



**boston planning &
development agency**

PLAN: Mattapan

Focus Area Deep Dive: Implementing the Vision



December 2019

Introduction

What is PLAN: Mattapan?

Guided by Imagine Boston 2030, PLAN: Mattapan is a City of Boston planning initiative that seeks to ensure that we preserve wisely, enhance equitably, and grow inclusively.

The PLAN: Mattapan initiative formally kicked-off in late October of 2018. We have just completed the Pre-planning phase, during which we have been gathering and analyzing information, guided by community input. We now have a vision statement created with the community that will guide the planning process as we move forward. This is the “what” of the plan.

PLAN: Mattapan will...

Strengthen the existing culture and stability of the community by supporting **affordable housing**, creating **opportunities for businesses** to thrive, and **enhancing connections** to improve the neighborhood's experience accessing **jobs** and spaces **where people gather**.



What will PLAN: Mattapan produce?



PLAN: Mattapan is a community-driven planning initiative, which will result in a:

Neighborhood Plan that includes:

an Existing Conditions and Vision Report & Transportation Recommendations & Urban Design Guidelines.



Short, Mid and Long-term Implementation Projects.



Place-based projects during the planning process, (for example, sidewalk improvements).

We are entering the “how” part of the plan and be producing development scenarios over the next year.



Community members told us what they love about Mattapan on an oversized postcard at the Boston 25 News's Zip Trip event on August 9, 2019.

Introduction

Topic Areas

A topic area, also referred to as a typology, is a classification of multiple areas in a neighborhood with similar physical characteristics. We separated the neighborhood into three topic areas: Residential Fabric, Mixed-Use Corridors, and Mixed-Use Squares & Nodes.

Types of Topic Areas



Residential fabric makes up most of Mattapan. This area is characterized by 1-3 family homes and some apartment buildings.



Mixed-use corridors are areas along major roads that can support businesses. Think Blue Hill Avenue, Cummins Highway and Morton Street.



Mixed-use squares can be found at major intersections. Think Mattapan Square or the intersection of Blue Hill Avenue and Walk Hill Street.

Focus Areas

A focus area is a **specific geography** we use to better understand the conditions of the whole neighborhood. Focus areas allow us to work **quicker** by giving us a **baseline of information as we test new ideas** that could **apply to similar areas** throughout the neighborhood.



Map of the Focus Areas to be studied in PLAN: Mattapan

Topic Area - Residential Fabric

What it is...

Neighborhood residential fabric refers to areas in the neighborhood that are primarily, though not exclusively, used for housing. Residential areas make up the majority of the Mattapan neighborhood.



Our priority is to preserve the existing character of the housing in residential areas. Other topic areas will consider larger-scale development.

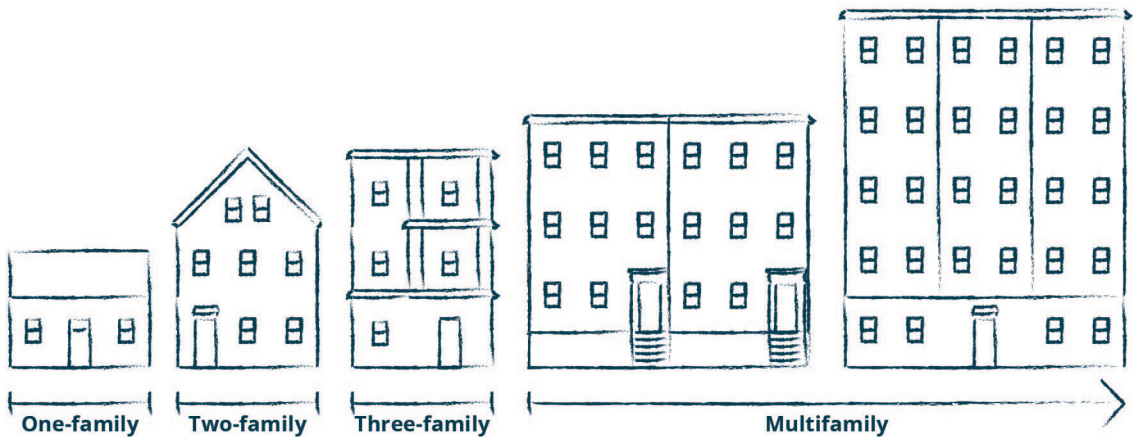
What we know...

Mattapan's residential fabric consists of one-, two-, three-, and multi-family housing units.

Houses range from single family bungalows to triple deckers, and larger multi-family units. Currently, 13% of all units in Mattapan are income restricted. With new developments coming online, the number of income restricted units increases to 15%.

Mattapan is ranked 9th (out of 24) in homeownership numbers in Boston.

Owner occupancy rates in Mattapan are about 3% higher than the city as a whole. The largest percentage of homeowners in Mattapan are Asian, White, and Black. Over the last 17 years, homeownership has remained relatively stable in Mattapan.



Neighborhood residential streets provide immediate access to the residential fabric. These types of streets are not typically intended for through-traffic, and should be designed for slow speeds.

The Fairmount Corridor cuts Mattapan in half. No residential street crosses the tracks. Nearly all travel in Mattapan must use a major street, even when traveling entirely within Mattapan.

Mattapan is made up of families that both own and rent.

68% of Mattapan households are families compared to 48% of Boston households and 1/3 of Mattapan households are families headed by single women. 36% of renting households in Mattapan are considered severely housing cost burdened compared to 24% in Boston.

Topic Area - Residential Fabric

What we heard...

Throughout our engagement, we have heard many things about Mattapan's residential fabric. Some of the priorities, concerns, and opportunities expressed include:

“Togetherness, family, longevity.”

“Knowing who my neighbors are.”

“Displacement is a threat.”

“Not enough buying power.”

“It is difficult to get around Mattapan.”



There will be another Deep Dive dedicated to exploring housing development, affordability, and other related issues in early 2020.

What we will study...

The residential fabric will be studied at the policy and program level.

While we will be discussing infill development, we will not be looking at large-scale development in the neighborhood residential fabric. Instead we will be exploring ways to maintain homeownership levels and create existing programs and policies that will contribute to wealth generation and equity creation.

Transportation & Mobility

- » Use design techniques that slow traffic and make streets feel more inviting for people of all ages who walk, play, or bike.
- » Enhance the safety and convenience of walking and biking connections to squares, schools, community spaces, and open spaces.
- » Increase access to rapid transit, bikeshare, and careshare to provide alternatives to single occupancy vehicles.

Housing

- » Support appropriately scaled additions to existing housing stock (i.e. accessory dwelling units (ADUs)) in order to grow wealth within existing assets.
- » Identify opportunities for infill development and maximize impact of development.
- » Identify existing and new policies that will contribute to residents' access to affordable housing (<30% of their average monthly income).
- » Retain Mattapan's existing income-restricted/affordable housing and identify further opportunities to maintain these levels.
- » Preserve existing rates of homeownership and connect existing resources the City and others provide to first time homebuyers.

People, Culture, and Place

- » Identify new and existing housing typologies that support the diverse family types that exist in Mattapan.
- » Create shared spaces throughout the residential fabric in order to reinforce to community that Mattapan values.
- » Identify affordable options for young-adults aging out of their family homes to stay in Mattapan.
- » Ensure that the aging population is able to have opportunities to age-in-place.

Jobs & Businesses

- » Identify opportunities for small, local businesses, to provide amenities on the ground floors of future developments.
- » Determining if, and what kinds of, commercial uses are viable at major intersections within the residential fabric.

As we preserve the existing residential fabric, where would you put new housing in Mattapan?

Topic Area - Mixed-Use Corridors

What it is...

A mixed-use corridor refers to areas in the neighborhood that are suited for active ground-floor uses and the amount of density required to support them. In Mattapan, this includes Blue Hill Avenue, Cummins Highway, Morton Street, and River Street.



Blue Hill Avenue

Blue Hill Avenue runs North to South and is one of the most prominent corridors running through multiple neighborhoods in the City.

Historically, streetcars ran along the streetcar median on Blue Hill Avenue and contributed to the creation of a thriving commercial corridor. Now multiple bus routes have taken the place of the streetcars.

Blue Hill Avenue is large in scale and is able to support housing, businesses, and a vibrant public realm.



Cummins Highway

Cummins Highway runs Northwest-Southeast, connecting Mattapan and Roslindale.

Part of the surrounding area is also zoned under a Gateway Overlay, which allows for more density near the entrance of the Blue Hill Avenue T Stop and serves as a 'gateway' to the square.

Cummins Highway is currently undergoing a redesign. BTD will be identifying opportunities to increase safety and accessibility for all users as well as improvements to the public realm. Cummins Highway can also support housing, businesses, and a vibrant public realm.

What we know...



The mixed-use corridors in Mattapan are zoned for both residential and commercial uses.

The zoning ranges from single-family (1F) to multi-family (MF), and from neighborhood shopping (NS-1, NS-2) to community commercial (CC). This means that we can expect a diversity of uses along the corridors.



Many of Mattapan's jobs and businesses are concentrated along mixed-use corridors.

The top industries in Mattapan are healthcare, retail, food services, and public administration. Businesses along the corridor include small local businesses and larger globally-owned and operated businesses.



Mixed-use corridors serve a vital transportation function and form the backbone of Mattapan's multimodal networks.

Mixed-use corridors are wide, creating long pedestrian crossings, encouraging speeding, and double parking. Crashes are concentrated on these corridors.



Sidewalks are public spaces that define much of a neighborhood's public realm.

Each of the major corridors in Mattapan hosts a diverse set of assets to the neighborhood. These include businesses that represent different cultural identities, the Boston Public Library, and the community health center.

Topic Area - Mixed-Use Corridors

What we heard...

Throughout our engagement, we have heard many things about Mattapan's mixed-use corridors. Some of the priorities, concerns, and opportunities expressed include:

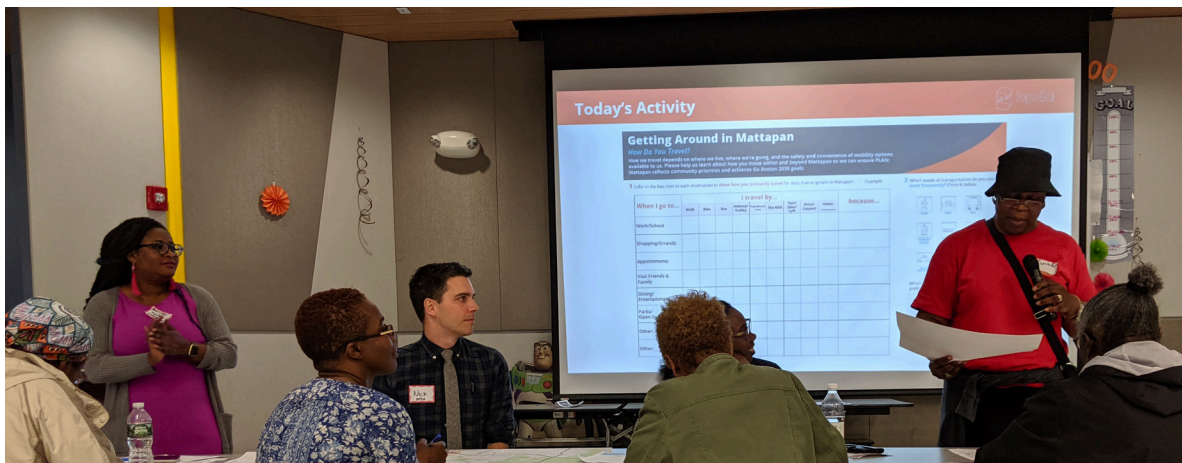
“More bus lines on Cummins”

“Starter residential near T entrances”

“Crossing streets can be dangerous”

“Activate Main Street spaces with arts and public space”

“More diversity in businesses”



Throughout this process we will be testing ideas using pop-ups to improve connectivity and mobility across the neighborhood.

What we will study...

Studying mixed-use corridors will allow us to increase mobility and connectivity across the neighborhood, as well as explore development scenarios for new housing and jobs & businesses. These studies will also inform potential modifications to other neighborhood corridors, too.

Transportation & Mobility

- » Introduce design techniques that slow traffic and make streets feel more inviting for people of all ages who walk, play, or bike.
- » Increase reliability of bus service to make transit a more convenient choice and to enhance connections to jobs and employment.
- » Increase access to rapid transit, bikeshare, and carshare to provide alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles.
- » Activate the public realm with reconstruction projects, such as curb extensions, as well as with experiments using paint, signs, and planters.

Housing

- » Connect housing opportunities with civic and commercial amenities to broaden their impact.
- » Identify opportunities for diverse housing types and mixed-use development along the corridors in order to bring more opportunities for rental and homeownership at mixed-incomes.

People, Culture, and Place

- » Identify opportunities to emphasize the existing culture and community of Mattapan through placemaking.
- » Program public realm improvements to build on the community vision.
- » Work with City agencies and community partners to implement community-centered and community-driven programming and arts.

Jobs & Businesses

- » Enhance opportunities for businesses to thrive with a focus on capturing wealth within the community through:
 - » Identifying market drivers, such as changing demographics and consumer preferences,
 - » Working with Main Streets and other agencies to promote small business growth, and
 - » Analyzing how physical improvements can support existing businesses.
- » Recommend a mix of uses to contribute to the already thriving business district.

What segment of Cummins Highway and Blue Hill Avenue should we focus on for development scenarios?

Topic Area - Mixed-Use Squares & Nodes

What it is...

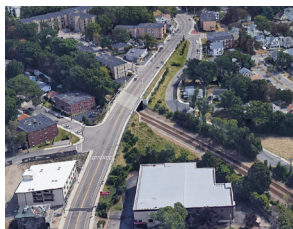
Mixed-use squares & nodes are areas where commercial, retail, and residential uses are concentrated. They can provide opportunities for people to gather and create a destination for the neighborhood.



Mattapan Square

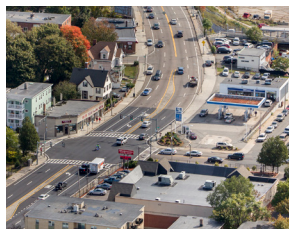
Mattapan Square is the only traditional square in Mattapan. While it is a major hub of activity, it could use improvements to the public realm and transportation network to be more people-oriented.

In order to support this kind of activity, squares and nodes tend to be denser than other parts of the neighborhood. Currently, Mattapan Square is zoned to allow buildings as tall as 55 feet. However, most buildings rise to 1-2 stories or approximately 25 feet. It is important to understand why this condition persists in order to mindfully spur more activity in Mattapan Square.



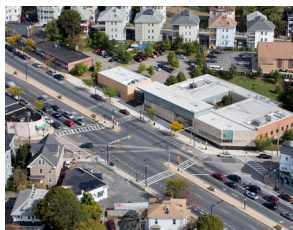
River at Fairmount Line

This particular node is near a more suburban style shopping center but is near the Fairmount Line where a new station was considered in the FIPI.



Morton at Norfolk

This node is already a hub of commercial activity but does not have the adequate public realm improvements to encourage people to stay.



Blue Hill at Walk Hill

This node is primarily a car-oriented intersection that lacks "a sense of place," but could be improved to allow more social engagement opportunities.



Cummins at Greenfield

This intersection has minimal commercial activity and is difficult to navigate, but could support the neighborhood through new retail activity.

What we know...



Squares & nodes are meant to be major destinations for a neighborhood.

Squares & nodes provide opportunities to meet outside of homes and places of employment. While Mattapan Square may be a prominent destination, other destinations could be created to benefit Mattapan.



In 2017, only 2% of Mattapan residents were employed in Mattapan.

Mixed-use squares & nodes are economic centers given their commercial and retail uses. This means that new jobs could be created in Mattapan and allow for shorter commute times for Mattapan residents.



Squares & nodes have the most businesses, foot traffic, transit connections, and vehicle traffic.

Nodes and squares in Mattapan are often defined by large and complex intersections and on-street parking. While streets serve a vital function, they are also public spaces. Squares & nodes in Mattapan can be enhanced to create spaces to socialize and gather.



Mixed-use squares & nodes also require housing to support the commercial and retail uses.

Mattapan is characterized by low-density single-family homes, but more housing can be concentrated in squares & nodes to meet Mattapan's growing need for diverse housing and to ensure the success of new businesses.

Topic Area - Mixed-Use Squares & Nodes

What we heard...

Throughout our engagement, we have heard many things about Mattapan's squares & nodes. Some of the priorities, concerns, and opportunities expressed include:

“Do something with the Stone Building”

“Commercial local ownership”

“The Square needs an arts and cultural center and hub”

“We need a sit down restaurant in Mattapan”



The planning team can help make space to celebrate Mattapan's identities but it's up to the community to use those spaces.

What we will study...

We will be studying mixed-use squares & nodes at a development scenario level. These scenarios will help identify the necessary density and mix of housing and commercial space that will achieve the PLAN: Mattapan vision. Along with new commercial development we will also explore a diversity of housing types to support the neighborhood.

Transportation & Mobility

- » Seek opportunities to activate the public realm and increase public space by repurposing redundant or underused pavement.
- » Simplify intersections, making crossings safer, and calm traffic.
- » Work with MassDOT, MBTA, and various City departments to prioritize moving people safely rather than faster.

Housing

- » Guide growth and development surrounding transit hubs, such as the newly opened Blue Hill Avenue Station.
- » Introduce creative housing solutions to meet the needs of Mattapan, including housing for young professionals, senior housing, and more homeownership opportunities, to name a few.
- » Support the stabilization of the existing housing stock in the residential areas.
- » Locate housing in economic centers to promote shorter commute times and increase community wealth opportunities.

People, Cultures, and Places

- » Encourage a diversity of use types to include creative space for artists and makers in the Mattapan area.
- » Support a mix of uses to allow for more “third spaces” where people can gather, collaborate, and engage with the broader community.
- » Enhance the public realm in the squares & nodes in order to create a sense of place and allow for Mattapan’s many identities to flourish.

Jobs & Businesses

- » Continue to promote and support local businesses by partnering with other City departments and agencies.
- » Explore opportunities for a diversity of commercial and retail spaces to enrich the business community and meet market demands.
- » Analyze other infrastructure needs to encourage community gathering without diminishing access to neighborhood jobs & businesses.

In addition to Mattapan Square, which square or node identified on the previous page do you think we should focus on for development scenarios?

Glossary for PLAN: Mattapan

Some of the words and phrases we will be using have different meanings outside of a planning context. Others are very specific to planning and aren't frequently used in everyday life. Below are some definitions to help clarify the terms we frequently use.

American Community Survey (ACS)

Most of the demographic information in this packet is drawn from the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS only collects information from a sample, or a subset of the total population. Statistics are calculated from the samples to make estimates or inferences about the whole population. Thus, the data have margins of error that are sometimes quite large, and are not exact.

Census Block Group

A Census Block Group is a geographical unit used by the U.S. Census Bureau that is between the Census Tract and the Census Block. It is the smallest geographical unit for which the bureau publishes sampled data from the ACS. Typically, Block Groups have populations of 600 to 3,000 people. The boundaries of Census Block Groups are determined in a partnership between local governments and the Census Bureau.

Deep Dives

Deep dives area where we spend some time focusing closely on specific themes. These are meant to be informative and give space to share knowledge between the planning team and the community. They will include handouts, presentation, and detail discussions. We will have deep dives on: Housing; Jobs & Businesses; Transportation & Mobility.

Demographics

Demographics are statistical data relating to the population and particular groups within it.

Focus Area

A focus area is a specific geography we use to better understand the conditions of the whole neighborhood. Focus areas allow us to work quicker by giving us a baseline of information as we test new ideas that could apply to similar areas throughout the neighborhood.

Household vs. Family

Households and families are basic units of analysis in demography. They are not the same thing. A **household** is composed of one or more people who occupy a housing unit. Not all households contain families. Under the U.S. Census Bureau definition, **family households** consist of two or more individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, although they also may include other unrelated people. **Non-family households** consist of people who live alone or who share their residence with unrelated individuals. Sometimes, data are better representations of the neighborhood when sampled from family households rather than all households.

Housing Voucher

Housing Vouchers also help tenants with affordability. A voucher (with funds from the State or Federal government) pays the difference between what the tenant can pay, and what the landlord is asking for in rent. The goal is that the tenant would pay no more than 30% of their income in rent, but rent payments may not exceed 40% of the tenant's income.

Income-Restricted Housing

Income-restricted housing refers to any properties where rents or sales prices are limited through public ownership and/or legal agreements with local, state, or federal authorities. In some rental properties, the tenant pays a percentage (usually 30%) of their income towards housing, and the State or Federal government pays the difference. In other properties, the owner of the building, in return for public funds or zoning variances, agrees to keep the rents below market. In these properties, the tenant pays a set rent, which may be higher than 30% of their income.

Median vs. Mean / Average

The **median** is the middle value in a given set of data arranged from smallest to largest. The **mean or average** is the sum of all the values divided by the number of values in a set of data.

Ex: 4 is the median of 1, 3, 4, 8, 9; 5 is the average (25 / 5).

Mixed-Use Corridors

A mixed-use corridor refers to areas in the neighborhood that are suited for active ground-floor uses and the amount of density required to support them. In Mattapan, this includes Blue Hill Avenue, Cummins Highway, Morton Street, and River Street.

Mixed-Use Squares & Nodes

Mixed-use squares & nodes are areas where commercial, retail, and residential uses are concentrated. They can provide opportunities for people to gather and create a destination for the neighborhood.

Pop-Ups

You'll spot pop-ups around the neighborhood following workshops. Pop-ups also give us the opportunity to test ideas in real-time through tactical experiments and placemaking. Look out for these pop-ups throughout the next year!

Residential Fabric

Neighborhood residential fabric refers to areas in the

neighborhood that are primarily, though not exclusively, used for housing. Residential areas make up the majority of the Mattapan neighborhood.

Study Area and Census Tracts

The boundaries of PLAN: Mattapan were determined by following the United State Postal Service's Zone Improvement Plan (ZIP) code for Mattapan (02126). The 2013-2017 American Community Survey and 2000/2010 Census data in this packet are summaries of the selected Census Tracts that overlap the boundaries of the neighborhood. In this packet, these Census Tracts will be referred to as Mattapan. While the Census Tract boundaries do not match up with the study area boundary perfectly, the data from the Census Tracts show demographic patterns that are consistent with the diversity of Mattapan as a whole.

Topic Area

A topic area, also referred to as a typology, is a classification of multiple areas in a neighborhood with similar physical characteristics. We separated the neighborhood into three topic areas: Residential Fabric, Mixed-Use Corridors, and Mixed-Use Squares & Nodes.

Workers' Earnings vs. Household Income

Workers' earnings are how much income residents earn from their wages or self-employment. Worker earnings are different from household income; households can include multiple workers therefore multiple workers' earnings.

Workshops

Workshops are larger meetings where we ask questions, gain feedback and "workshop" **with** you. Workshops allow us to inquire about your thoughts and find opportunities to see them come to life. We will present ideas and invite feedback to make sure we got it right. They include presentations, table discussions, focused activities, and decision-making.

Notes

Use these pages to take notes throughout the conversation. Jot down questions you might have so that we don't forget to address them during our discussion.

Notes

Guided by Imagine Boston 2030, PLAN: Mattapan is a City planning initiative that seeks to ensure that we preserve wisely, enhance equitably, and grow inclusively. Through these three principles of “preserve, enhance, and grow,” the City’s planning team will work with the community to create a comprehensive vision for the Mattapan planning area and guide future growth and investment.

PLAN: Mattapan will work closely with the community to review past planning efforts, and identify needs and opportunities for improvements which will support the long-term equitable growth and sustainability of the neighborhood. Focuses will include, though are not limited to, economic development (jobs and business) and the creation of transit-oriented market-rate and affordable housing growth while preserving the neighborhood’s character and unique attributes.

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