

2026



PLANNING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Year Three Highlights

CITY *of* **BOSTON**



Planning Department

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STRUCTURE AND CORE FUNCTIONS

The Planning Advisory Council is an internal coordinating body that guides a shared vision for a green, growing, family-friendly Boston, coordinating investments in the built environment to realize that vision. It was created by Mayor Michelle Wu, via Executive Order, in January 2023. At the heart of our work is a simple idea - that teamwork takes work. In a large organization, it requires shared vision and shared spaces, daily efforts to break down silos, and willingness to listen and innovate.

As the Mayor's "Built Environment" Cabinet, appointed members of the Planning Advisory Council (PAC) include:

Kairos Shen (Chair)

Chief of Planning

Sheila Dillon

*Chief of Housing and Director,
Mayor's Office of Housing*

Joseph Henry

Chief of Arts and Culture

Chris Osgood

Interim Chief of Streets

Ashley Groffenberger

Chief Financial Officer, Collector-Treasurer

Dion Irish

Chief of Operations

Mariangely Solis Cervera

Chief of Equity and Inclusion

Brian Swett

Chief Climate Officer

Donald Wright

Interim Chief of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion

Alongside the Mayor's Office, key Cabinet and Staff leadership also regularly advise on and engage in the work of the PAC, including Kenzie Bok, Administrator of the Boston Housing Authority, and José Massó, Chief of Human Services.

OUR MISSION:

Delivering quality of place improvements for our constituents through coordinated, responsive government.



The Council is supported by three full time staff: an Executive Director, Assistant Director, and Implementation Manager. This year our team also welcomed a Policy Advisor. It benefits from the support and collaboration of colleagues across the City.

MAKING COLLABORATION ROUTINE

We connect leaders and staff across departments to break down silos and work better together.

DRIVING IMPLEMENTATION

We track and report progress to make sure community priorities in City plans move forward quickly.

BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST

We create new ways to engage residents, so they can stay up to date on and influence key projects and plans.

LEADING CROSS-CABINET INITIATIVES

We lead special cross-departmental initiatives that require a dedicated set of hands to bring everyone together and create momentum.



PLAN COORDINATION

Cross-departmental coordination is in our DNA. We are the day to day dot connectors, taking intentional steps to break down silos to deliver for constituents.

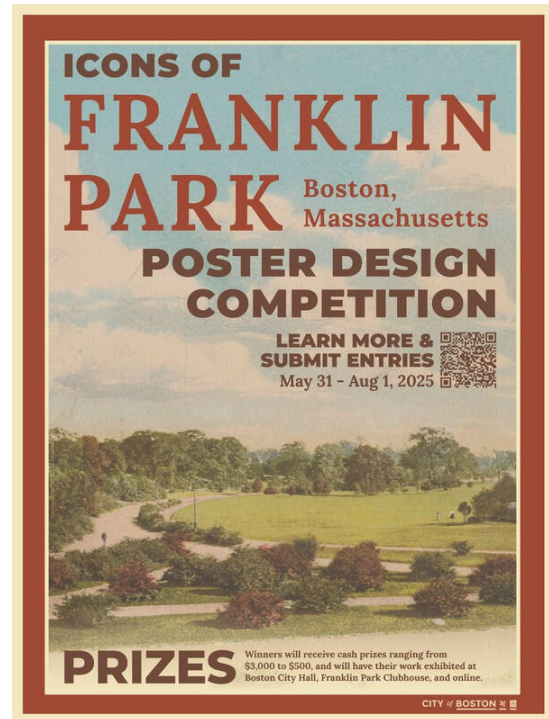
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT CABINET

The nine appointed Cabinet Chiefs and key collaborators continue to convene regularly, enabling cross-Cabinet deliberation and decision-making on major planning and infrastructure initiatives. This fiscal year, PAC welcomed two new Interim Chiefs, for Streets and Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, and the addition of a new full-time Chief of Arts and Culture.

At the start of the new fiscal year, meetings focused on 12 month ‘horizon planning’ for the respective Cabinets, to enable proactive, early coordination across strategic initiatives. Throughout the year, members delved into major efforts to improve Boston’s built environment, including neighborhood planning and zoning initiatives, issue-specific planning related to coastal resilience, open space, arts and culture, economic development, transportation, citywide public facilities, the work of the Reparations Task Force, as well as capital prioritization.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The PAC continued to update public trackers related to PLAN: East Boston, Mattapan and Charlestown. Work is underway to provide a comprehensive update on PLAN: Downtown, which will be released in FY '27. Our team also continued to help advance the Franklin Park Action Plan. Highlights this year included welcoming the park's first Executive Director in September, working to ensure continued alignment between the community's priorities for improvements along the Park's eastern edge and the Blue Hill Avenue redesign, and the successful launch of the [Icons of Franklin Park poster competition](#) with the Boston Society of Landscape Architects, Parks and Recreation, Planning, and the Franklin Park Coalition.



“Whether it’s honoring the history of the great Elma Lewis, recollecting Olmsted’s vision, showcasing the incredible native species found throughout the park, or uplifting the many cultural events whose home is Franklin Park – these pieces capture how foundational Franklin Park continues to be to our city and our communities.”

- Mayor Michelle Wu



Helena Wang, "Franklin Park: Framed Through Time"

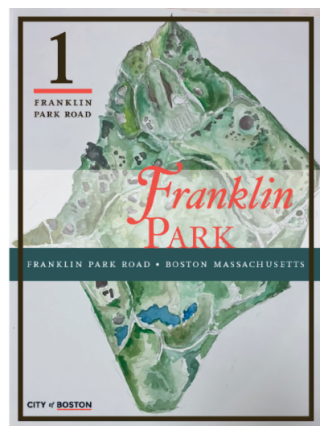
More than 50 original artworks were submitted and more than 1,300 residents voted for their favorite. [Learn More.](#)



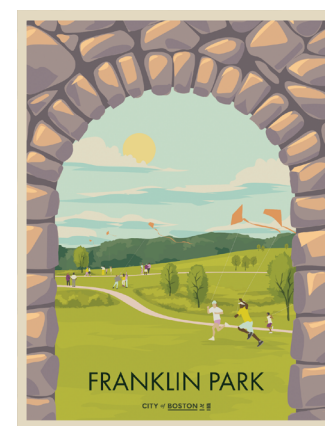
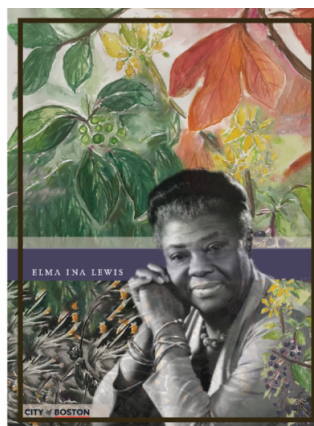
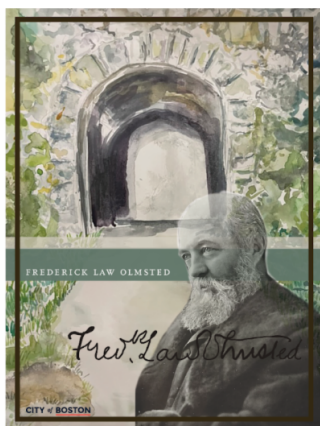
Lindsay Crockett, "New Jewels"



Stella Shippy, "Birds of Franklin Park"



Becky Fong Hughes, "Franklin Park: Alive with People, Place and Story"



Anne Lai, "History and Horizon at Franklin Park"

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Boston is fortunate in our ready access to academic expertise, highly trained staff, and a pipeline of talent who bring new skills and perspectives. This past year we capitalized on these opportunities, supporting the learning and growth of hundreds of public servants all across the City.

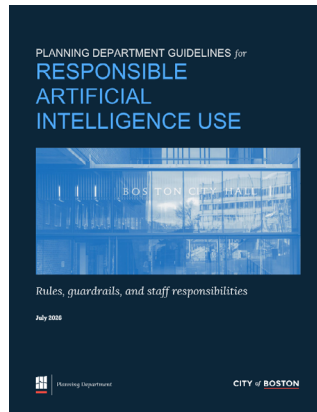
CITY UNIVERSITY

This year, our team launched a new professional development series, City University. Each month, we invite outside speakers including authors, practitioners, researchers and creatives, to share their expertise on how we can shape and be shaped by the built environment. The talks provide an inclusive learning forum, frequently drawing over 100 staff from wide-ranging departments. Topics have centered around green, growing and family-friendly cities, as well as priorities like public safety and cultural stabilization.

Beginning in January 2026, participating employees can also receive continuing education credits for attendance through the American Planning Association, thanks to support provided by the Planning Department.



AI ADOPTION



As the City continues to adopt AI tools, while working to protect resident privacy, the PAC team also helped to author AI Guidelines for the Planning Department. Building on the citywide guidance provided by the City's Department of Innovation and Technology, these practical guardrails include suggestions for using AI responsibly in the Planning Department's work. This coming year, our team will also advance new opportunities for professional development and AI skill building.

WHAT'S THE PLAN? SERIES

The PAC and the Planning and Zoning Division of the Planning Department co-host *What's the Plan?*, a monthly cross-departmental staff forum that delves into plans and their roadmap for delivery. This year's topics included presentations on the *Allston/Brighton*

Community Plan, the *Neighborhood Housing Initiative*, Boston's *Coastal Storm Risk Management Study*, the *Climate Action Plan*, the *Equity Study of Black Men & Boys*, and *Safe Routes to School*. As we enter a more resource-constrained environment, we also made intentional efforts to educate staff about the City's *Capital Plan* and prioritization process, and the important role the *Community Preservation Fund* plays in advancing housing, open space and preservation. In support of improved collaboration with the State, our team invited MassDOT to present on the *Morrissey Boulevard Corridor Study*, and the report by the *Special Commission on Micromobility*.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

This Community of Practice brings together City staff from more than 20 departments, from Streets to Planning to Housing, who engage constituents in transforming Boston through planning. This year, these staff-led sessions focused on accessibility, communications, best practices to reach under-represented groups, survey tools, and invited outside experts to share their perspective on effective public meetings, and how to foster social connections in this era.

A HOME FOR EVERYONE

We work every day to make Boston a home for everyone, whether through expanding the supply of housing, ensuring continuity of services, improving access to neighborhood amenities, or stabilizing residents.



ANTI-DISPLACEMENT ACTION PLAN

Last year, the PAC led development of Boston's first Anti-Displacement Action Plan, [A Place to Thrive](#) to protect residents, small businesses, and cultural anchors from displacement. Adopted in July 2025 as a two year roadmap, this year the PAC team has been focused on implementation. A report on progress to date is in development.

“This plan lays out how Boston is creating new displacement protections, improving access to existing resources, expanding successful programs like Office to Residential Conversion, and continuing to innovate to build wealth in our communities.”

– Mayor Michelle Wu

ARTICLE 80 DIRECT DISPLACEMENT DISCLOSURE PILOT

In October 2025, the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) Board adopted a one year pilot for the City's new [Direct Displacement Disclosure](#). It went into effect in January, 2026. The goal of the Disclosure is to help mitigate direct residential, small business, or cultural displacement associated with Large or Small Projects subject to Article 80 review, creating more predictability for tenants, community members and proponents. It requires that current tenants be notified of the proposed project and directed to City resources, through a new Tenant Notification Form, and that the proponent discloses tenant impacts via the Disclosure at the time of project filing. The PAC team is leading ongoing process improvement, to ensure this new tool is integrated into the Development Review process. We will report back to the Board at the conclusion of the pilot, at which time the Chief of Planning has the option to automatically extend it for an additional year.



FAMILY FRIENDLY CITY

Our team has been advancing a number of cross-Cabinet initiatives to deliver on Mayor Wu's goal of making Boston the most family-friendly in the country. In addition to improving information available to Planning and Streets about BPS schools and school communities, we worked alongside Streets and Parks to explore more ways to improve street safety.

FAMILY FRIENDLY STREETS

This year, our team worked alongside the Children's Council and Office of Early Childhood, the Streets Cabinet, and other partners to identify new ways to advance family-friendly streets, supporting children's independent mobility and safety. We helped the Safe Routes to School team in their successful 'Bus Only' street pilot at the King Elementary School in Dorchester. Supported by a Bloomberg Mayors Challenge grant, the pilot was designed to evaluate how bus-only streets could be used to improve efficiency and safety during school arrival and dismissal.

Additional efforts are underway to improve cross-departmental coordination to make our roadways safer, particularly in places and spaces frequented by children and older adults such as parks, community centers and libraries. This work is an important complement to the City's existing Safe Routes to School program.

ECONOMIC GROWTH & REGENERATION

Economic growth and regeneration became a new area of focus for the PAC this year, building on both community priorities identified through our anti-displacement work and the opportunity presented by a trifecta of summer events that would draw new visitors to Boston.

READY DOWNTOWN



As the world readied to visit Boston, we readied to welcome them. In November, 2025, the PAC and Mayor's Office kicked off a cross-departmental effort to accelerate improvements to Downtown, Chinatown and the Waterfront, 'relying' the City to welcome hundreds of thousands of international visitors this summer, while improving the daily experience of workers, small businesses and residents. Our goal was to provide a vibrant, safe experience for people as they walked, rode, shopped, and celebrated.

"As we celebrate 250 years since the American Revolution began, and get ready for Sail250 and the World Cup, we are welcoming the world to our City. We're making sure what they see reflects the best of who we are. And Downtown is our front door."

- Mayor Michelle Wu



Early actions drew on strategic priorities outlined in [PLAN Downtown](#) and the [2022 Strategy to Revitalize Boston's Downtown](#), and we sought stakeholder feedback to ensure we were advancing what mattered most. Together, City staff created new spaces to sit, eat, and socialize with new late night food trucks, renewed Color Flows activations on Winter Street in Downtown Crossing and Liberty Tree Plaza in Chinatown, a hands on refresh of Chinatown's Phillips Square, support for the Friends of the Public Garden's activation of Brewer Fountain, and the successful rollout of new social districts.

Over the summer, a cross-departmental team also tested new methods to evaluate the City's placemaking efforts in the area, employing new, efficient methods to observe and measure impact. Ultimately, the aim is to develop tools to compare different kinds of interventions to one another and share best practices across departments.

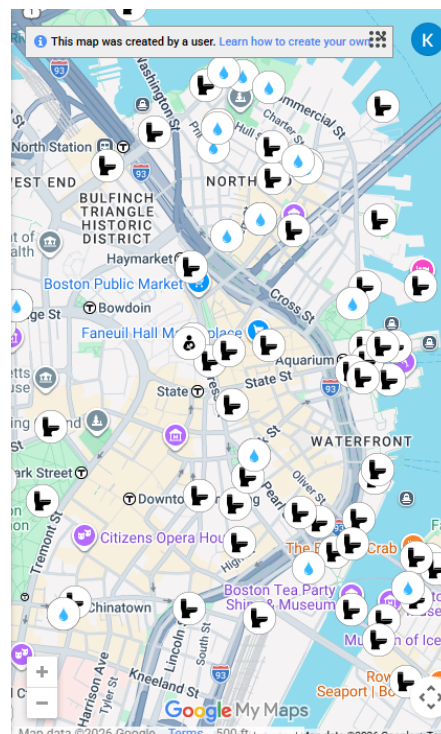


The Streets Cabinet advanced wide ranging improvements to the public realm, including extensive road repaving, refreshed crosswalks, lighting repairs and upgrades, and better bike protections. We also made it easier to get around and find the resources families and visitors need, through new temporary pedestrian wayfinding.

A NEW PUBLIC AMENITIES MAP

Working together with Department of Innovation and Technology, Age Strong, Equity and Inclusion, and with support from Boston Center for Youth & Families, Boston Public Library, Boston Fire Department, and Boston Police Department, we created a new family-friendly public amenities map released in late May. The map, integrated into Google Maps, improves resident and visitor access to publicly accessible restrooms, drinking fountains, and lactation spaces. In just two months, it was viewed over 300,000 times, making it one of the most used maps the City has created in recent years.

[Boston.gov/amenities](https://boston.gov/amenities)



STOREFRONT VACANCIES



This year our team began a new cross-departmental effort to identify creative ways to address storefront vacancies through both short and long-term efforts. Drawing on best practices from other cities, we worked with the City's 250th team, Bloomberg Connects, and the Downtown Business Alliance to bring new art to vacant storefronts in priority areas, as part of a pilot. Together with the Small Business team, Planning, the Permitting Transformation team and others, the City is exploring new ways to tackle persistent vacancies in priority areas.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

In May 2026, Governor Maura Healey invited municipalities to nominate eligible census tracts for Opportunity Zone designation, as part of the OZ 2.0 program created by the federal government. The program provides federal tax incentives for qualifying investments made in designated census tracts, helping to spur housing and commercial development and attract jobs to these areas. Planning, the Mayor's Office of Housing, Economic Opportunity & Inclusion and the Boston Housing Authority worked together to identify tracts where designation could have a near-term positive impact, and conducted stakeholder outreach and in depth data analysis to guide prioritization.



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