



PLAN: Downtown

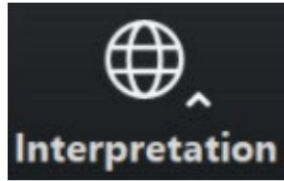
Public Meeting

September 13, 2023



**boston planning &
development agency**

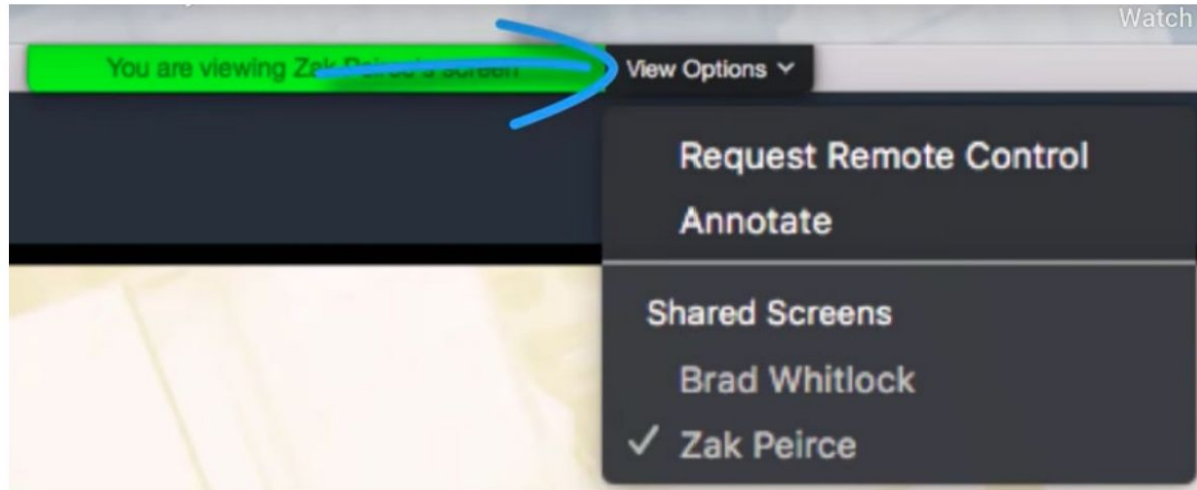
How to choose a language interpretation channel



"Mandarin" - **Judy Bedell**

"Cantonese" - **Joan Siu**

"English"



Meeting Recording

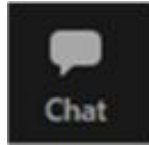
At the request of community members, this event will be recorded and posted on the PLAN: Downtown project webpage at <http://bostonplans.org/PlanDowntown> for those who are unable to attend the zoom event live.

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.

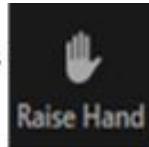
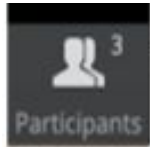
If your camera and microphone are off, you can still participate through the text chat feature at the end of the presentation.

Zoom Tips

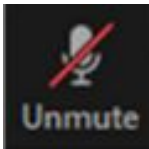
Welcome! Here are some tips for first-time Zoom users.
Your controls are at the bottom of the screen:



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

PLAN: Downtown

Create a new framework for the growth, enhancement, and preservation of Downtown Boston as a place for all, balancing livability, daylight, walkability, climate change preparedness, access to open space, affordability, and a dynamic mix of uses.



Agenda

Public Meeting

- Welcome and timeline updates
- Feedback so far
- Next steps
- Public discussion

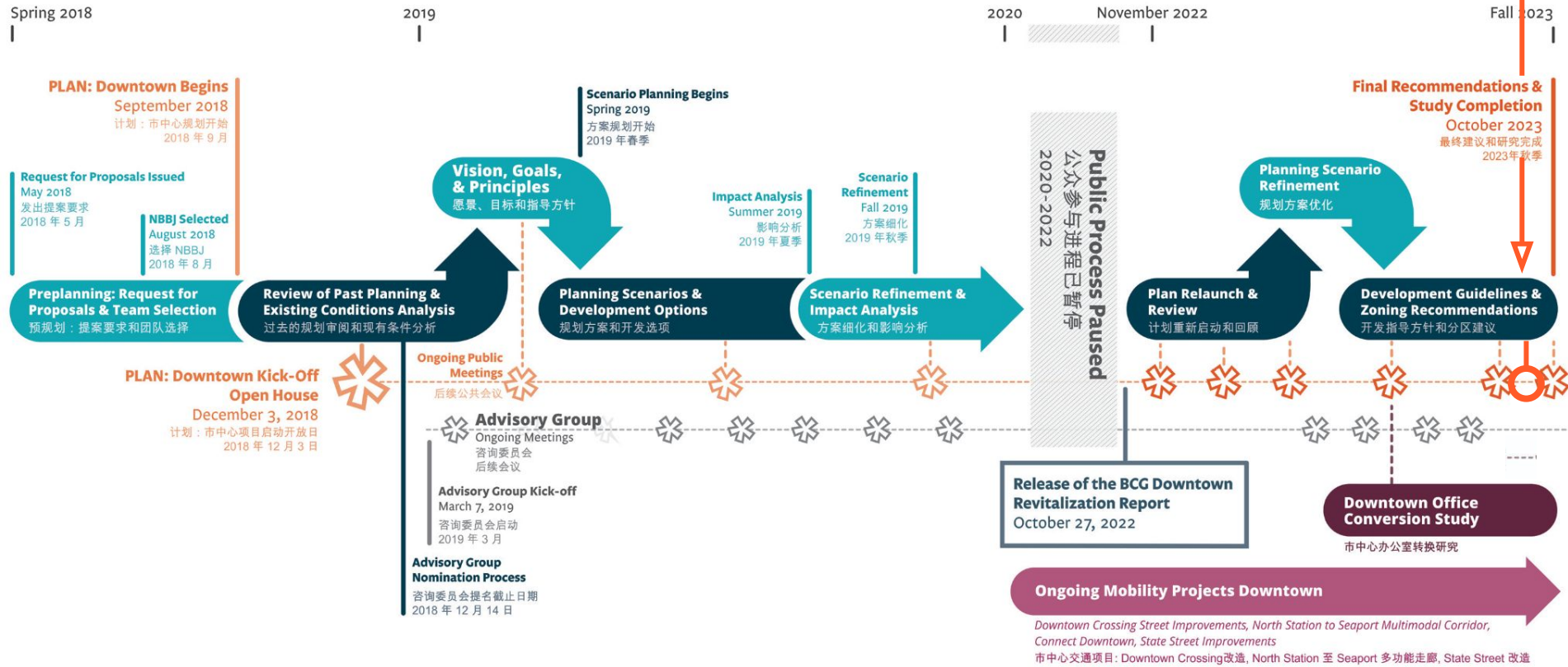
The PLAN: Downtown report was released on August 21st

***Public comment period until:
September 18, 2023***



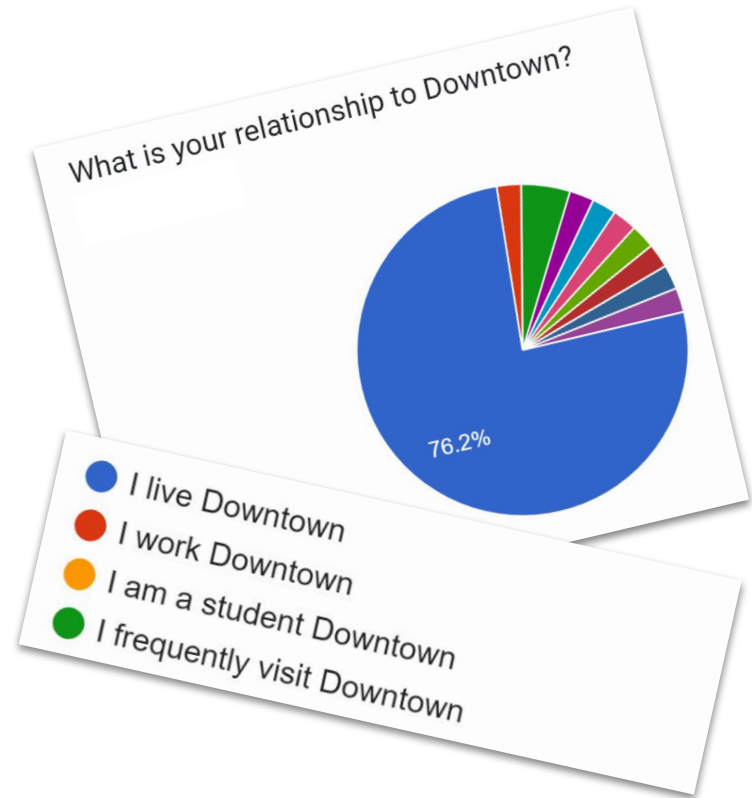
Timeline

We are here!



Public Feedback So Far...

- *Prioritize residential development and access to housing*
- *Activate empty buildings and vacant ground floors*
- *Focus on public safety and the accessibility of public spaces*
- *Provide support and services for individuals experiencing homelessness*
- *Address traffic congestion and the enforcement of curbside uses*
- *Make it easier to get around via protected bike lanes and pedestrian priority spaces*
- *Preserve historic buildings and character areas*
- *Reconsider the proposed 400' zoning heights along a portion of Washington St.*
- *Do not allow additional office development*



Next Steps



Next Steps

PLAN: Downtown report:

- **Public comment period until:** *September 18, 2023*
 - *Survey Feedback form: <https://forms.gle/NnctcVMxPQtAsNC58>*
- **Public Meeting:** *Final Plan Release - Early October 2023*

Zoning Updates

- **Draft zoning amendment** *(including use changes and baseline heights): Fall 2023*
 - *3 week public comment period after release*
- **Zoning with height-bonus:** *Summer 2024 with Article 80 modernization*



Public Discussion

Contents

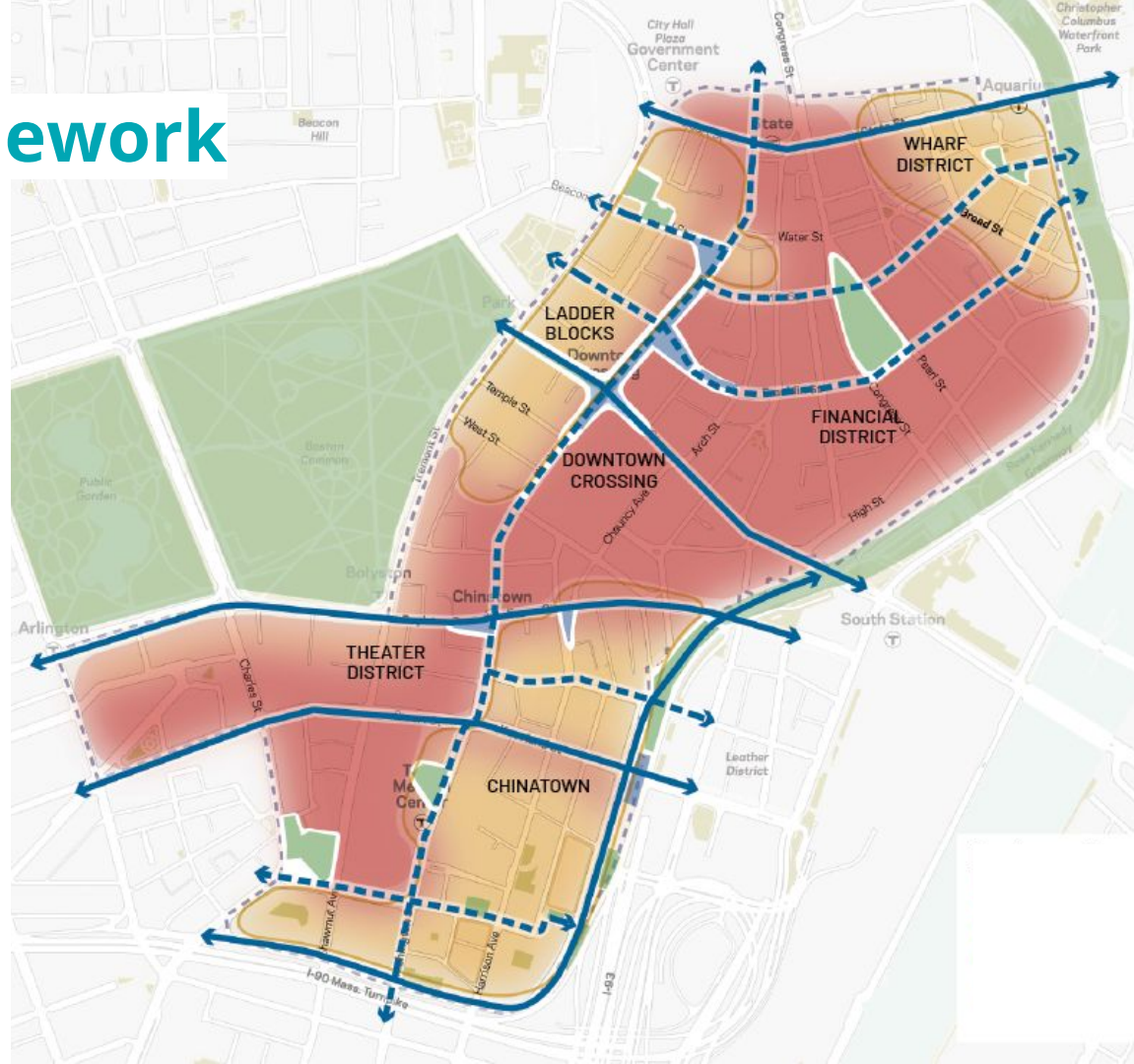
To fulfill community's goals, the report relies on the following components:

- **Existing conditions analysis** of the challenges and opportunities facing Downtown today.
- **Development framework** to guide growth and inform zoning updates.
- **Streetscape and public realm recommendations** for enhanced connectivity and public spaces that support a more vibrant, accessible, and greener Downtown.
- **Priority public realm projects** for new and enhanced public spaces.
- **Policy actions** that establish a coordinated approach across city departments and agencies to fulfill the PLANS goals.
- **Zoning recommendations** to incentivize new growth and public benefits.
- **Design guidelines** to ensure that new development and the public realm respect and enhance Downtown's existing urban fabric.
- **Office conversion recommendations** to support adaptive reuse and residential growth.

Development Framework

Spatial components to guide the growth of Downtown:

- Growth Areas**
Encourage large-scale mixed-use development opportunities that provide benefits for all of Downtown.
- Enhance Areas**
Find opportunities to improve and elevate the area while affirming its distinct historic and cultural identity.
- Public Realm Connectors**
Strengthen key public realm routes that connect existing public open spaces.
- Public Realm Assets**
Improve existing public realm spaces and identify opportunities for new permanent and tactical public space Downtown.



Zoning Updates

New District Boundaries

- Create new sub-districts that more closely reflect Downtown character area boundaries as defined by the community.
- Continue the Chinatown zoning process, building on the findings of PLAN: Downtown and the Chinatown Cultural Plan.

Height and density

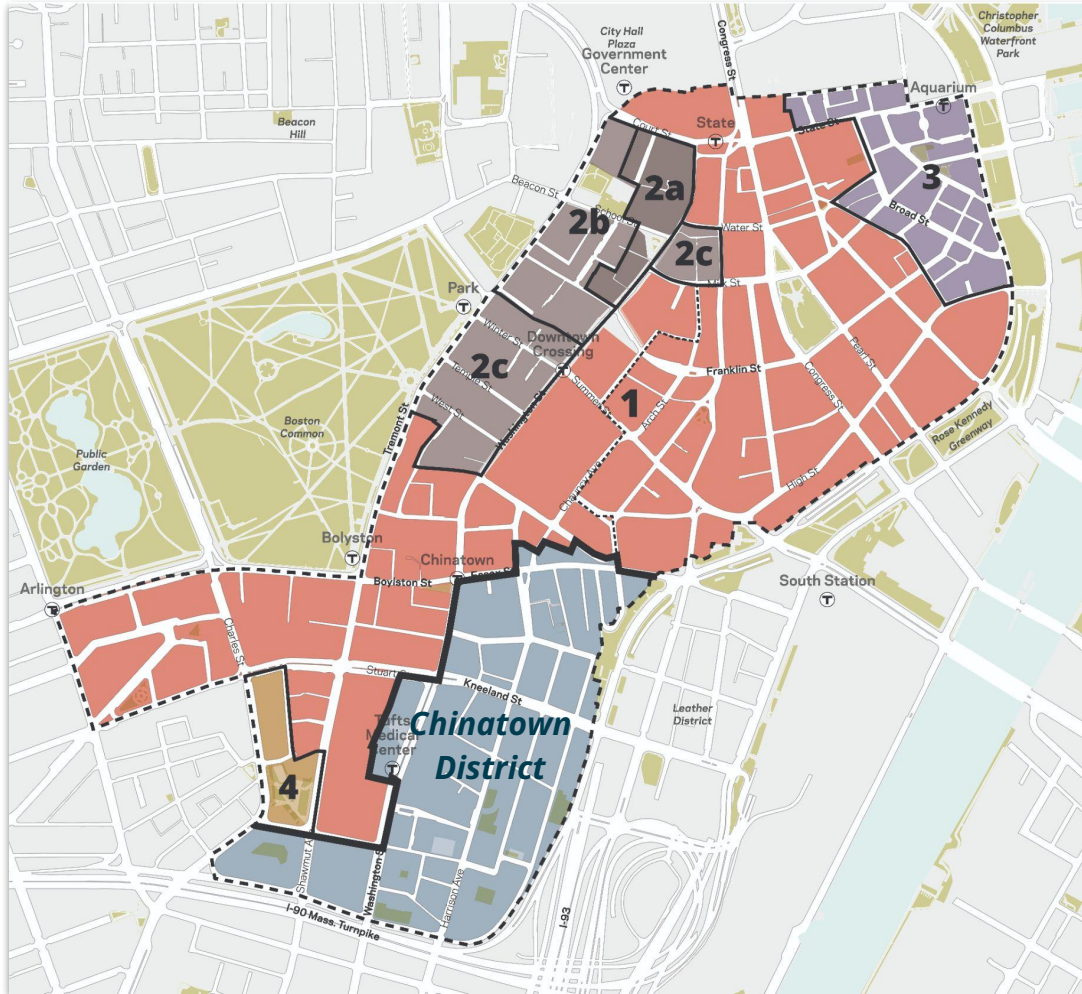
- Change as-of-right heights to match the scale of Downtown's character areas.
- Allow taller bonus-heights where density is most appropriate and transitions from high to low areas.
- Require a floor plate reduction for buildings exceeding the height of the surrounding context to reduce the visual impact of taller buildings on the public realm.

Uses

- Create zoning pathways to streamline residential development, particularly affordable residential development, within Downtown through the office conversion program, the height-bonus program, and base zoning changes.
- Refine inconsistent and prohibitive use definitions in the zoning code to lower barriers for diverse retail, services, and entertainment uses especially on ground floors.
- Ensure existing theaters continue to be prioritized in zoning and development review.

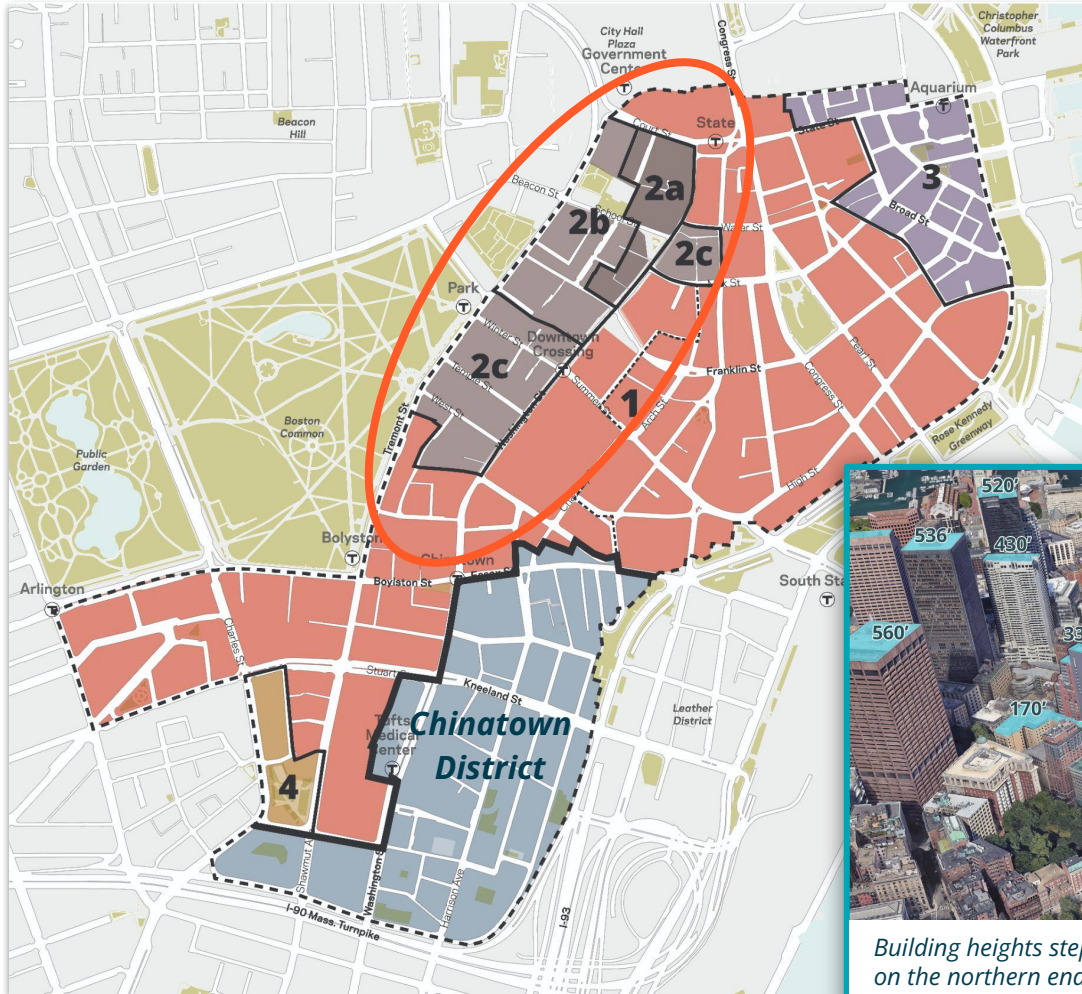
Height-bonus program

- Implement a height-bonus program and public benefit system that streamlines project mitigation, incentivizes mixed-use development where it is most appropriate, and directly funds priority public projects outlined in PLAN: Downtown.



New district boundaries

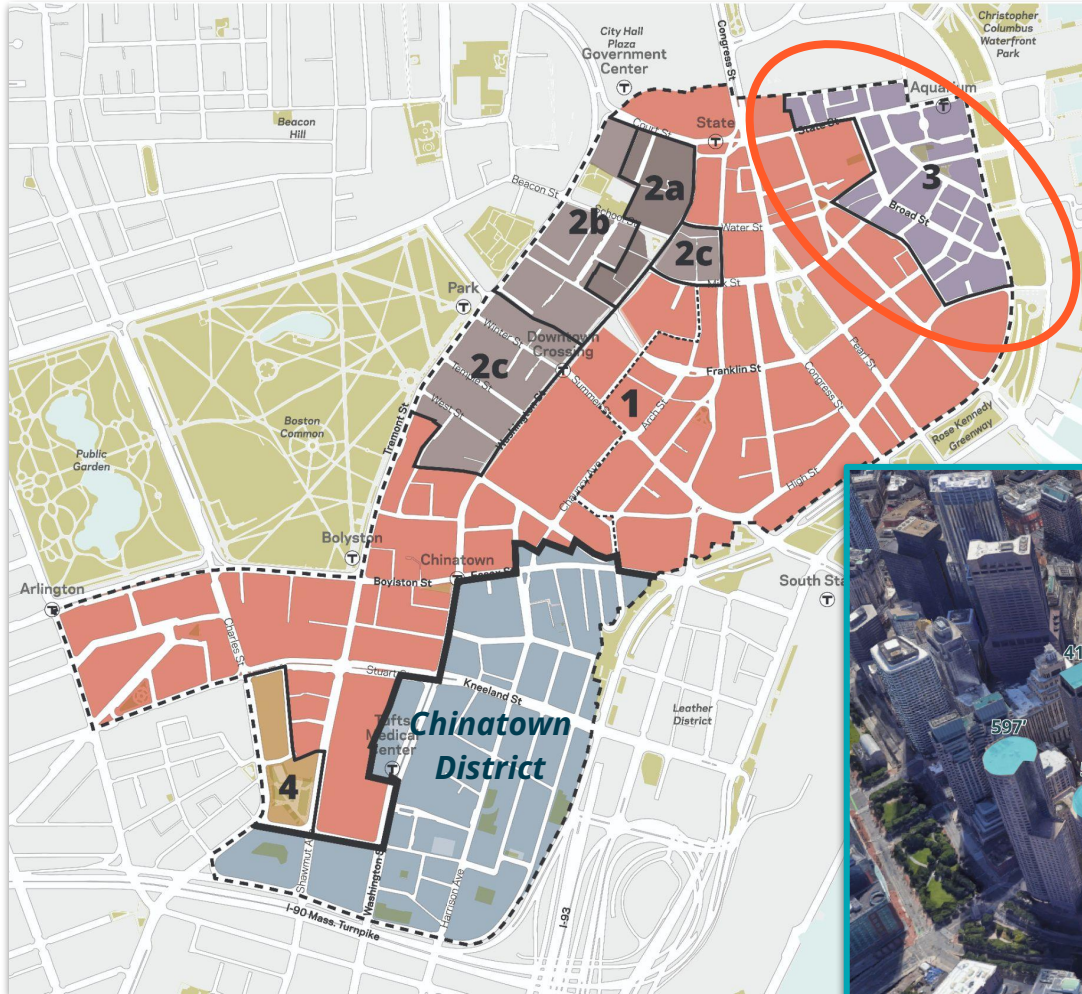
- **New Downtown sub-districts:**
 1. **Downtown Crossing, Theatre District, and Financial District**
 2. **Ladder Blocks**
 3. **Wharf District**
 4. **Bay Village**
- **Chinatown District:** Continue the zoning process to align with the ongoing Chinatown Cultural Plan and address complex use questions in the zoning code.



Heights

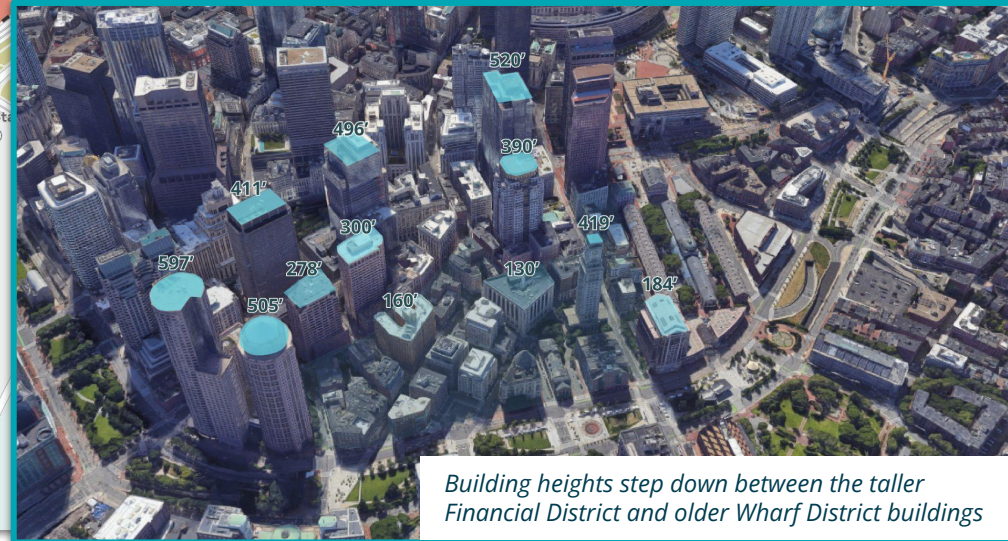
- Change as-of-right heights to match the scale of Downtown's character areas and planned-for growth.
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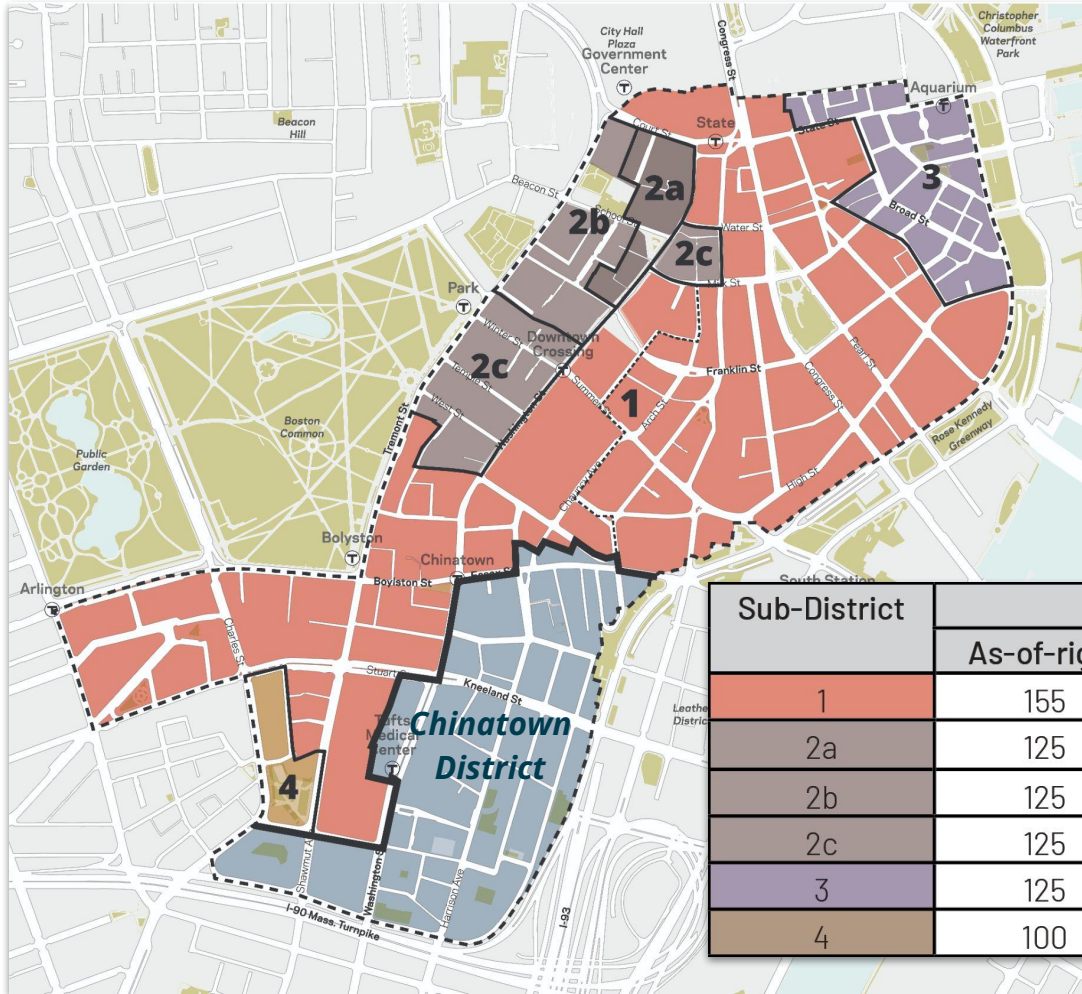


Heights

- Change as-of-right heights to match the scale of Downtown's character areas and planned-for growth.
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Building heights step down between the taller Financial District and older Wharf District buildings



Heights

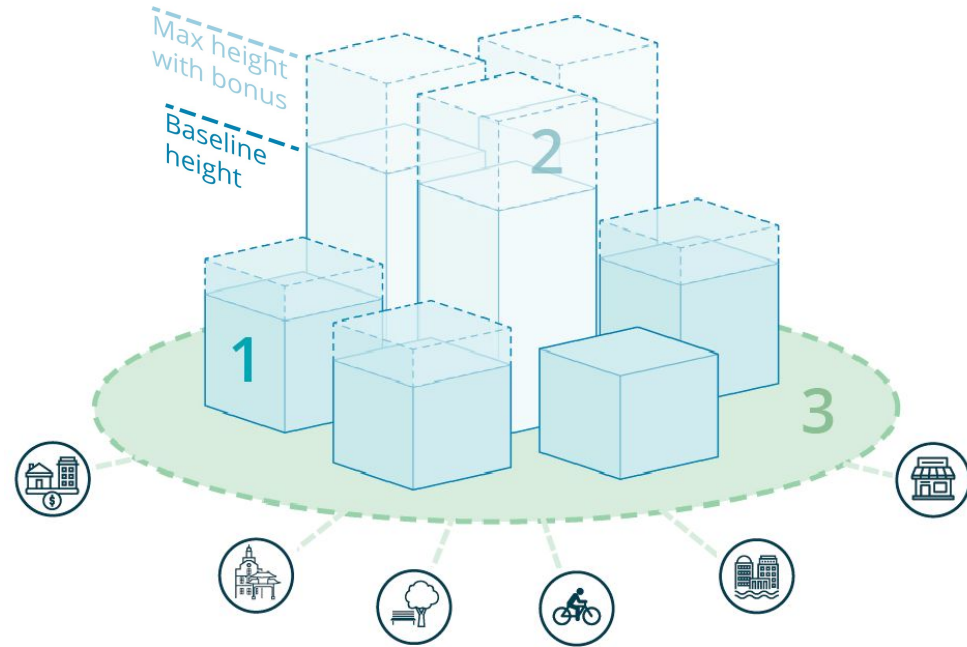
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Sub-District	Height	
	As-of-right	Density Bonus
1	155	Shadow Regulations /FAA
2a	125	400
2b	125	180
2c	125	155
3	125	155
4	100	N/A

Height-bonus Program

Streamlines project mitigation and creates a more predictable development process that can address long-standing needs Downtown.

1. **New baseline heights** match the character of an area.
2. Developers can add **density up to an established maximum building height** in exchange for a predictable contribution to a public benefit fund.
3. The public benefit fund will be used to **directly support projects and programs that benefit Downtown and Chinatown.**



Use recommendations

Existing use definitions and categories in the zoning code are often inconsistent and prohibitive, creating obstacles for retail and entertainment businesses that could help revitalize and activate Downtown.

Use changes will:

- Consolidate and simplify uses so we do not restrict innovative uses
- Allow more uses, particularly entertainment, retail, and cultural uses
- Streamline the code to make it more user friendly

S.P.A.C.E. GRANTS

The City is working to identify creative ways to bring people back to commercial districts to revitalize our local economy. We are seeking to fill vacant storefronts and help small business owners secure new storefront space or expand to a space by subsidizing the costs associated with operating expenses.

24 small businesses were selected for the first round of S.P.A.C.E. Grants:

**1/3 of S.P.A.C.E.
grantees might need
zoning variances.**