



PLAN: Downtown

Advisory Group Meeting - Policy Actions Workshop

June 13, 2023



**boston planning &
development agency** 1

Meeting Recording

At the request of community members, this event will be recorded and posted on the PLAN: Downtown project webpage at <http://bostonplans.org/PlanDowntown> for those who are unable to attend the zoom event live.

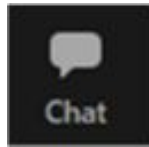
It is possible that participants may be recording the meeting with their phone cameras or other devices. If you do not wish to be recorded during the meeting, please turn off your microphone and camera.

If your camera and microphone are off, you can still participate through the text chat feature at the end of the presentation.

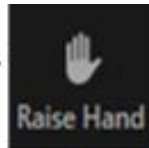
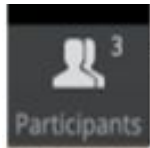


Zoom Tips

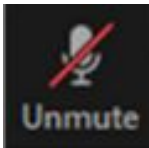
Welcome! Here are some tips for first-time Zoom users.
Your controls are at the bottom of the screen:



Use the **chat** to type a comment or ask a question at any time –
Members of the PLAN: Downtown team will enable the chat at the end.



To **raise your hand**, click on “Participants” at the bottom of your screen, and then choose the “Raise Hand” option in the participant box, or press *9 on your phone



Mute/unmute – Participants will be muted during the presentation – the host will unmute you during discussion if you raise your hand and it is your turn to talk. To mute/unmute on your phone press *6.



Turns your **video on/off**



Zoom Etiquette

- We want to ensure that this conversation is a pleasant experience for all attendees.
- Please remain muted until called on. If you'd like to speak during this time please use the "Raise Hand" function in Zoom so a BPDA moderator can unmute attendees.
- Please be respectful of each other's time.
- We ask that participants limit their questions so that others may participate in the discussion. If you have more questions, please wait until all others attending have an opportunity to ask questions.
- If we are unable to get to your question at this meeting please put them in the Chat at the end or email plandowntown@boston.gov



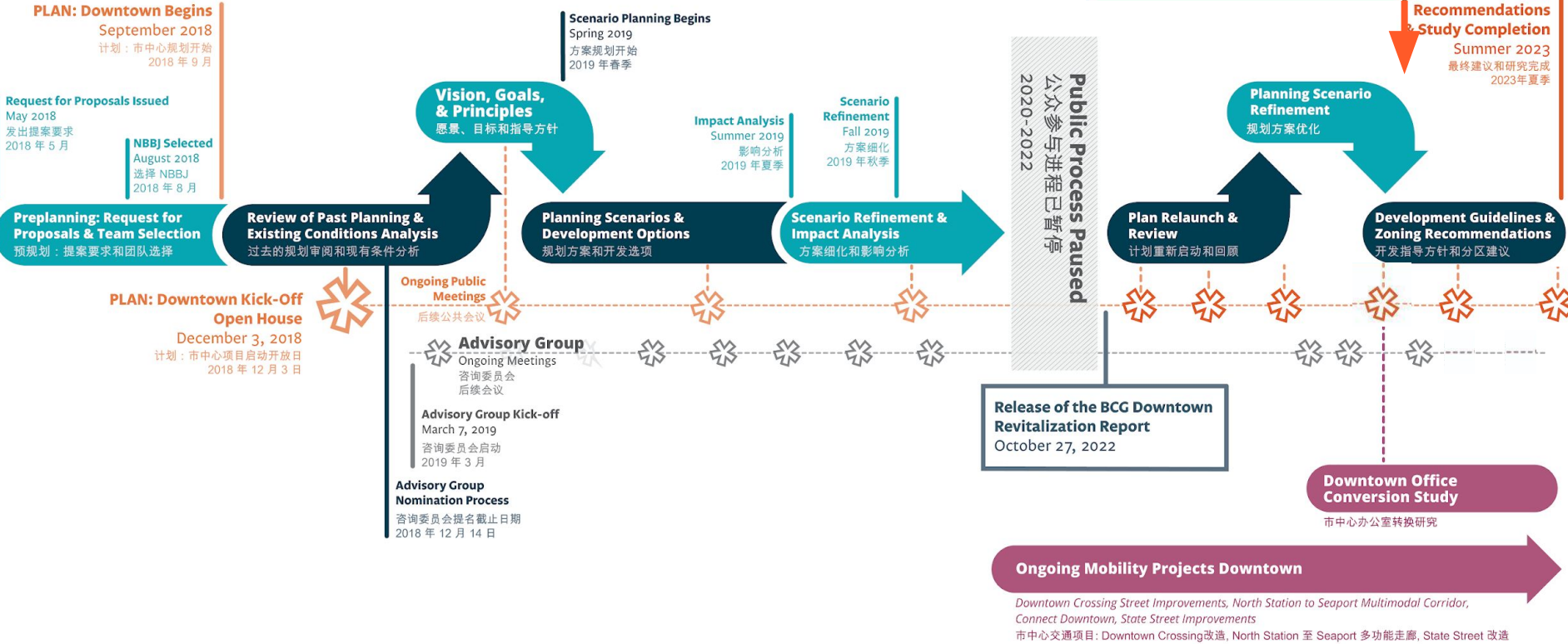
Agenda

Advisory Group Meeting

- Welcome and Timeline Updates
- PLAN: Downtown Recommendations
 - Policy Recommendations
 - Priority Public Realm Improvement Projects
- Breakout Groups
- AG Discussion

Timeline

Where we are now
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Public Feedback to Date

Office conversion

- As part of an office conversion program, how do we encourage a creative mix of uses that include small businesses, cultural spaces, and diverse ground floor uses?
- Why should we provide financial support to private developers to convert their buildings?

Zoning, use, and heights

- There should be a finer look at the proposed zoning heights to ensure they respect character preservation areas
- Besides height how can building character and scale be best preserved?
- Allow for higher and denser development when it meets community priorities, such as for a significant percentage of affordable housing

Streamlining public benefits Downtown

- How is the density-bonus system managed?
- What specific projects will this support?



Ladder blocks walkthrough, April 4th 2023

PLAN: Downtown Recommendations

Policy and Planning Actions

City strategies and actions as they relate to: *Preservation, Equity and Affordable Housing, Mobility, Public Realm, and Climate and Resiliency*

Zoning Recommendations

- **Streamlined public benefits and density-bonus program**
- **New height and use regulations** for growth and character areas

Design Guidelines

- **Site and building design:** massing, frontages, servicing, architectural elements
- **Public realm and open space:** streetscape, plantings, lighting, view sheds, etc.

Priority Projects

- **Priority public realm improvements:** open spaces, tactical projects, etc.
- **Downtown office conversion program**
- **Areaways**



PLAN: Downtown Recommendations

Policy and Planning Actions

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Zoning Recommendations

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- **Areaways**



Policy Recommendations



Policy and Planning Actions

Establish a coordinated direction across city departments (Planning, Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, Boston Transportation Department...) that also includes:

- *Ongoing planning/initiatives*: Incorporates other ongoing planning work (such as the Chinatown Master Plan) or citywide initiatives (SPACE program...)
- *Future planning*: Commits to conducting future planning studies (such as the Chinatown Cultural Plan)

Goals



Preservation

Preserve cultural heritage, historic building fabric, and embrace distinctive histories to create a unique and cohesive Downtown and Chinatown.



Mixed-use Growth

Revitalize Downtown by encouraging economic development, small business growth, and diverse ground-floor uses.



Equity & Affordable Housing

Enhance access to housing and amenities Downtown for all levels of affordability, stages of life, and backgrounds.



Mobility

Strengthen connections to and throughout Downtown, with a focus on active transportation, transit, and other non-vehicular modes of transportation.



Open Space & Public Realm

Improve existing public spaces and create new ones that invigorate downtown year-round.



Climate & Resilience

Ensure new and existing spaces and development are resilient and mitigate climate change impacts.



Preservation

Preserve cultural heritage, historic building fabric, and embrace distinctive histories to create a unique and cohesive Downtown and Chinatown.

- **Strengthen the Theater District as a cultural hub** by incentivizing development of affordable performance, production, and exhibition spaces.
- **Promote 2D and 3D public art interventions** by local artists and makers: in active alleys and blank façades, in wayfinding and streetscape furniture design, incentivized on walls, streets and public spaces when not incorporated into design improvements/proposals.
- Support the Mayor' Office of Arts & Culture in the creation of a **Chinatown Cultural Master Plan** that includes an updated inventory of cultural assets and strategies to preserve and expand cultural and artistic vitality in the neighborhood.
- **Petition the state to designate Chinatown as Cultural Districts within the City of Boston.**



Mixed-use Growth

Revitalize Downtown by encouraging economic development, small business growth, and diverse ground-floor uses.

- **Incentivize placement of community infrastructure** such as schools, libraries, and recreation centers alongside or as part of proposed development.
- **Incentivize new uses for underutilized parking garages** that create opportunities for public amenities and spaces.
- Consider reserving space in new projects or on publicly owned parcels for **rotating artists' space**.
- **Continue support for the SPACE grant program** helping small business owners secure new storefront space or expand.
- **Consider a new process for licensing or permitting Food & Beverage businesses** to improve access for M/WBEs and first-time brick-and-mortar businesses, advocating for change to state-level regulations as needed.
- Ensure that **projects that displace small (<2,500 sf) independent businesses must provide tenant space of equivalent size in new or existing spaces**.
- **Facilitate the location of short-term and temporary uses in vacant ground floor retail spaces** by streamlining the permitting process for short-term occupation





Equity & Affordable Housing

Enhance access to housing, services, and amenities Downtown for all levels of affordability, stages of life, and backgrounds.

- **Further study alternative development models that make housing more affordable** such as co-housing, custom build housing, community land trusts - and their viability and feasibility in Downtown.
- **Expand the number and range of housing options** with a priority on low- and middle-income family housing.
- **Explore options for addressing housing stabilization in Chinatown.**
- Provide needed housing supply, while preserving historic building facades through the **conversion of underutilized office buildings** to residential.



Mobility

Strengthen connections to and throughout Downtown, with a focus on active transportation, transit, and other non-vehicular modes of transportation.

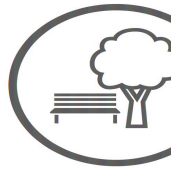
- **Support bus prioritization** on city streets through Downtown. Ongoing implementation efforts include BTD's "North Station to Seaport Multimodal Corridor".
- **Support the expansion of the city's protected bike lane network through Downtown.**
- Ensure that Downtown has **consistent lighting based on the light levels and color temperature.**
- **Explore the creation of a bus hub** to improve connections and consolidate transit access.
- **Explore directionality changes to streets** to provide improved bus transit priority, enhanced stops/stations and pedestrian improvements
- **Explore the potential expansion of the City's pedestrian zone**
- **Support MBTA's efforts for accessibility improvements** to the Downtown Crossing, Chinatown and State Street Stations
- **Advocate for accessibility improvements to the Boylston Station**
- **Conduct a study to reallocate curb space according to the highest and best use in relation to each area in Downtown.** This could include: TNC pick-up/drop-off zones, Bike corrals, Temporal bus lanes, Limited delivery times, Elimination of on-street parking



Climate & Resilience

Strengthen connections to and throughout Downtown, with a focus on active transportation, transit, and other non-vehicular modes of transportation.

- **Incentivize private investment in vulnerable historic buildings**, referring to the Resilient Historic Buildings Design Guide for specifics.
- **Incentivize investment in green infrastructure that addresses multiple needs**, including urban heat island effects and stormwater management.
- **Contribute towards district-scaled heat resiliency mitigation.**
- **Incentivize co-location strategies for new development and bulk transformers.**
- **Support cooling centers and programming options.**



Open Space

Improve existing public spaces and create new ones that invigorate downtown year-round.

- **Enhance the context around transit connections** through Downtown - making transit areas more efficient and legible.
- **Support improved connections to the waterfront**
- **Improve wayfinding Downtown** highlighting transit entrances and visual cues at key intersection.
- **Update standards for clear signage** indicating all privately-owned spaces that are open to the public.
- **Support the reinforcement or filling of areaways** that inhibit sidewalk and public realm improvements, especially on key corridors like Beach St.
- **Improve the public realm by revitalizing existing and creating new parks and plazas.**
- **Use temporary interventions in Phillips Square to guide permanent improvements to the public realm.**
- **Pursue the creation of a greenway along Marginal/Hudson Street**, beginning with a road diet and with a goal of full pedestrianization between Tai Tung St. and Tremont St.
- **Encourage and facilitate tactical public realm projects** including: intersection redesign, traffic islands and corner redesign, road diets.

Priority Projects

Public Realm Improvements



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Public Realm Improvements

1. Eliot Norton Park Extension
2. Oxford Place Playground
3. Tufts Medical Center
4. Philips Square Extension & Permanent Design
5. *Readers' Park**
6. Franklin Street / Tontine East
7. Chauncey Street / Summer Street
8. Bedford Street / Kingston Street
9. Jenney Plaza
10. Liberty Square
11. Milton Place
12. Fiduciary Trust Building
13. Kilby Street / Milk Street
14. *Extended Pedestrian-Priority Zone**
15. Hudson Street / Marginal Street

* Ongoing DTX Street Improvement Project



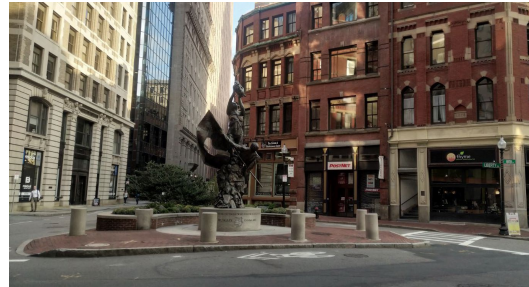
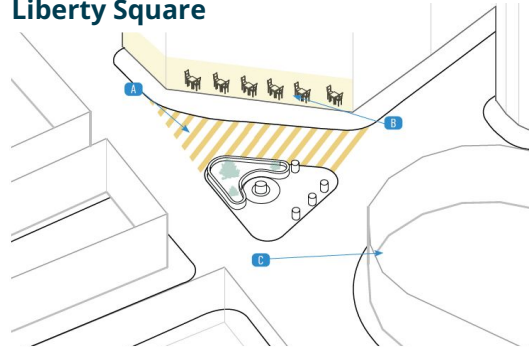
Public Space Improvements

Kilby Street/Milk Street



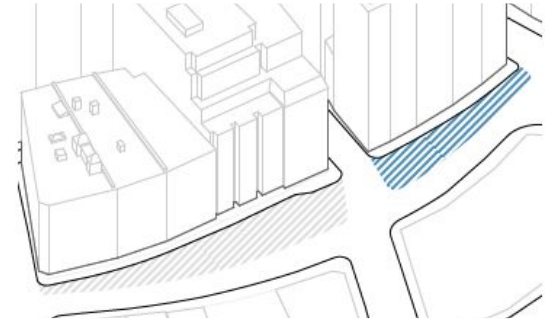
- New tactical public realm plaza merging the existing traffic island with the street.

Liberty Square



- New tactical public realm plaza merging the existing traffic island with the street.

Tontine Crescent East



- Expand the now permanent on Franklin Street plaza east.

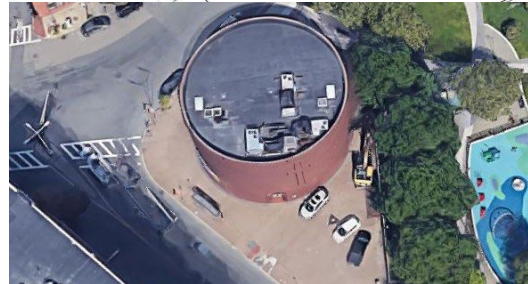
Public Space Improvements

Tufts Medical Center, Chinatown



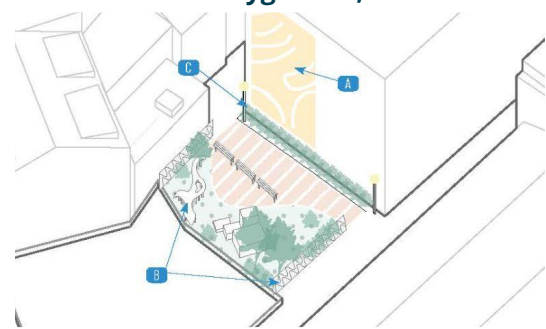
- Provide a clear, well-lit and welcoming connection to Tremont Street.
- Integrate playable landscape and fixed seating; improve lighting to ensure a sense of safety and highlight the route to Tremont Street,

Elliott Norton Park Extension, Chinatown



- Ensure visible sightlines and routes between the playground and existing building
- Improve lighting to provide even illumination and reduce glare

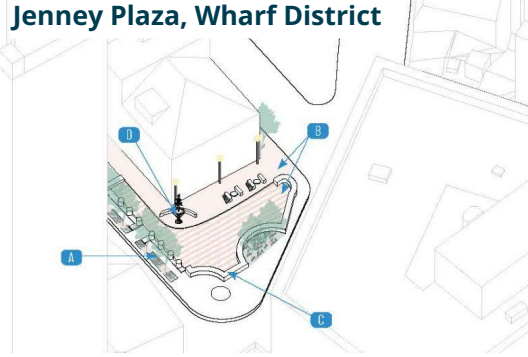
Oxford Street Playground, Chinatown



- Retain mural reflective of Chinatown
- Provide a playable landscape, incorporating existing utility box and perimeter fencing
- Provide uniform lighting that illuminates the interior of Oxford Place

Public Space Improvements

Jenney Plaza, Wharf District



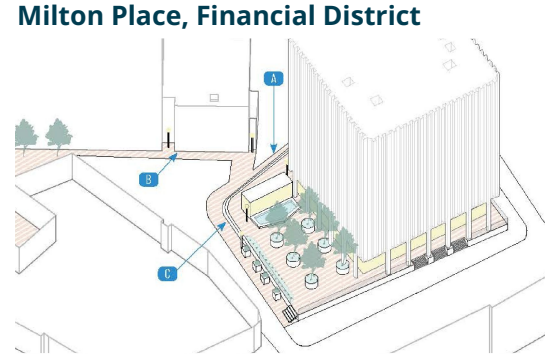
- Thin existing plantings to improve sightlines and sun exposure
- Improve accessibility and comfort by removing bollards and chains
- Use level changes to incorporate seating

Readers Park, Downtown



- Add more shade trees and provide usable green space
- Provide more well-located seating; respect desire lines; retain, but potentially relocate the Irish Famine Memorial within the park

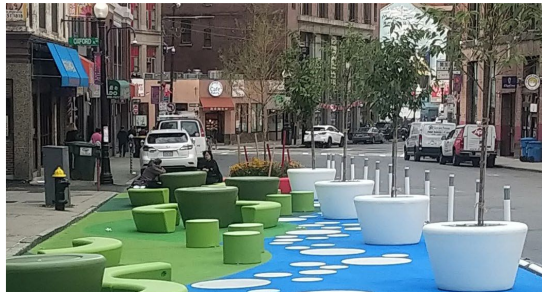
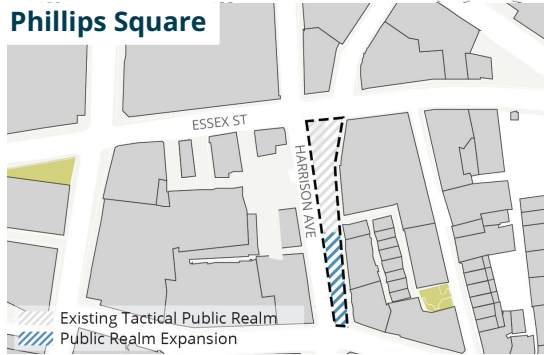
Milton Place, Financial District



- Retain mural reflective of Chinatown
- Provide a playable landscape, incorporating existing utility box and perimeter fencing
- Provide uniform lighting that illuminates the interior of Oxford Place

Public Space Improvements

Phillips Square



- Make Phillips Square a permanent public space with possible expansion south.
- Include opportunities for art and cultural installations.

Hudson / Marginal Street



- Ensure legible sightlines and routes including a road diet and potentially full pedestrianization.
- Introduce green infrastructure and plantings whenever possible.
- Improve lighting to reduce glare and provide even illumination.

Breakout Groups



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Breakout Groups

Discussion questions

- Are the recommendations focused on the right issues?
- What else would you like to see in these policy recommendations?
- What are the potential metrics of success?
- What other partners are needed to ensure successful implementation?
- What challenges may arise with implementation?
- How would you rank the priority for each recommendation overall and for different districts?



Breakout Groups



Preservation



Mobility



Mixed-use Growth



Open Space & Public Realm



Equity & Affordable Housing



Climate & Resilience



Next Steps



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Next Steps

- *Advisory Group Comments: Policy Actions*
- **Public Meeting:** Draft Plan Release & Zoning Recommendations - *August, 2023*
- **Advisory Group Meeting:** Draft Plan Overview Meeting - *August, 2023*
- *Public comment period August-September 2023*
- **Public Meeting:** Final Plan Release & Zoning Recommendations - *Early October 2023*
- **Board and Zoning:** *Early October 2023*

Get Involved with PLAN: Downtown: <http://bit.ly/plandowntownboston>

Questions and Comments: plandowntown@boston.gov

Discussion

