



**PLAN: Downtown
Information Exchange Session**
Wednesday, December 19, 2019, 9:00 AM–5:00 PM
Location: BPDA Conference Rooms

Attendees:

- **BPDA:** Chris Busch, David Carlson, Michael Christopher, Raul Duverge, Manuel Esquivel, James Fitzgerald, Jonathan Greeley, Phillip Hu, Mary Knasas, Marcus Mello, Natalie Punzak, John Read, Kennan Rhyne, Lauren Shurtleff, Corey Zehngebot, Jill Zick
- **Department of Neighborhood Development:** Sheila Dillon, Beverly Estes-Smargiassi
- **Public Works Department:** Joseph Fleury, Zachary Wassmouth
- **Transportation Department:** John Monacelli, Vineet Gupta
- **Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture:** Kara Elliott-Ortega, Courtney Sharpe
- **Mayor's Office of the Chief of Streets:** Jacob Wessel
- **Mayor's Office of Economic Development:** Andrew Grace
- **Mayor's Office of Environment, Energy, and Open Space:** Alison Brizius, Katherine Eshel, Alisha Pegan
 - **Boston Landmarks Commission:** Joseph Cornish, Rosanne Foley
- **Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services:** Danchen Xu
- **Consultant Team:** Kathryn Firth, Chris Herlich, Lisa Howe, Alex Krieger, Brian Swett, Katie Wholey

PLAN: Downtown Website: bit.ly/plandowntownboston

Meeting Summary:

The PLAN: Downtown team invited members of various City Departments to attend one or more of seven sessions that provided an overview of ongoing planning work to the PLAN: Downtown consultant team. Sessions included:

- Downtown Crossing & the Downtown & Greenway BIDs
- Climate Change & Resiliency
- Landmarks & Historic Designation
- Transportation & Infrastructure
- Arts & Culture
- Chinatown & Affordable Housing
- Ownership & Focus Sites

Downtown Crossing & the Downtown & Greenway BIDs Notes:

Past Plans & History

- [Downtown Crossing: Crossroads for a Crossing](#) (June 2008): Retail-focused plan used to argue for investment in Downtown Crossing. The plan reinforced the identity of Downtown and led to the creation of the [Downtown Boston Business Improvement District](#) (Downtown BID).

- The Downtown BID was established in 2010 with an initial primary focus on “clean and safe” streets within the BID boundaries. Over time the Downtown BID has expanded its services and programming.
- There was a heavy push for theater preservation and renovation in the early 2000s which led to redevelopment by Suffolk of the Paramount Theater, among other efforts.
- The [Greenway Business Improvement District](#) (Greenway BID) was established in 2018 to support the Rose Kennedy Greenway by funding long-term maintenance and enhancements.

Challenges

- Private areaways provide barriers to street lighting and furniture and also preclude sidewalk repairs. Areaways must be structurally certified by an owner for the City to invest in the repair of the public sidewalk above.

Climate Change & Resiliency Notes:

Carbon Free Boston

- Currently updating the 2019 [Climate Action Plan](#) by looking at implementation.
- Looking at strategies relating to buildings, transportation, waste, and energy.
- Explores net zero energy for new construction, which is significantly cheaper than retrofitting existing buildings.
- Buildings: Interesting in introducing new technologies into net zero building requirements (modeling)
- Transportation: Looking at how to incentivize rideshare and transit.
- 2018 Bloomberg Grant for the American Cities Challenge focused on the following aspects of carbon emission reduction:
 - Commuter incentives
 - Electric vehicles
 - Bicycle/pedestrian accommodation acceleration
 - Testing new and old mobility options (multimodal micro-hubs)
 - Workforce/building operator training
 - Creating action pathways for the [Building Energy Reporting and Disclosure Ordinance](#) (BERDO)
 - Equitable training programming for residential buildings
 - Building Financing to support net-zero

Climate Ready

- [Climate Ready Downtown and North End](#): Looking at balancing waterfront access with coastal resilience. The study specifically looks at properties on the waterside of the Greenway, Christopher Columbus Park, and Commercial Avenue in the North End and Downtown waterfront.
 - Looks at surface level flooding. Outfall information is available from the Boston Water and Sewer Commission.
- [Flood Resiliency Zoning Overlay District](#): Grant funded to wrap up in June with guidelines for retrofit projects and new construction within areas vulnerable to storm surge across the entire City.

Landmarks & Historic Designation

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- Preservation planning and resource management - including pending landmarks and districts
- Ability to regulate if something is visible from a certain district but do not regulate specific view corridors
- Interested in a full survey of resources Downtown if there was budget available in the future. This would include streetscape elements such as historic slabs/pavers.
- Interested in being a part of the conversation about retrofitting properties for new uses such as residential.
 - Ladder Blocks have a valuable, walkable, granular fabric that is threatened by redevelopment
- Suggest looking into San Francisco's retail/small business preservation program
- Ideas to explore: retrofit, lighting of historic buildings, preservation easements, tax abatement, transfer of development rights, etc.

Transportation & Infrastructure

- [Street Caster](#): sidewalk improvements through an equity lens
- [Southwest Corridor Expansion](#) is looking for ways to connect with the Charles MGH area and Downtown Boston.
- Planning for expanded bike facilities on Kneeland Street
- [Smart Utilities Guidelines](#): Overview of the Article 80 Table, see attached table.
- North-South Transportation Study is needed in the future
- Currently re-examining bus routes Downtown through the MBTA's [Better Bus Project](#)
- [Tontine Crescent Tactical Plaza](#): Working toward a permanent solution in the Fall of 2019
- State Street Improvements: DPW is studying improvements to the pedestrian areas along State Street.
- [Seaport Strategic Transit Plan](#) and [Northern Avenue Bridge Replacement](#): Mayor is working with a Task Force to find an agreeable solution for the Northern Ave. Bridge
- Interested in: Transportation Network Company (TNC) and loading curbside management, push toward active transportation choices, micro-mobility hubs, tour bus parking management

Arts & Culture

- Cultural equity: Public realm legibility and opportunities for artists
- Discussed locations of existing public art Downtown
- Lack of existing opportunities for temporary/performance art Downtown
 - Plug and play opportunities missing
 - Pop-up opportunities
- Generally looking towards development to provide artist live/work spaces, however, this is less applicable Downtown
- [Boston Literary Cultural District](#): Could leverage development to make this district more legible/visible
- Interesting placemaking opportunities in Chinatown such as the [Phillips Square Redesign](#)
- Could study a percentage fee for art programming to fund ongoing work

- Think about how to signify transitions through zones/districts Downtown

Chinatown & Affordable Housing

- Limited amount of high quality public spaces available
- Tension around who/how housing is developed, including the level of affordability
- Pressure to balance preservation with affordable housing growth
 - Preservation of community/low-income residential population, preservation of building scale, and preservation of businesses

SMART UTILITIES POLICY FOR ARTICLE 80

	Article 80 Size Threshold	Specifications
District Energy Microgrid	>1.5 million SF	Feasibility Assessment; if feasible, then Master Plan & District Energy Microgrid Ready design
Green Infrastructure	>100,000 SF	Install to retain 1.25" rainfall on impervious areas (Increase from 1" currently required by BWSC)
Adaptive Signal Tech.	All projects requiring signal installation or improvements	Install AST & related components into the traffic signal system network
Smart Street Lights	All Projects requiring street light installation or improvements	Install additional electrical connection & fiber optics at pole
Telecom Utilidor	>1.5M SF of Development, or >0.5 Miles of Roadway	Install Telecom Utilidor

<http://www.bostonplans.org/smart-utilities>