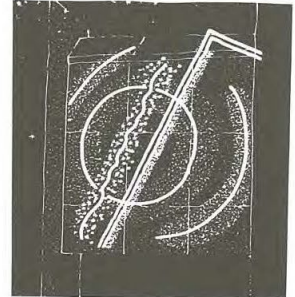
artistry of the sign offers opportunities for lighting and identity in the district



Twoli lights



artistry of the billboard offers an opportunity for major lighting events



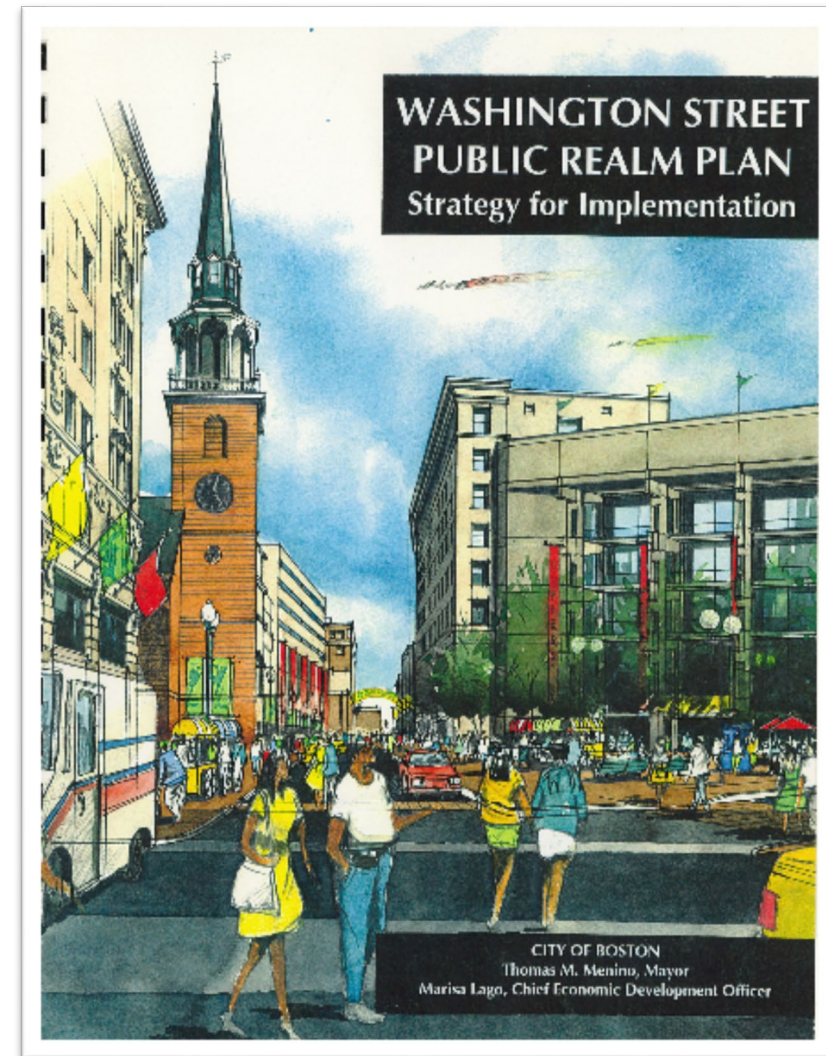
Neon signs

# Washington Street Public Realm Plan, 1996

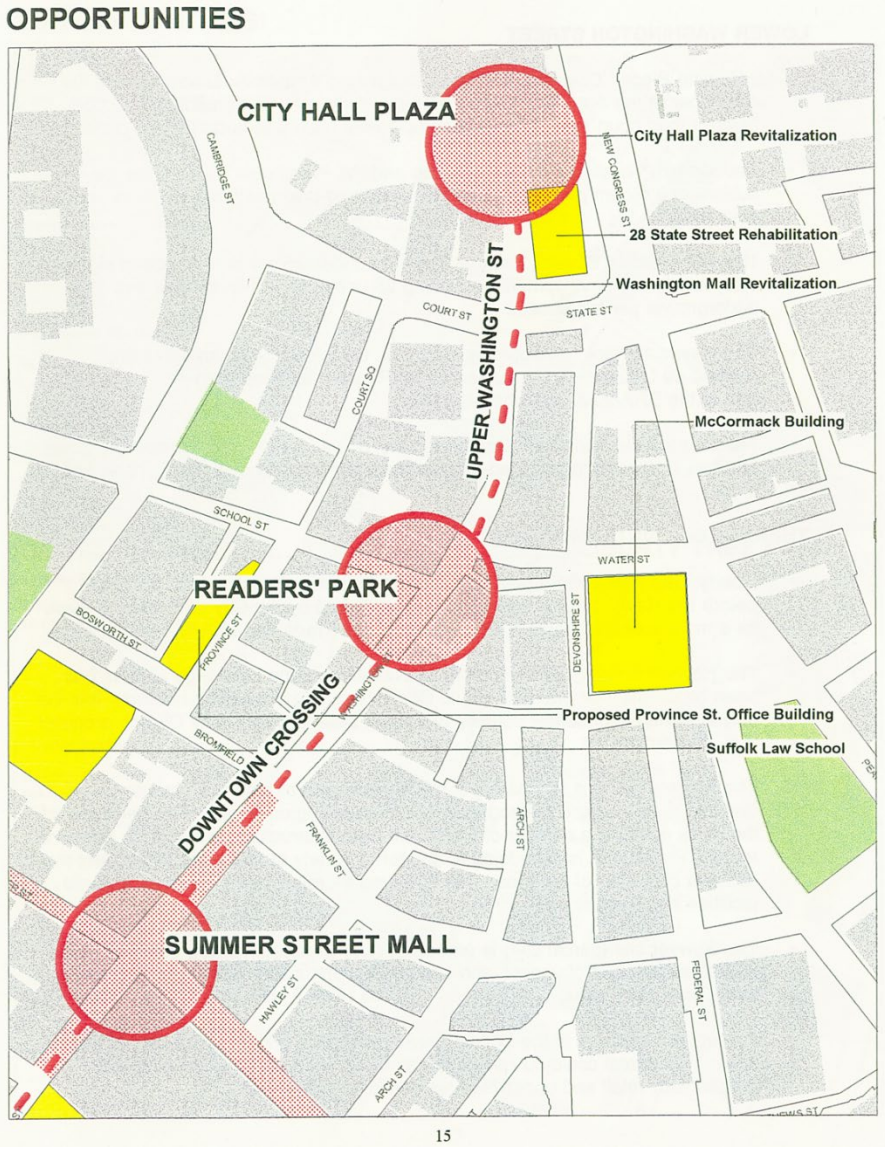
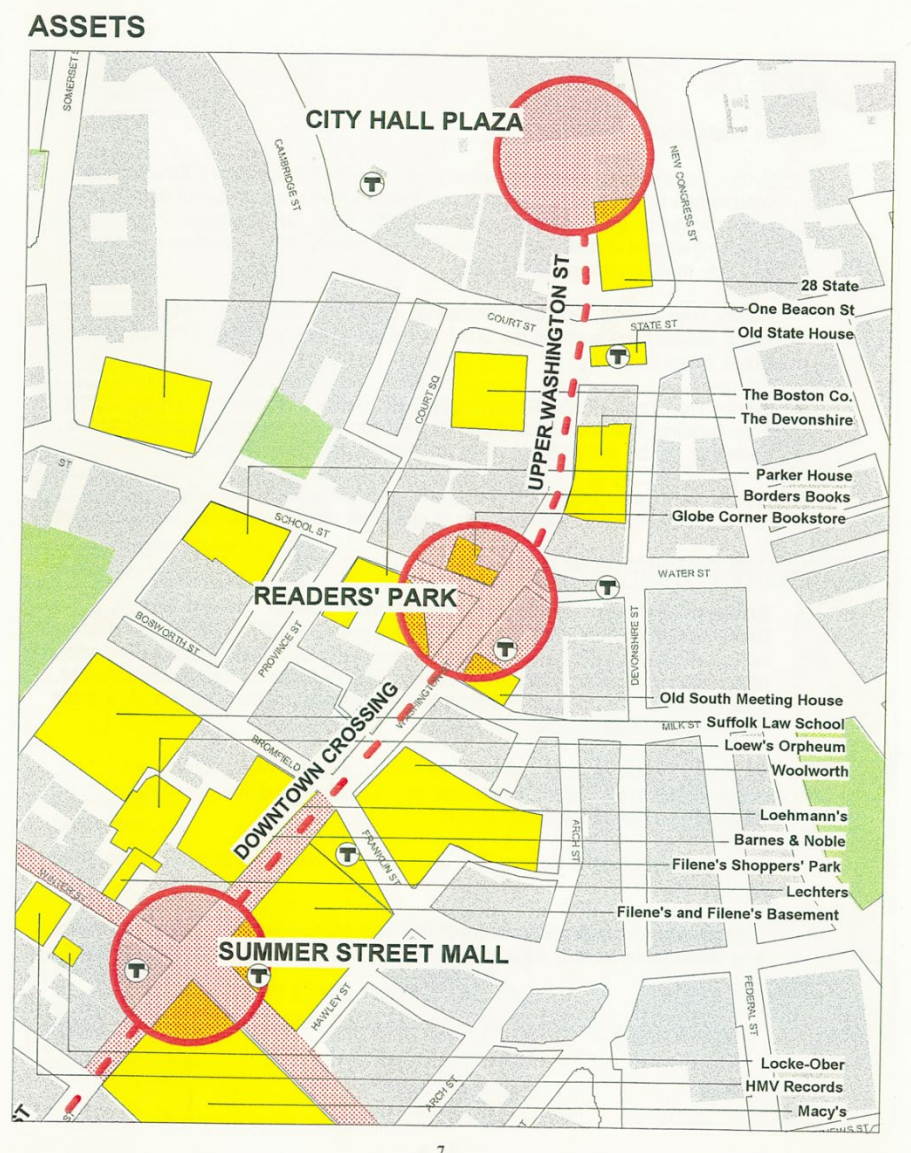
Plan that emphasizes public realm improvements such as streetscape and ground floor activity

## 6 Point Implementation Strategy

- Investment in streetscape improvements and activities
- Maintain streetscape improvements and enforce codes
- Enhance public safety
- Establish a Business Improvement District
- Market business and investment opportunities
- Establish special Design Overlay District



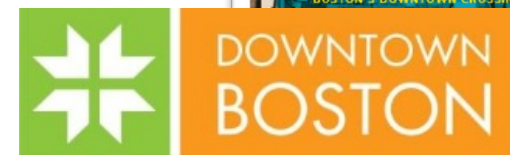
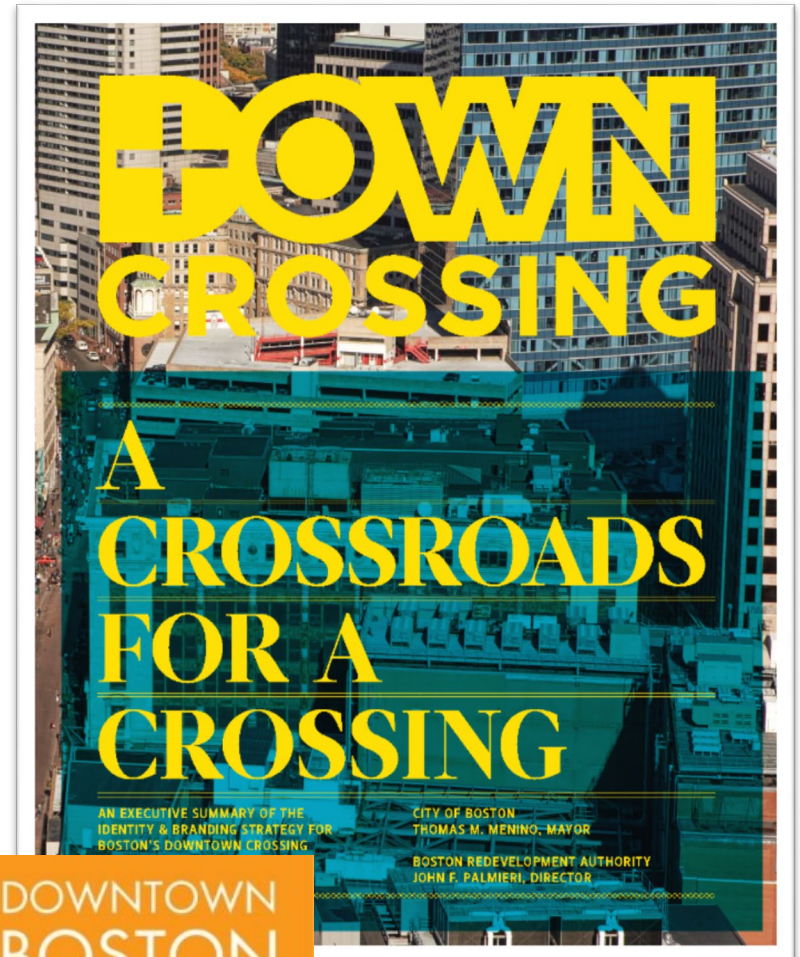
# Washington Street Public Realm Plan, 1996



# Downtown Crossing Economic Improvement Initiative, 2004-8

## Plan that articulates a vision for Downtown Crossing

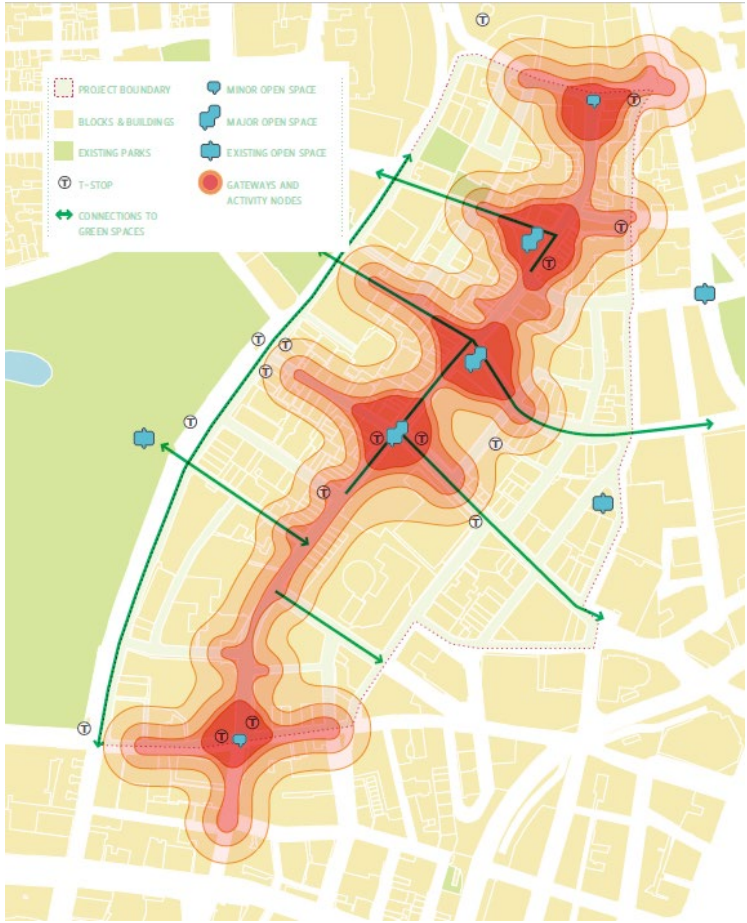
- Vision: Downtown Crossing is Boston's meeting place. It's an urban neighborhood where commerce and leisure intersect and a diverse mix of people are encouraged to innovate, interact, and explore.
- Urban design recommendations focused on pedestrian experience and creating activity nodes
- Addressed misconceptions of Downtown Crossing
- Identified three distinct districts based on character of the streets
- Helped to establish the Downtown BID who today continues to drive improvement and maintenance efforts in Downtown Boston



BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT



# Downtown Crossing Economic Improvement Initiative, 2004-8



# Crossroads Initiative, 2006–2010

Public Realm and Urban Design plan coordinated with the Greenway to improve “Crossroads” connections to the waterfront and adjacent neighborhoods.

- Proposed targeted streetscape improvements at key gateways, crossroad connections, and an active, lively Greenway to connect it all as a spine



# Chinatown Master Plan, 2010

**Community-driven plan to guide future improvements, growth, and preservation in Chinatown.**

- Preserve and strengthen Chinatown as a gateway
- Reaffirm Chinatown's connections with its neighbors
- Preserve existing and create new affordable housing
- Increase economic opportunities
- Increase public safety, improve pedestrian experience
- Foster a greener and more sustainable community
- Promote and cultivate healthier environment
- Expand civic spaces and open spaces and parks
- Improve quality of life for community
- Increase civic participation



CHINATOWN MASTER PLAN 2010  
*Community Vision for the Future*

Chinatown Master Plan 2010 Oversight Committee

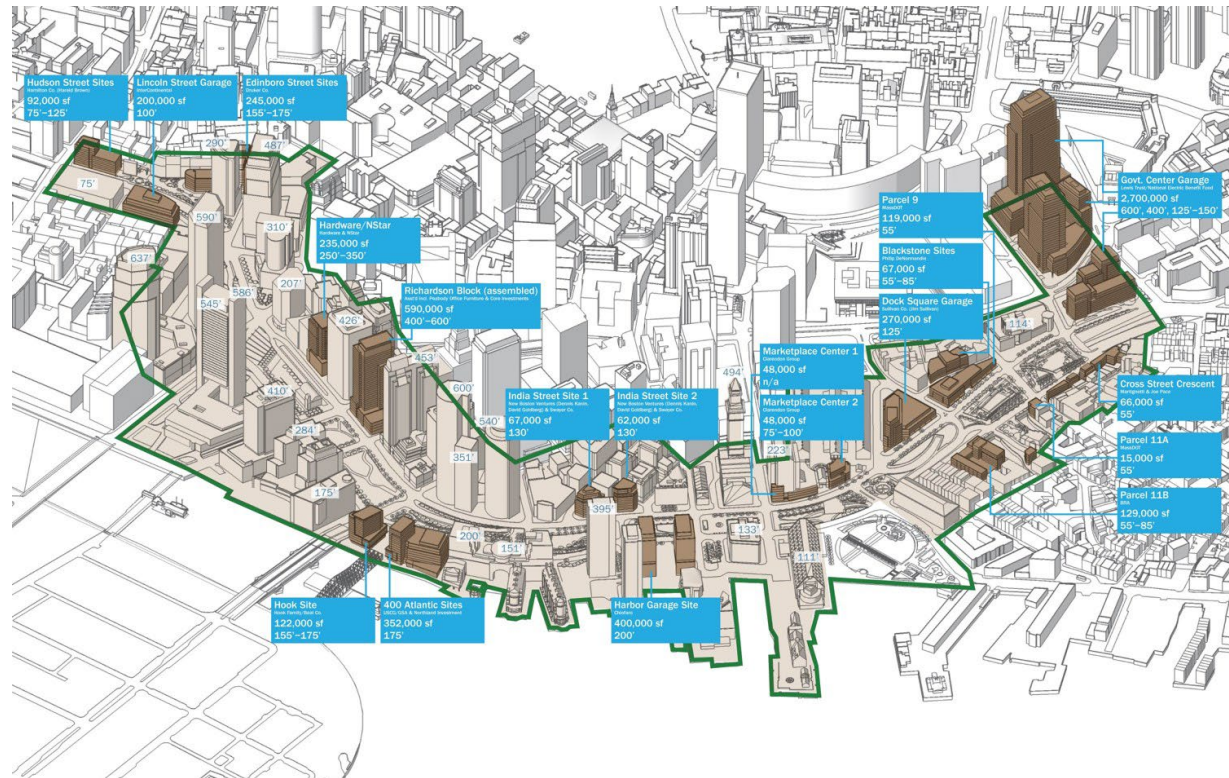
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# Greenway District Planning Study, 2010

Public Realm and Urban Design guidelines for development opportunity sites along the Greenway. Codified as the Greenway Overlay District (Article 49A) in 2013.

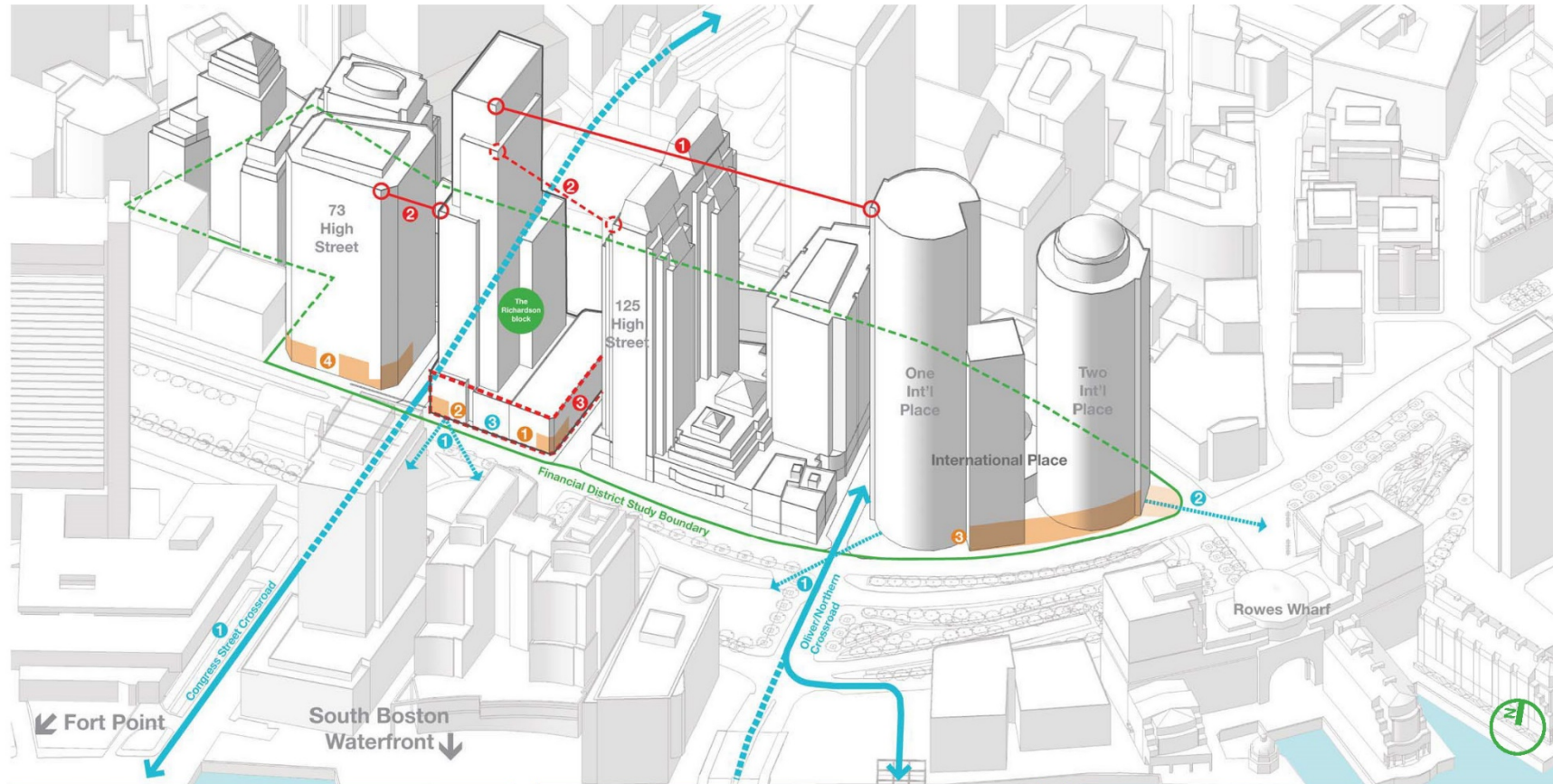
## Goals included:

- **Preserve** the newly created Greenway
- **Activate** the broader public realm
- **Ensure the long-term value** of the public's investment by shaping development to maximize the quality of the parks and extend their impact
- **Balance** development pressures with other growth areas



# Greenway District Planning Study, 2010

Boston Redevelopment Authority



## Dimensional Criteria

- 1 600' height limit, corresponding to One International Place. The site can support a maximum FAR of 20.0.
- 2 The building should be shaped in such a way as to correspond to adjacent buildings, 73 and 125 High Street in particular. Tower elements should be set back significantly from the existing structures to retain the scale of the existing streetscape.
- 3 Existing historic buildings on Pearl Street should be retained in whole or in part.

## Programmatic Goals

- 1 Retain the character and street activation of the existing buildings.
- 2 The important intersection at Congress Street should be marked by a significant architectural element and/or two-story active frontage.
- 3 The base of International Place, formerly the back of the building, should be reactivated with new entries and/or café uses.
- 4 To the extent feasible in a new development at the Hardware/NSTAR site, small retail or restaurants would help link the activity of Dewey Square to the northern parts of the Greenway, and to mark the significance of the Congress Street intersection.

## Connectivity

- 1 The subdistrict contains two important Crossroads within two blocks of each other. Currently these cross-Greenway connections are tenuous. The legibility of these connections can be further realized by new, Greenway-facing program and entries at the Richardson Block and by locating active uses at the east edge of One International Place. Because of the east-west grade differential of the Greenway at this location, these programmatic links are especially important.
- 2 The existing northeastern facing entry at One International Place is currently underutilized, but offers great potential to contribute to the activation of the Broad Street / Rows Wharf node of the parks. Additional street level uses along the Greenway edge would help reinforce these connections.
- 3 Should a development occur on the Richardson Block site(s), a publicly accessible through-block connection along the historic Gridley Street right-of-way must be preserved.

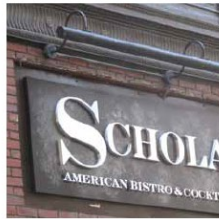
# Downtown Crossing Signage Guidelines, 2011

Plan that builds off of “A Crossroads for a Crossing” and sets graphical guidelines for outdoor signage in an easy-to-understand format.

## Examples



**Halo Illumination**  
Projected light from behind individual letters or symbols gives a halo effect.



**External Illumination**  
Light projected onto the face of a sign from an outside source, such as a gooseneck or spot.



**Internal Illumination**  
Light is projected from a source inside an enclosed sign.



**Channel Neon Tube**  
Light is emitted by neon tubes mounted inside channels, creating a glow effect.



**Exposed Neon Tube**  
Light is emitted by neon tubes mounted directly to the face of a sign.



**Exposed Incandescent**  
Exposed bulbs mounted to the face of a sign create the illumination.

## Storefront Guidelines



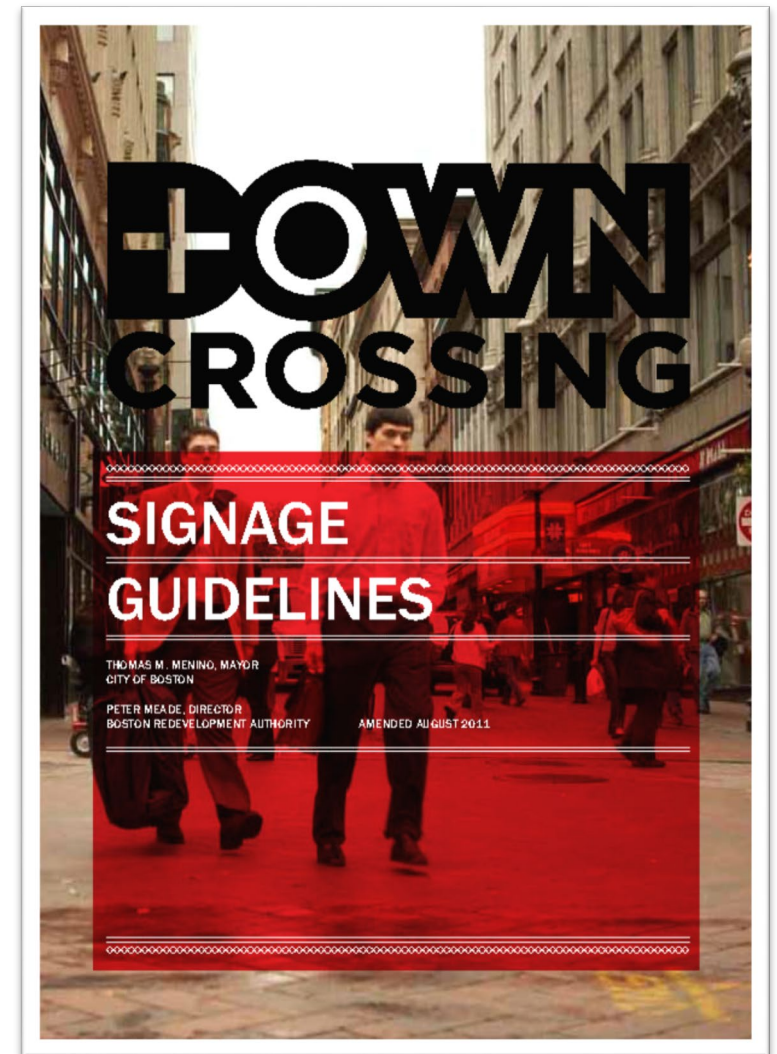
**E Hours of Operation**  
Display business hours of operation on the door.

**F Sign Message**  
The words on a sign may be repeated a maximum of 3 times.

**G Position**  
Do not attach signs to roofs, chimneys, smokestacks, elevator towers, penthouses or sides of buildings.

**H Interior Signs**  
Signs that are inside the building and within 5 ft of the storefront must be counted as window signs (see page 42) when calculating maximum signage area allowed.

**\* Signs must be integrated with the building's architecture.** Do not obstruct the building's cornice lines, windows and architectural details.



# Other Downtown and Relevant Area Plans

- [Financial District Study, 1988](#)
- [A New Washington Street: Boston's Main Street for the New Century, 1997](#) (Focus on South End and Lower Roxbury, in response to dismantling of former elevated rail)
- [Stuart Street Planning Study, 2011](#) (Adjacent to planning area)
- [Urban Renewal Extension Process, 2015](#)
- [The Transformation of Downtown Crossing, 2016 Downtown BID Report](#)
- [Boston Preservation Alliance: Ladder Blocks, 2016](#)
- [Defining our Future BID Strategic Plan Progress Report, 2017](#)
- [Downtown Waterfront District Municipal Harbor Plan & Public Realm Activation Plan, 2018](#) (Adjacent to planning area)

# 2

## Key City-Wide Plans



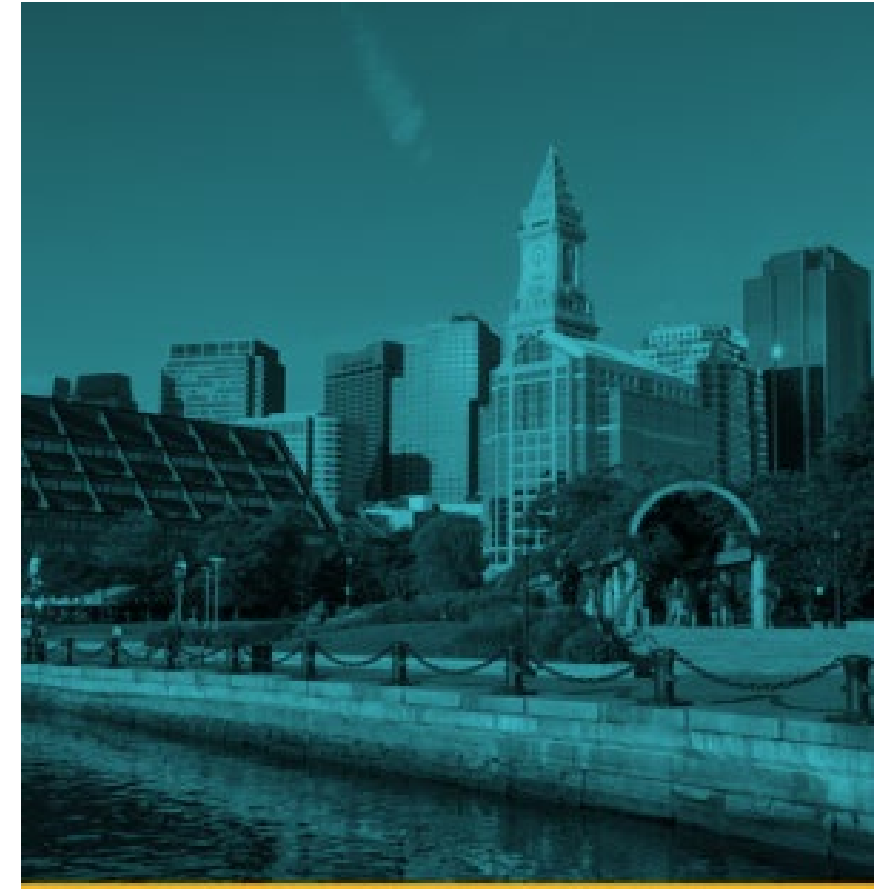


# Climate Ready Boston, 2016

A plan to prepare the City for the long-term impacts of climate change.

## Four main components:

- Updated climate projections for extreme temperatures, sea level rise, extreme precipitation, and storms
- A comprehensive vulnerability assessment of potential future risks associated with extreme heat, storm water flooding, and coastal and riverine flooding
- Detailed focus areas to analyze specific risks at a neighborhood scale
- Policy, planning, programmatic, and financial climate resilience initiatives to address the identified risks



# Imagine Boston 2030, 2017

The city's first comprehensive plan in 50 years, sets the agenda for future growth, investment, and development.

- Imagine Boston 2030 is a plan to strengthen the city's physical assets and a strategy to encourage equitable economic growth.
- Identifies three areas requiring customized approaches to **growth, enhancement, and preservation**—existing neighborhoods, the commercial core, and edge areas.
- A set of initiatives combines this place-based planning with new policies —ranging from carbon neutrality to anti-displacement measures, universal Pre-K, and open data—to advance the plan's underlying goals.
- The final Imagine Boston 2030 plan articulates how the initiatives and priority actions will be funded, led, and measured to ensure success—directly informing the City's five-year capital plan.

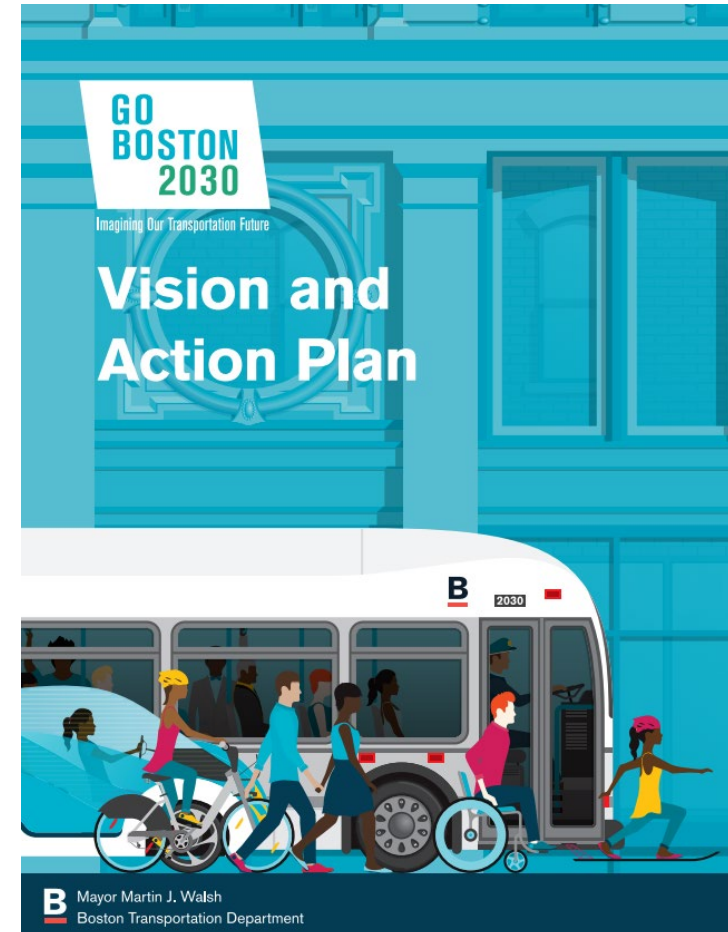


# Go Boston 2030, 2017

Go Boston 2030 envisions a city where all residents have better and more equitable travel choices, where efficient transportation networks foster economic opportunity, and where the City has taken steps to prepare for climate change.

## Primary Goals and Targets:

- Make Boston's neighborhoods interconnected for all modes of travel
- Substantially reduce collisions on every street through education, enforcement, and designs that reallocate street space to prioritize moving people safely rather than faster
- Prioritize making travel predictable on Boston's transit and roadway networks



# Housing a Changing City Boston 2030, 2014

The plan sets forth how the city will help preserve and expand diversity and equity through housing policy integrated with education, health, environmental, and economic growth goals.

- The plan calls for 53,000 new housing units to accommodate the 20% growth in Boston population by 2030, generating \$21 billion in new development and 51,000 construction jobs.

### 2018 update:

- The 2018 plan update increases the units planned from 53,000 to 69,000 based on increase population projections. The plan also adds new affordable housing goals, plans for strategic neighborhood growth, and new foci on preventing displacement, increasing homeownership, and promoting fair and equitable housing access.



# Other Key City-Wide Plans

- [Greenovate Boston 2014 Climate Action Plan, 2014](#)
- [Boston Public Health Commission 2015-2018 Strategic Plan](#)
- [Boston Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2015-2021](#)
- [Age Friendly Boston Action Plan, 2017](#)
- [Vision Zero, 2016](#)
- [Boston Creates Cultural Plan, 2016](#)
- [Resilient Boston: An Equitable and Connected City, 2017](#)
- [BuildBPS, 2017](#)
- [Smart Utilities Policy, 2018](#)
- [Boston Historic Landmark Study Reports](#)

# 3

## Background Information



# Downtown Background Information

- [Neighborhood Profiles: Downtown 2018](#)
- [Boston in Context 2019](#)
- [Boston by the Numbers 2018](#)
- [Historical Boston in Context: Neighborhood Comparisons by Decade, 1950 to 2015 \(Associated tables\)](#)
- [Commuter Flows: Employment and Residence Patterns in Greater Boston](#)
- More research publications can be found here: <http://www.bostonplans.org/research>
- [PLAN: Downtown Open House Summary](#) & [PLAN: Downtown Open House Boards](#)