

CHINATOWN REZONING

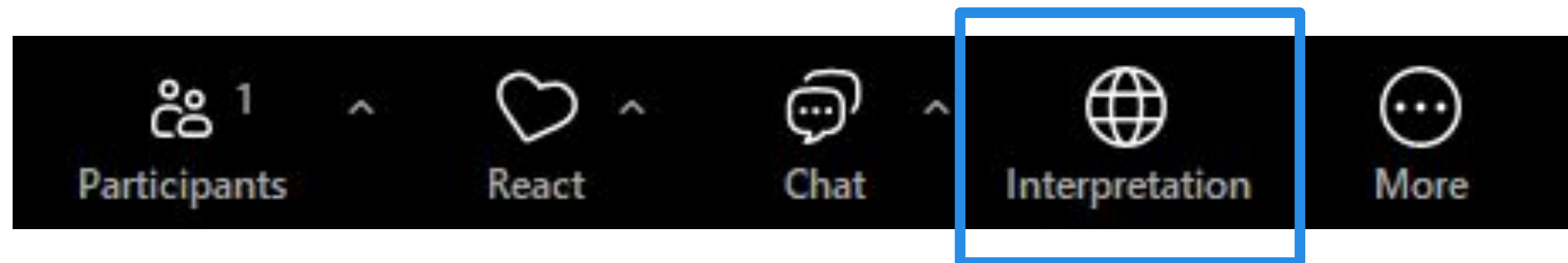
October 8, 2024



Planning Department

CITY of **BOSTON**

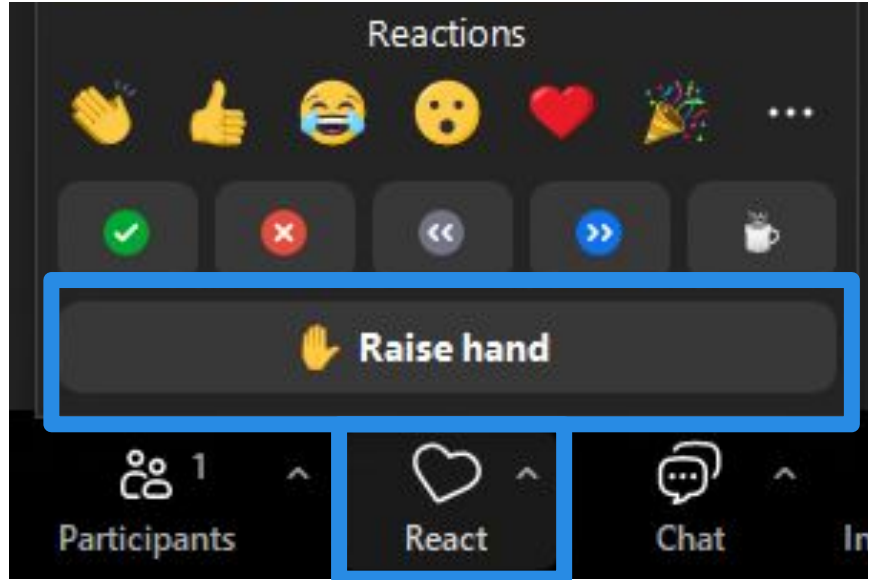
ZOOM CONTROLS FOR INTERPRETATION



(EN) Look for the interpretation icon (globe) at the bottom of your screen and select the language you want to hear.

ZOOM MEETING INFO + TIPS

- **This meeting will be recorded** and posted on the project webpage. If you do not wish to be recorded during the meeting, please turn off your microphone and camera.
- **Zoom controls are available at the bottom of your screen.** Clicking on these symbols activates different features.
- **Use raise hand function** (dial *9 followed by *6 if joining by phone) **and wait to be called upon** before asking your question or providing comment.



Raise Hand



Mute/Unmute

Turn Video On/Off

PLEASE ASK FOR CLARIFICATION!

Ask questions in the chat along the way – our staff are available to answer during the presentation!

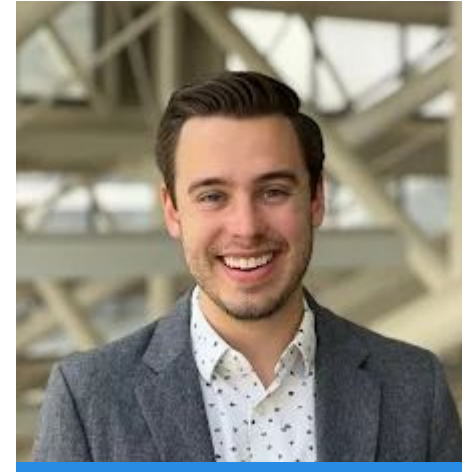
Ask for us to clarify any terms or concepts we discuss – we want to make sure that what we cover is accessible to everyone so you can all share your informed feedback!



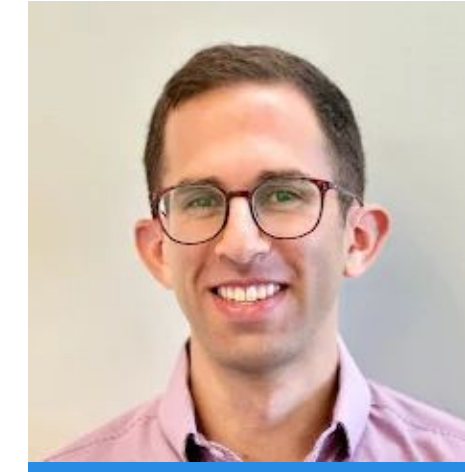
MEET THE TEAM



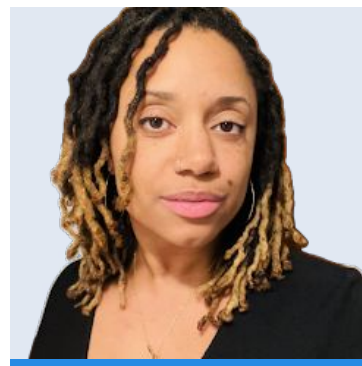
LAMEI ZHANG
Planner II



JACK HALVERSON
Planner II



ANDREW NAHMIAS
Senior Urban
Designer II



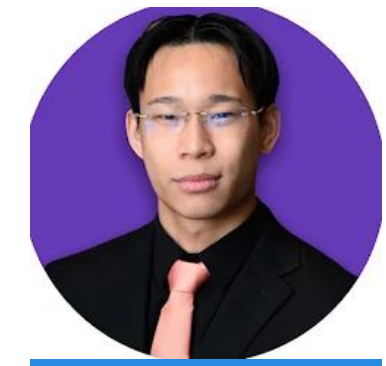
AIMEE CHAMBERS
Planning & Zoning
Director



KATHLEEN ONUFER
Deputy Director of
Zoning



CHRISTINE BRANDAO
Community
Engagement Manager



CHULAN HUANG
Office of
Neighborhood
Services Liaison

TONIGHT'S MEETING

1 CHINATOWN PLANNING + PLAN: DOWNTOWN

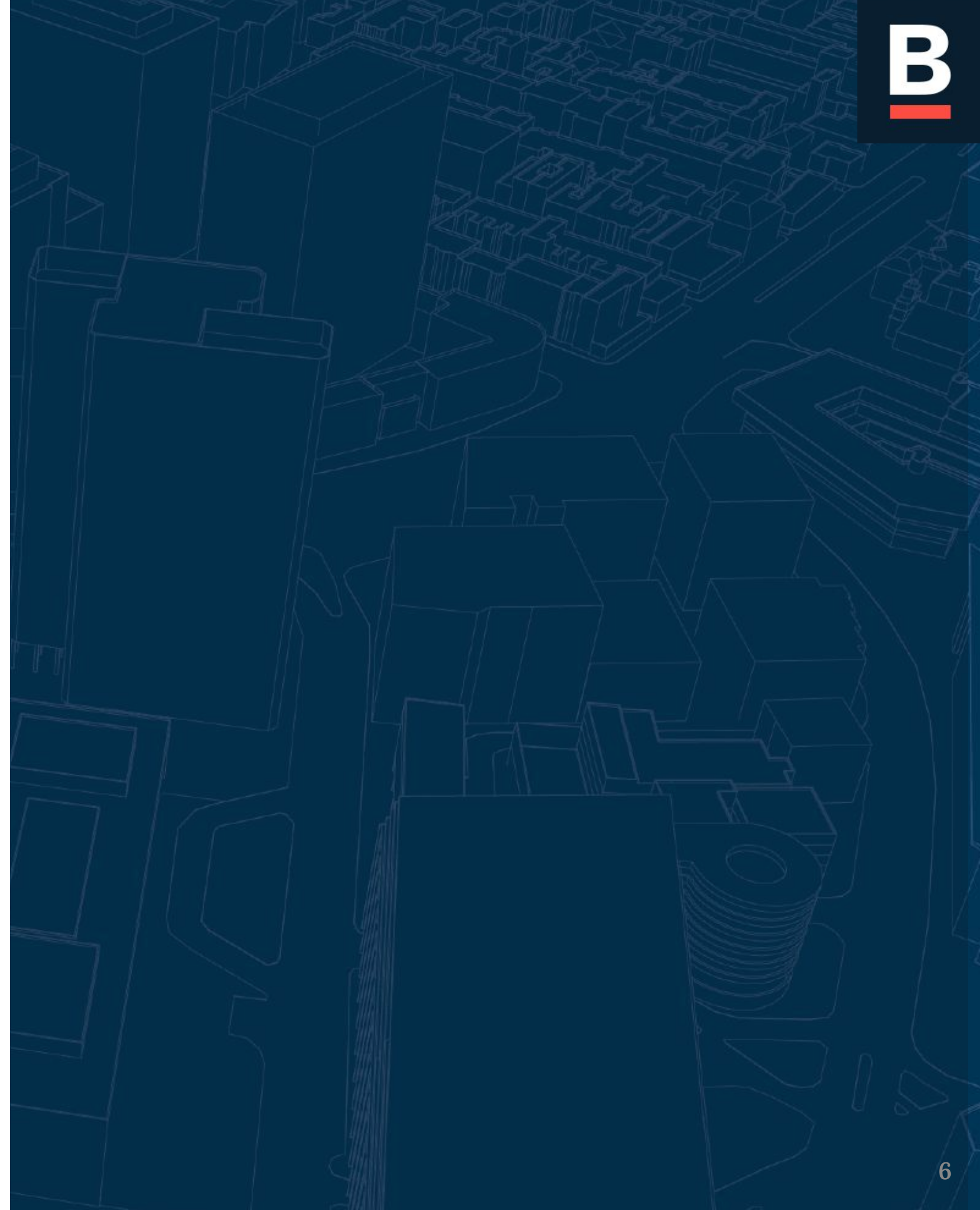
2 WHAT IS ZONING?

3 ZONING FEEDBACK

4 INITIAL ZONING IDEAS

5 DRAFT DESIGN GUIDELINES

6 NEXT STEPS



TIMELINE

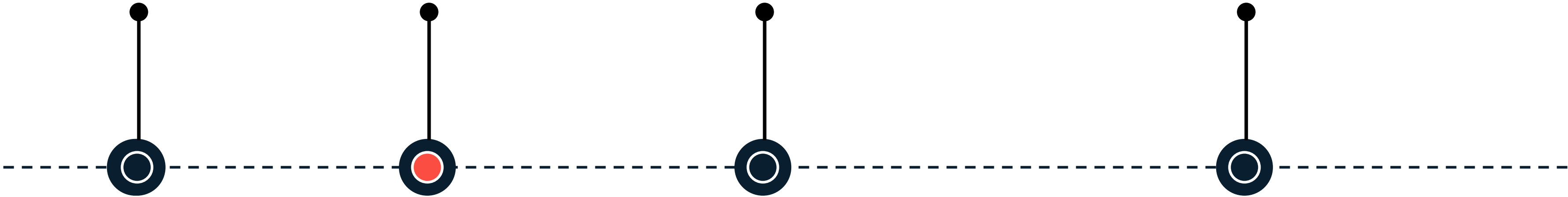


SPRING 2024
Engagement on goals
for new zoning

OCTOBER 8, 2024
Public meeting
summarizing feedback
and previewing zoning

FALL 2024
Release Draft Zoning +
Design Guidelines

WINTER 2024-25
BPDA Board + Boston
Zoning Commission



WE ARE HERE

Draft Zoning + Design Guidelines

Public Comment Period

Zoning Adoption



福州
味中味
CHINA GOURMET
CHINESE RESTAURANT
川湘
菜館
617-482-9888
中國

royaltea 皇茶

CHINATOWN + PLAN: DOWNTOWN



ABOUT PLAN: DOWNTOWN

Chinatown Rezoning started as part of PLAN: Downtown (2018-2023).

Creates a **framework for the growth, enhancement, and preservation** of Downtown Boston.

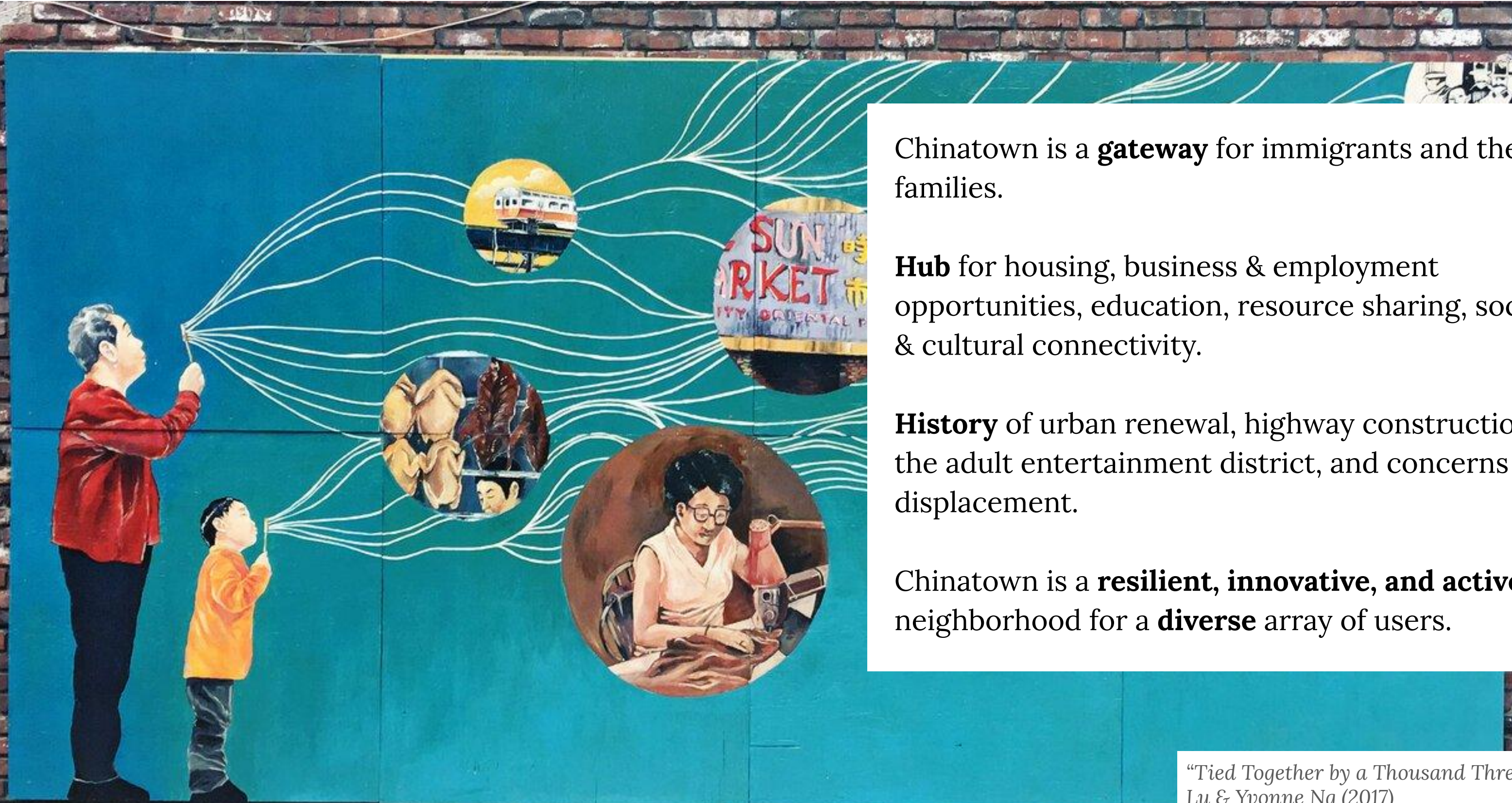
Encourages a **greater mix of uses** for a more inclusive and vibrant Downtown that meets **diverse needs of residents, workers, and visitors.**

PLAN: Downtown engagement identified Chinatown as a unique cultural and community hub that needs its own rezoning process.



Adopted by the BPDA Board on December 14, 2023

UNDERSTANDING CHINATOWN CONTEXT



Chinatown is a **gateway** for immigrants and their families.

Hub for housing, business & employment opportunities, education, resource sharing, social & cultural connectivity.

History of urban renewal, highway construction, the adult entertainment district, and concerns of displacement.

Chinatown is a **resilient, innovative, and active** neighborhood for a **diverse** array of users.

*“Tied Together by a Thousand Threads” by Shaina Lu & Yvonne Ng (2017)
Photo from Asian Community Development Corporation*

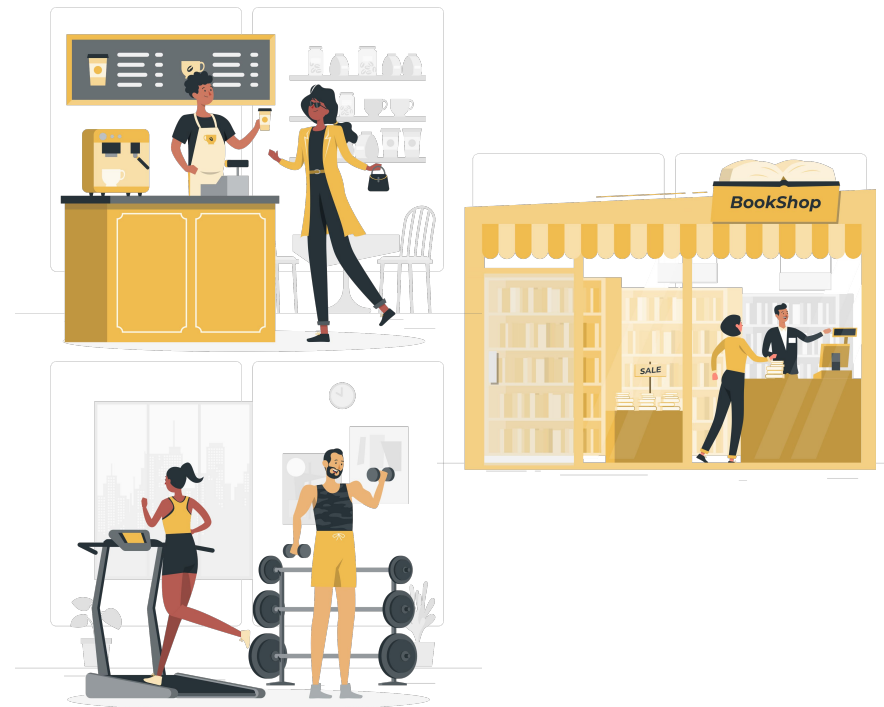


WHAT IS ZONING?



WHAT IS ZONING?

Zoning is a set of laws that are used to guide development by dictating the **allowed* use, shape, and density of a building or structure** in a given area. Some of what zoning regulates includes:



LAND USES

the types of activities allowed within a given area



BUILDING DIMENSIONS

how much space a building takes up, its height, and the open space around it



OTHER REGULATIONS

parking and loading, signage requirements, roof deck allowances, and many more.

***Zoning doesn't build or demolish anything; it acts as guides and limits to what people can build.**

LAND USES



Boston's Zoning Code regulates how **land can be used**. Each land use is delegated as **allowed, conditional, or forbidden** in each area of the City.

Conditional requires a conditional use permit, based on set criteria, from the Zoning Board of Appeal.

RESIDENTIAL



RESTAURANT + RETAIL



HOSPITAL + INSTITUTIONS

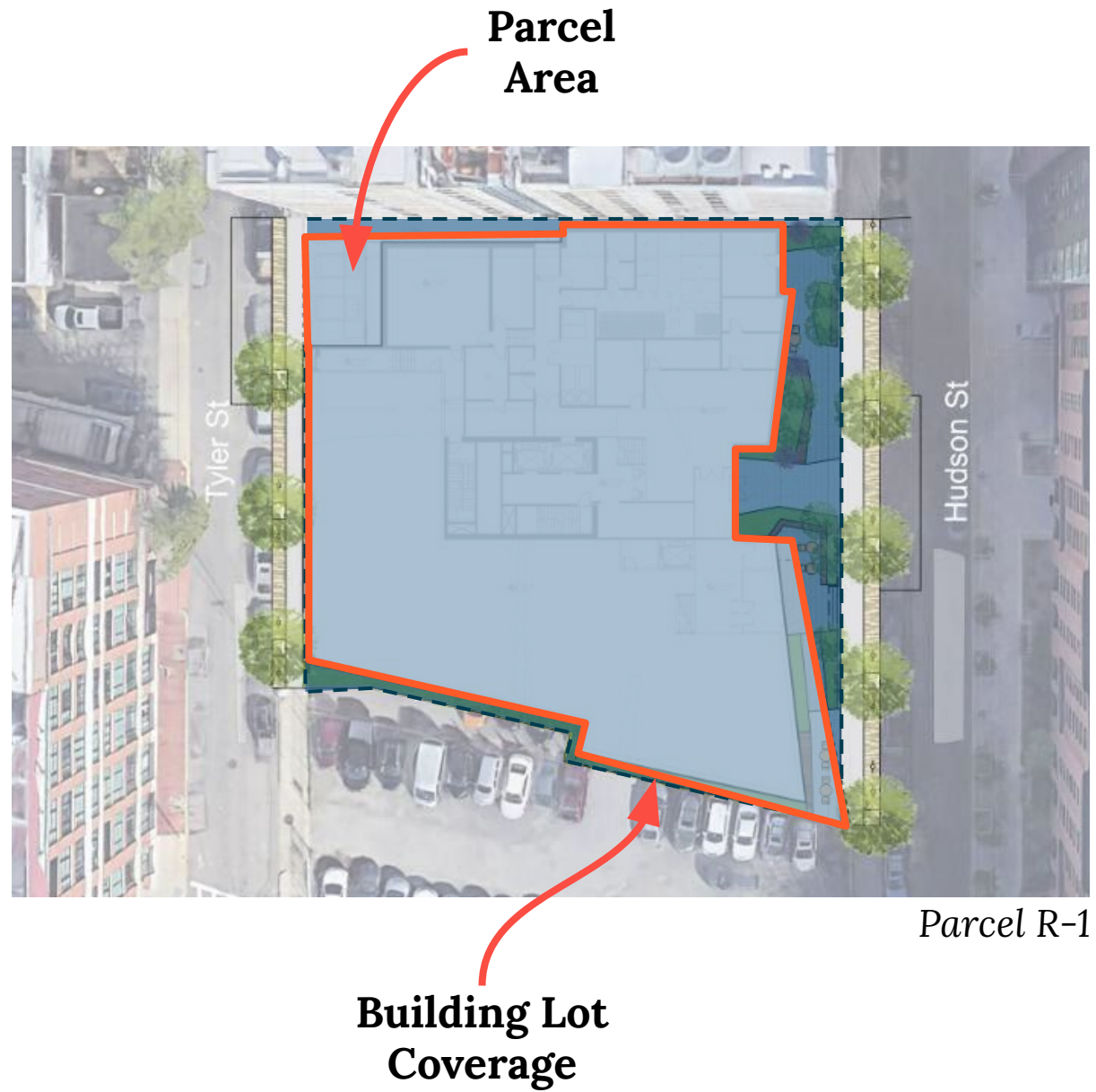


And many more...

DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS



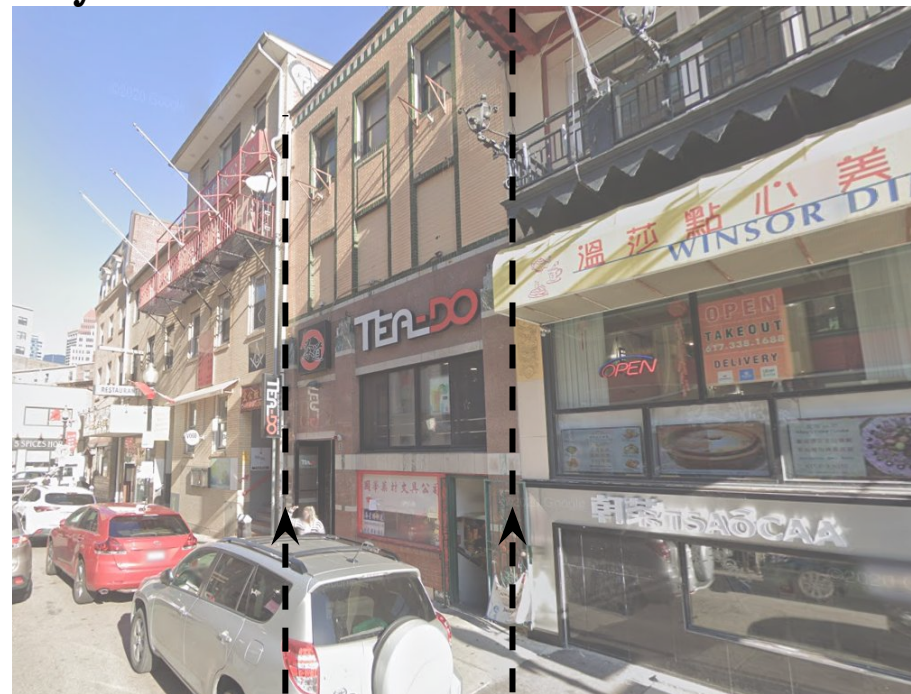
BUILDING LOT COVERAGE



YARDS



Party Wall Condition



HEIGHT



WHY REZONE?

We are **incrementally updating zoning citywide**; updating our zoning code has **benefits regardless of the specific place** in the City that we rezone.

1

Current zoning regulations do not match what's built, what exists, or the ways we want to grow

2

Updated zoning sets clear standards for what can be built (and makes it harder to rely on variances)

3

Provide pathways for small scale residential and commercial development as well as larger ones

4

Make the zoning code more legible, predictable, and easy to navigate

WHY REZONE IN CHINATOWN?



1

PLAN: Downtown engagement identified Chinatown as a unique cultural and community hub that needs its own rezoning process.



3

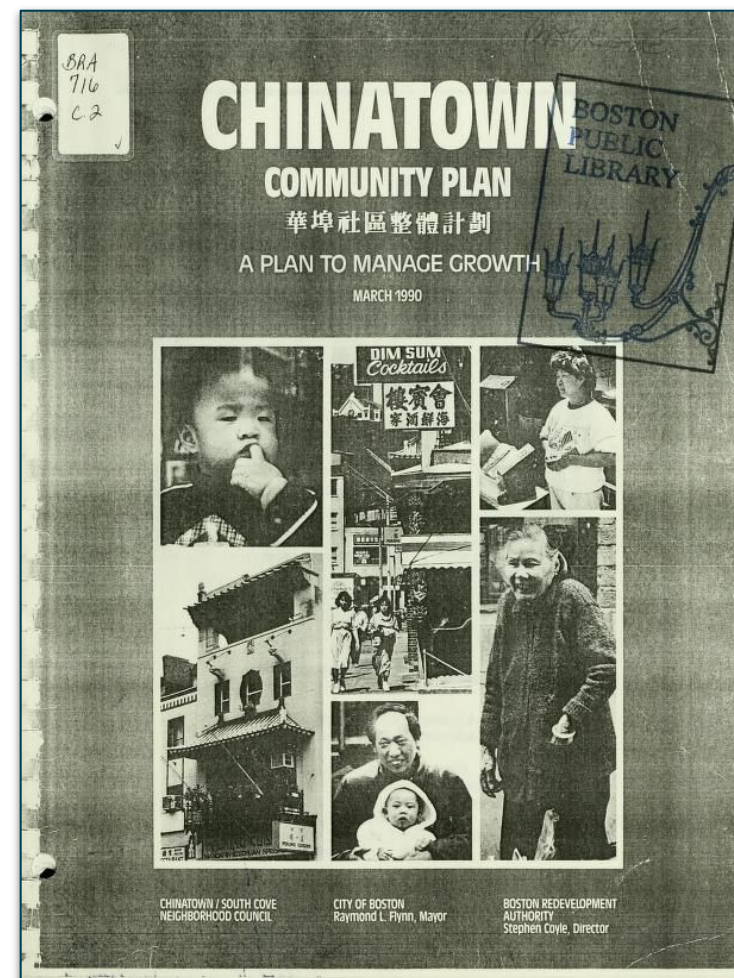
Development pressures in Chinatown, and not just in Boston.

NAT LOWE / JULY 16, 2019 / BOB KEEFER, ANALYSIS, CHINATOWN, CLASS STRUGGLE, GENTRIFICATION, HISTORY, HOUSING, RACIAL CAPITALISM, RACISM
Class Struggle in Chinatown: Ethnic Tourism, Planned Gentrification, and Organizing for Tenant Power

[Vancouver] *The Mainlander*, 2019

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Chinatown has not had a substantive zoning update in 34 years.



[Boston] *Boston Globe*, 2023



[Philadelphia] *WHYY*, 2024



ZONING FEEDBACK



OVERVIEW OF REZONING ENGAGEMENT



Engagement from February-April 2024

- 170 Survey Responses
- 2 Public Meetings
- 3 Community Group Workshops

Groups Engaged (In Addition to General Public)

- Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)
- Chinatown Business Association (CBA)
- The Chinatown Coalition
- Chinatown Community Land Trust (CCLT)
- Chinatown Master Plan Committee
- Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council (CNC)
- Chinese Progressive Association (CPA)
- Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association (CCBA)
- Tufts University and Tufts Medical Center

Chinatown Rezoning Kickoff Meeting
唐人街重新分区启动会议

Learn about how you can help inform the future built environment of Chinatown!
了解您如何帮助宣传唐人街的未来建筑环境!

Wednesday, February 7, 6:00PM - 7:30PM
2月7日星期三, 晚间 6:00 - 7:30 点

Join us **virtually!** 欢迎参加我们**网络虚拟会议!**

Cantonese & Mandarin interpretation will be available
将提供粤语和普通话口语翻译服务

*Presentation will be held during the
Chinatown Resident Association meeting*
演讲将在“波士顿华埠居民会”会议期间举行

Scan This QR Code 请扫码
or go to this website to participate:
或访问网站参加会议:
bit.ly/499auUT

Updated: 1/25/24
更新: 1/25/24

Questions? Please call
Lame



SURVEY RESPONSES



What do you think is the **priority/priorities** for Chinatown?



Housing: 75.3%

Preservation of Existing Chinatown: 65.9%

Cultural Identity & Arts: 60%

What are your thoughts on **taller buildings** if more **affordable housing** is **on-site**?



Generally positive from everyone, but varied in terms of *what affordability means*.

How do you think **zoning can better align** to Chinatown needs?



Housing, open space, small shops, groceries, social services

IDENTIFYING NEEDS

Desire for the growth and preservation of Chinatown's identity and heritage for years to come:

Housing & Commercial

Need for More Affordable Housing + Commercial Spaces

Chinatown supports new immigrants, elders, and low-income families and individuals, and there is a need for the more affordable housing to provide housing opportunities for these groups. There also needs to be ways to protect naturally-occurring affordable housing and affordable commercial spaces to preserve access to goods and services.

OVERLAP

Need for Middle-Income Housing + Commercial Growth

Chinatown needs more retail flexibility and diversity to meet the needs of both residents and visitors, and to stay competitive with other “Chinatown-like” places, such as Malden and Quincy. There should be more housing opportunities for middle-income families and individuals, as affordable housing requirements can be restrictive.

CONNECTING NEEDS WITH ZONING



Desire for the growth and preservation of Chinatown's identity and heritage for years to come:


THEME 1: Housing is an important part of keeping the community's identity (market and affordable), ensuring people can continue to live in Chinatown and Chinatown continues to be a gateway for immigrants and their descendants.

THEME 2: Commercial activity is also important to everyone and is one of the main drivers for people to come back to Chinatown.

Zoning CAN	Zoning CAN'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add affordable housing height bonus in growth areas • Allow multifamily residential buildings to match scale of recent residential projects • Limit growth in places vulnerable to displacement via dimensions and limited land uses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly maintain ownership for existing residents • Prioritize housing for immigrants

Zoning CAN	Zoning CAN'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update land uses to support where people shop, visit, and do business • Encourage affordable retail and continued growth of small business character with smaller land use allowances and matching dimensional requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly preserve Chinese-owned businesses

REZONING GOALS



The purpose of the Chinatown Rezoning process is to work with community members to **identify key neighborhood assets**, such as **housing, commercial development, and cultural spaces**, which are necessary for the continued success of Chinatown, and **develop zoning regulations** that ensure the **protection and promotion of such developments and land uses**.

“Tied Together by a Thousand Threads” by Shaina Lu & Yvonne Ng (2017)
Photo from Asian Community Development Corporation

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**INITIAL
ZONING
IDEAS**



COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL AREA



WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

- 46.5% of survey respondents expressed **priority in “Businesses”**, 65.9% of respondents come to Chinatown to **“shop for goods and services”**
- **Preserve the Chinese heritage** of existing shops and restaurants; ability to provide **affordable goods and services**

EXISTING CONDITIONS:

- High concentration of small culturally Chinese shops and restaurants
- Fine-grained parcelization and building typology



Tyler St



Beach St



Harrison Ave

COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL AREA



WHAT WE'RE LOOKING TO DO

- Maintain these smaller active storefronts
- Ensure that any future construction matches this small scale to maintain affordability
- Allow for businesses to operate on upper floors of buildings



“Wide” buildings are broken up with smaller scale storefronts



Small individual parcels (~1500 sf) with joined buildings

SMALLER RESIDENTIAL AREA



WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

- Preserve naturally occurring **affordable housing and homeownership**
- Maintain smaller-scale housing options
- Preserve **neighborhood history** and character

EXISTING CONDITIONS:

- Floorplates, building widths, lot coverages, and yards are similar to rowhouses elsewhere in the city
- Ground-floors and basements have small scale office and retail uses
- Several larger buildings (apartments and Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association building), diverge from this pattern



SMALLER RESIDENTIAL AREA



WHAT WE'RE LOOKING TO DO

- Maintain these smaller scale rowhouses, and ensure that any future construction is similar
- Allow for people to make additions to their homes
- Keep the smaller commercial activity happening on ground floors today



LARGER RESIDENTIAL AREA



WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

- Build off of existing concentrations of **affordable and mixed-income housing** of mid to high density
- **Higher densities for more affordable** and workforce housing units

EXISTING CONDITIONS:

- Mix of newly constructed and established mid-to-large scale residential buildings with ground floor retail and service spaces
- Lower building lot coverage with relatively higher distribution of open space
- Larger parcels with multi-building developments



Large parcels, long-term house projects, internal open space

Washington + Oak



Parcel R-1 ACDC development site

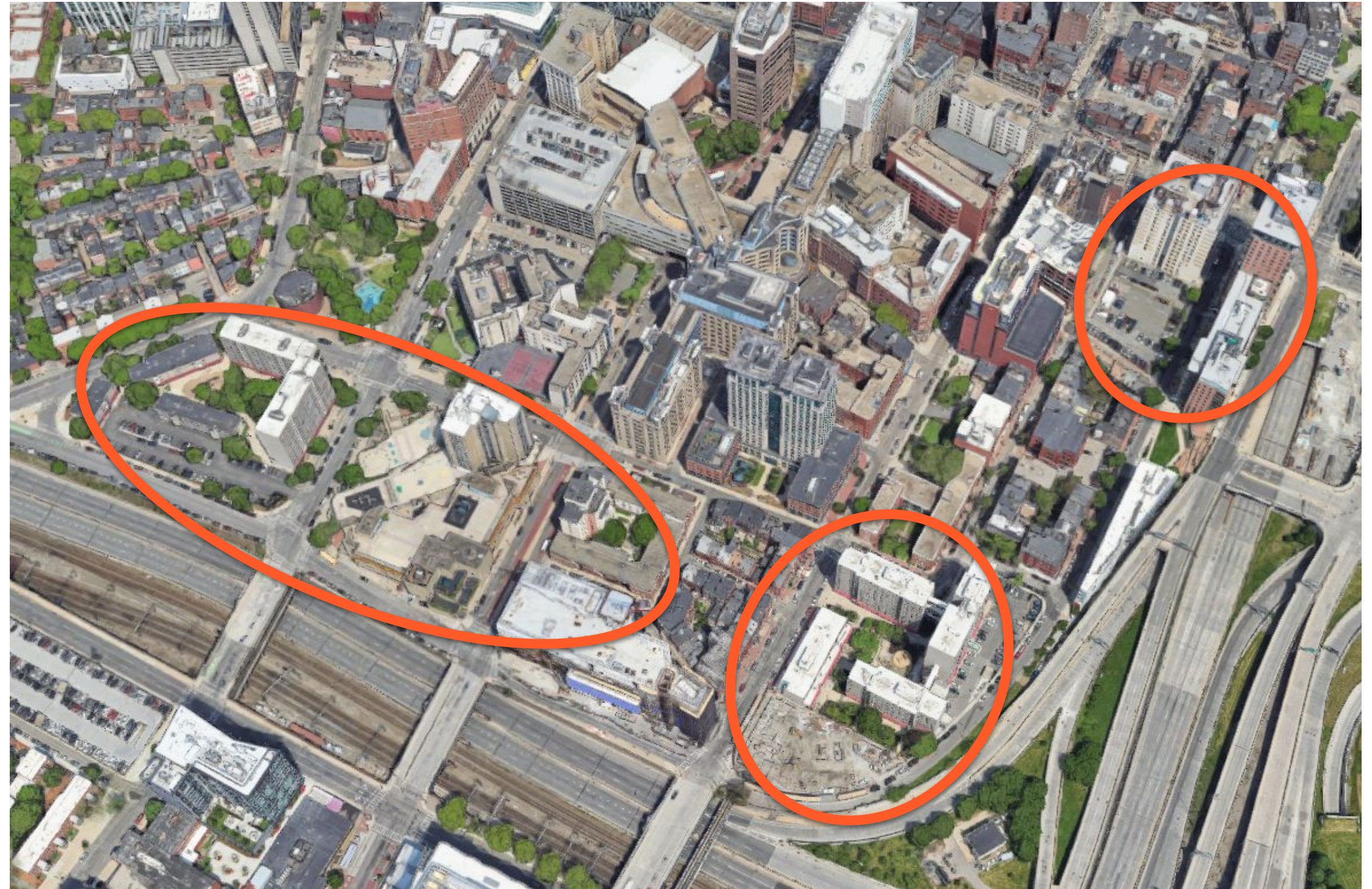
Tyler + Harvard



LARGER RESIDENTIAL AREA

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING TO DO

- Maintain residential character of the area
- Make sure that new residential buildings provide enough green space and amenity space for residents and the community
- Create conditions that allow both affordable and market-rate housing



TRANSITION AREA



WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

- More opportunities for development of varied businesses and housing above ground floor
- Survey participants identified **“growth and development opportunities”** as a priority for Chinatown; over **1/3 identified “tourism”**
- Make it easier to do business; greater height & density

EXISTING CONDITIONS:

- Northern “Edge” and gateway of Chinatown
- Limited number of potential development sites
- Similarities to adjacent SKY district which allows flexible large scale development



Essex St



Essex + Washington



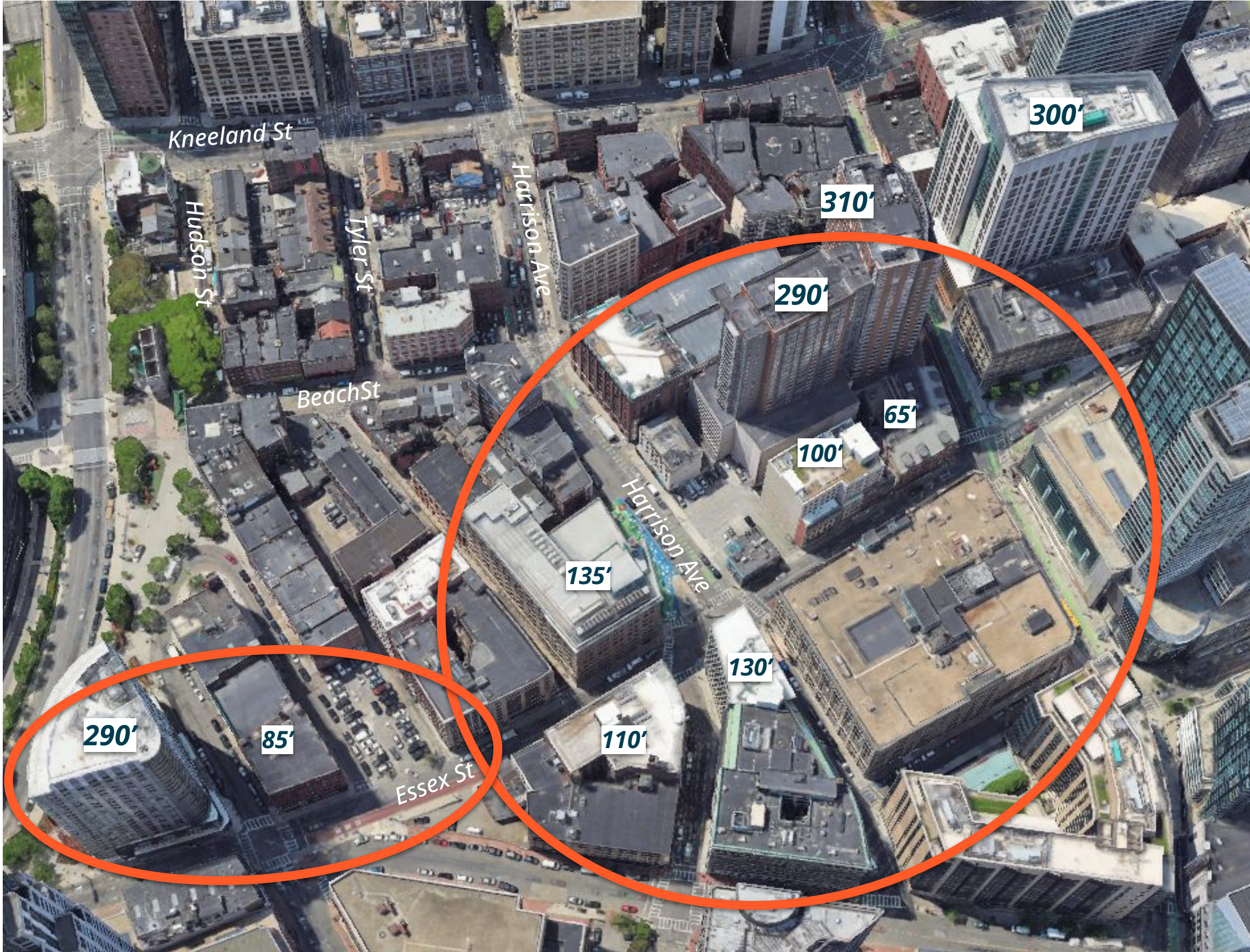
Harrison Ave (looking south)

TRANSITION AREA



WHAT WE'RE LOOKING TO DO

- Allow for appropriate transition in height and activity between the neighboring Downtown area and the smaller-scale commercial part of Chinatown
- Make sure housing is feasible to construct, both for affordable and market-rate
- Limit non-tourism related uses, like very large office spaces



INSTITUTIONAL AREA



WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

- Institutions like Tufts take up a significant portion of Chinatown; Chinatown feels “outsized”

EXISTING CONDITIONS:

- Several large parcels under Tufts Institutional Master Plan (IMP) with educational and medical buildings
- 1 parcel (church) not included in IMP, but within the district boundary



Washington St (looking north)



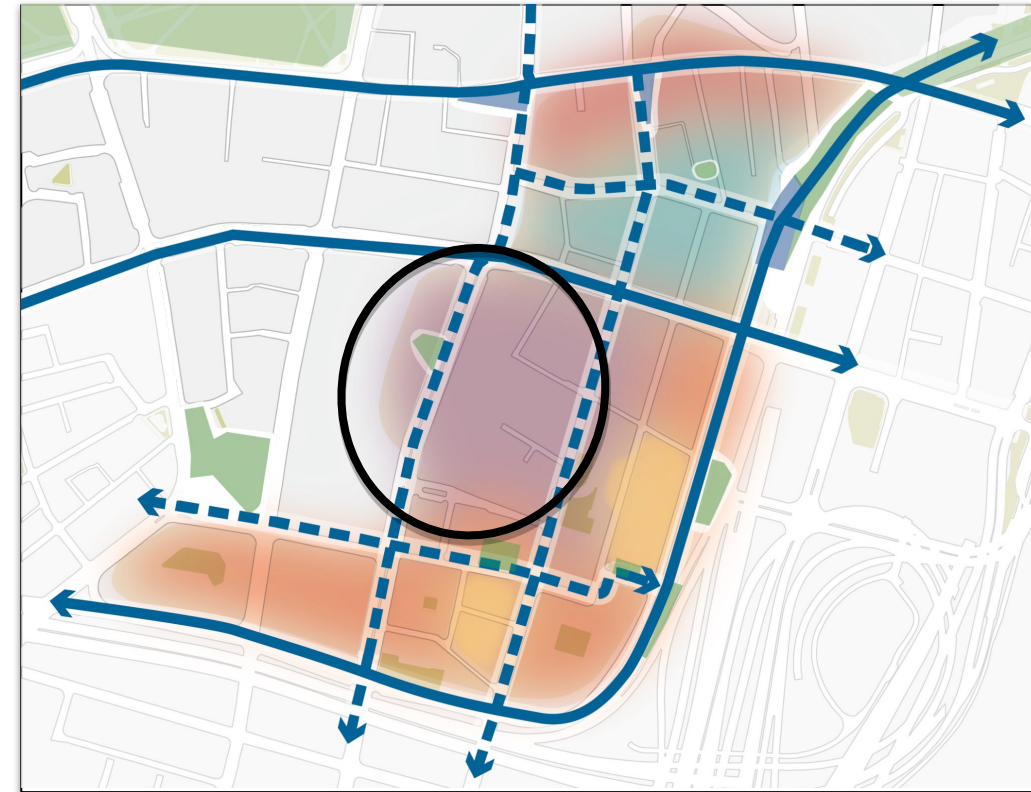
Washington St (looking south)

INSTITUTIONAL AREA



WHAT WE'RE LOOKING TO DO

- Set regulations that affirm where institutional buildings are and prevent their growth into the surrounding neighborhood
- Continue to use Institutional Master Plans (IMPs) as the primary tool for planning out institutional development projects



Washington St (looking north)



Washington St (looking south)

AIR RIGHTS AREA

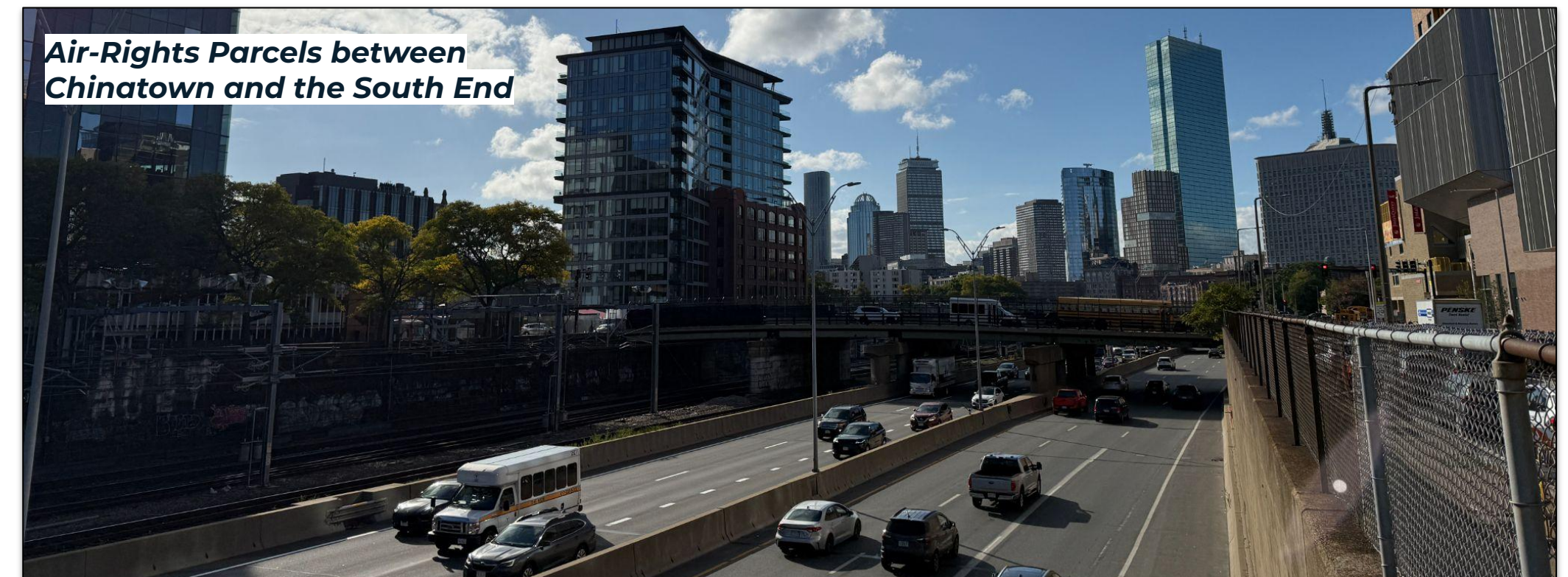
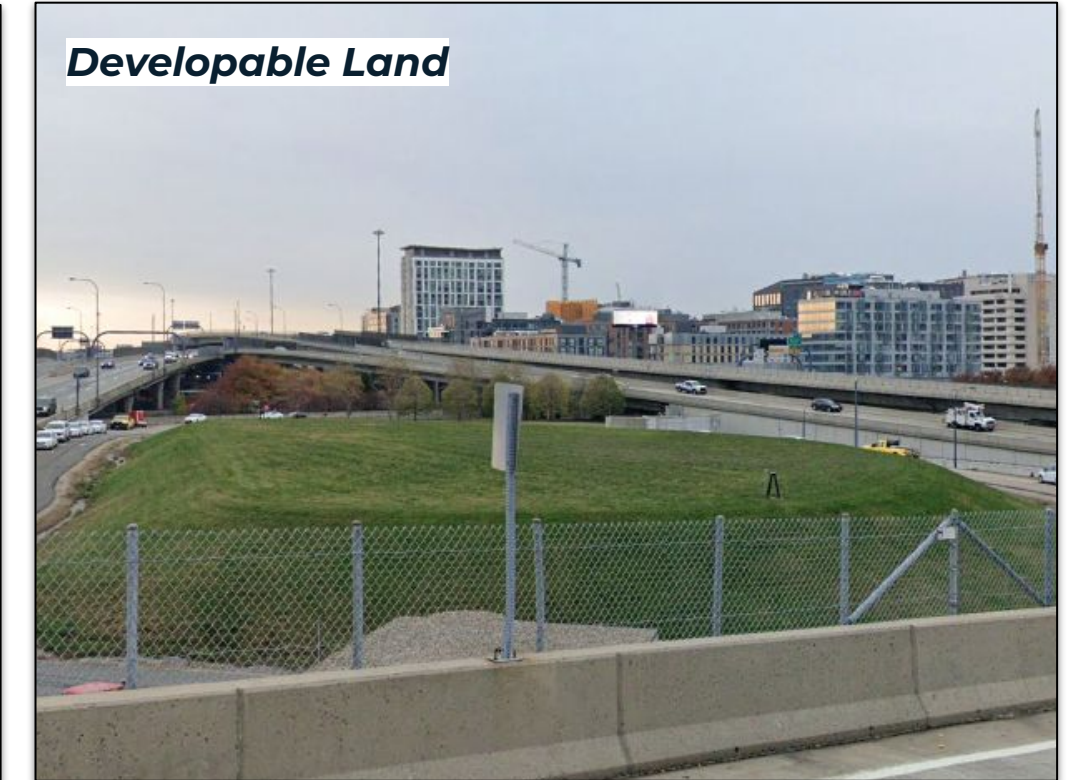


WHAT WE'VE HEARD:

- Areas were not addressed during previous engagement
- Planning goals from 1990 Chinatown Community Plan written into zoning

EXISTING CONDITIONS:

- Mix of highways, bridges, and on-/off-ramps
- Planned Development Areas (PDAs) are allowed in these areas today

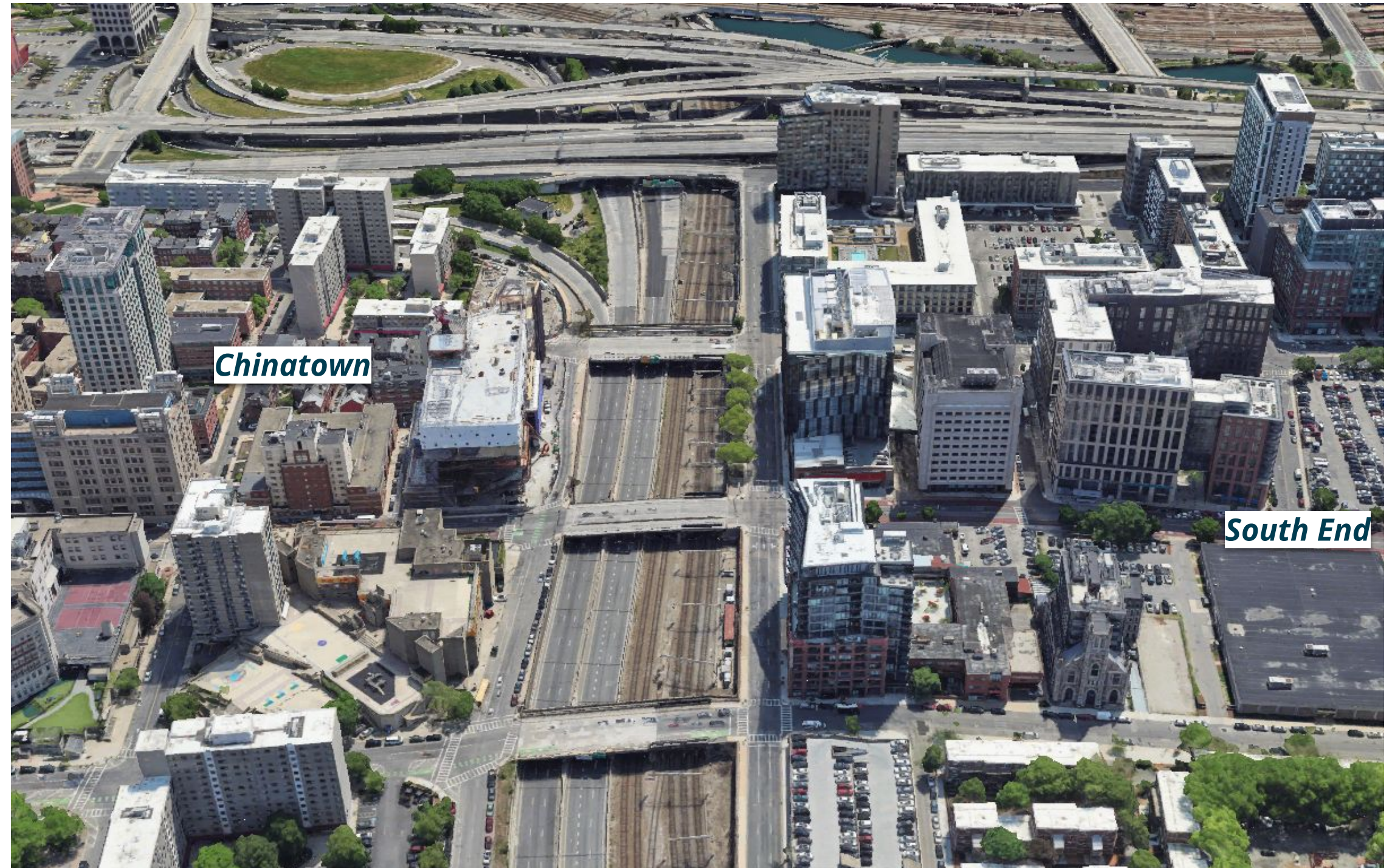


AIR RIGHTS AREA



WHAT WE'RE LOOKING TO DO

- Make sure that any projects help stitch together both sides of the highway
- Keep Planned Development Areas (PDAs) as the primary tool for development projects





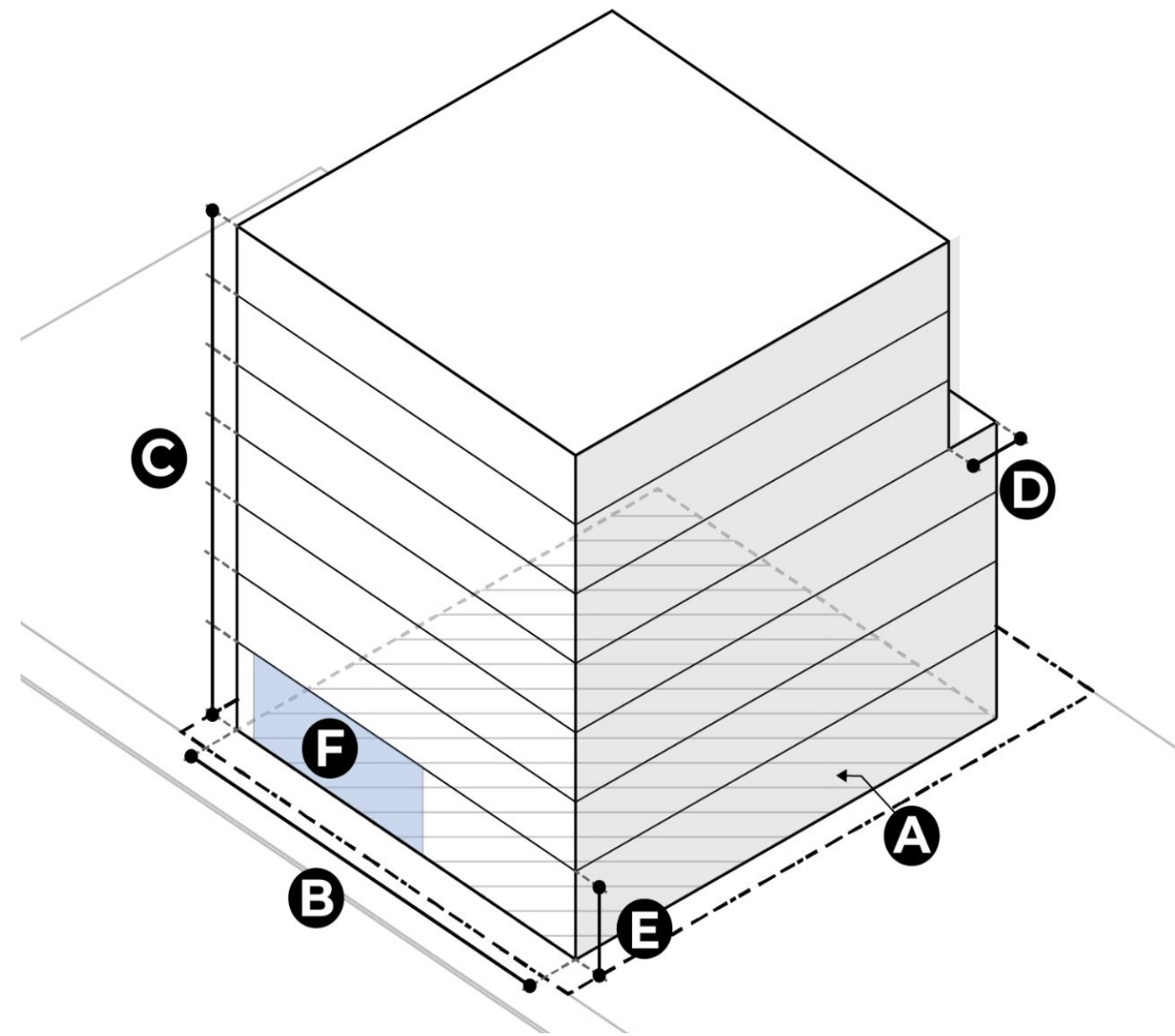
DRAFT DESIGN GUIDELINES

5

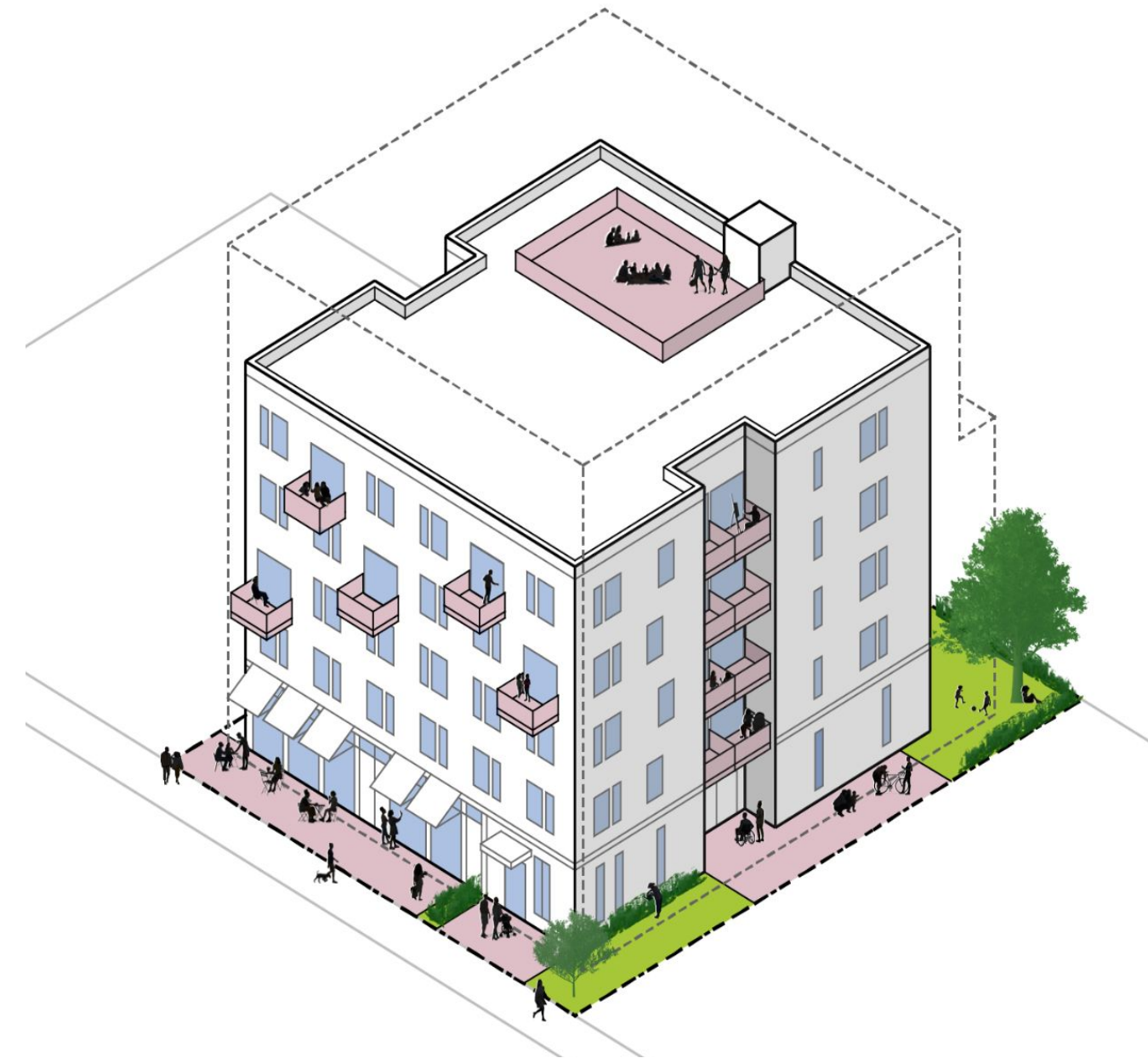
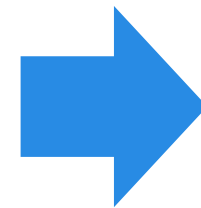
BEYOND ZONING



Zoning sets an outline (or “envelope”) of what could be built, but **additional tools** like community engagement processes and Planning Department Design Review **shape projects to reflect the character and needs of the local context.**



Zoning Envelope

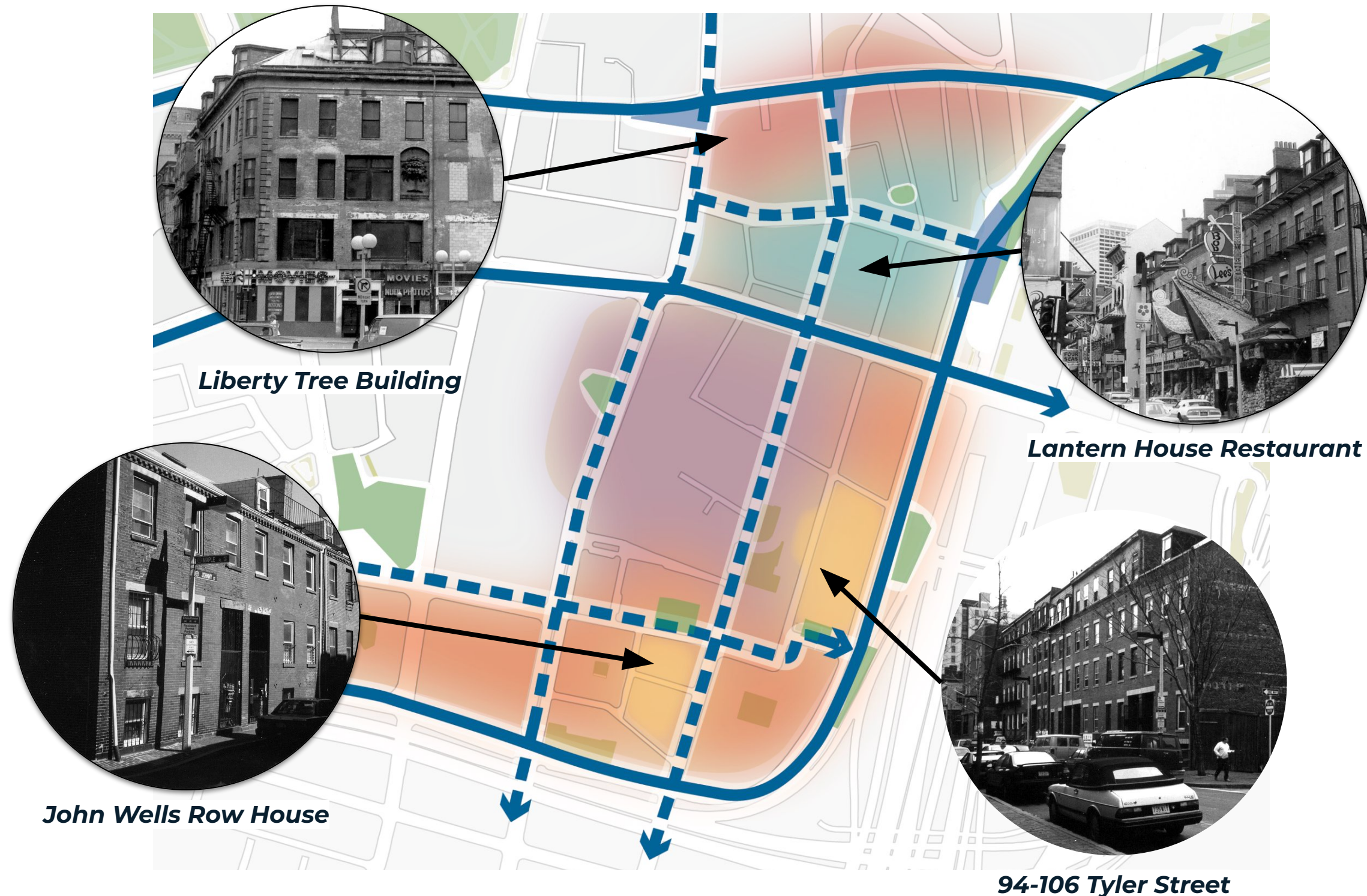


Resulting Built Project

DESIGN GUIDELINES



Design Guidelines guide how **future projects can enhance and complement** the existing architectural and historic **character of Chinatown.**



EXAMPLE FROM PLAN: DOWNTOWN

Maintain the small-grained scale of building frontages, parcels, public alleys, and streets.

The small fine grain of historic parcels and building footprints gives the Ladder Blocks area its small and cohesive character. Most buildings in the Ladder Blocks have a footprint of less than 20,000 square feet.

Create ground floors that respond to the scale and pattern of existing historic ground floor frontages.

Small building footprints in the area result in a mix of narrow and varied ground floor spaces that add a human scale and visual interest to the eye level experience that should be maintained in new projects.



Cluster of historic buildings along Temple Place that frame a glimpse of Boston Common



NEXT STEPS

6



WHAT'S NEXT?



WE ARE HERE



- Public Meeting(s)
- Focus Groups
- Office Hours

What other engagement resources and tools would be helpful for this zoning process?

THANK YOU

HAVE QUESTIONS?

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bit.ly/ChinatownRezoning

