

JULY, 2024



PLANNING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Year One Highlights

CITY of **BOSTON**



Planning Department

The **Planning Advisory Council** is an internal coordinating body that guides a shared vision for a green, growing, family-friendly Boston and coordinates investments in the built environment to realize that vision. It was created by Mayor Michelle Wu, via Executive Order, in January 2023.



"In this moment of need, we have an opportunity and an obligation to change how we plan for Boston's future... we're charting a new course for growth, with people as our compass".

Mayor Michelle Wu
State of the City, 2023

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

- **James Arthur Jemison (Chair)**
Chief of Planning
- **Sheila Dillon**
Chief of Housing and Director, Mayor's Office of Housing
- **Kara Elliott-Ortega**
Chief of Arts and Culture
- **Jascha Franklin-Hodge**
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
- **Segun Idowu**
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 Brianna Millor, Chief of Community Engagement, Kenzie Bok, Administrator of the Boston Housing Authority, José Massó, Chief of Human Services and Christopher Osgood, Senior Advisor for Infrastructure.

The Council is supported by two full time staff, Katharine Lusk (Executive Director) and Anne Schwieger (Assistant Director.) It benefits from the support and collaboration of colleagues across the City.

Our mission:

A more coordinated, responsive government that is delivering quality of life - and quality of place - improvements for constituents every day.

This report summarizes major accomplishments of the PAC during its first fiscal year in operation. PAC activities are aligned around four main objectives:

- Routinizing collaboration and information sharing
- Creating robust systems to implement plans
- Improving constituent transparency and accountability
- Accelerating special cross-Cabinet initiatives

ROUTINIZING COLLABORATION & INFORMATION SHARING

The PAC breaks down departmental silos by connecting both Cabinet leadership and frontline staff. In our first year, we have created new spaces for shared decision-making and new forums to regularly relay information.

MONTHLY CONVENINGS

Established regular cadence: Beginning in July 2023, the Planning Advisory Council established a monthly cadence for meetings of the eight appointed Cabinet Chiefs and key collaborators.

Tackling cross-Cabinet topics: These meetings allow for cross-Cabinet deliberation and decision-making on major planning initiatives. To date, the PAC has discussed 31 critical issues and topics brought by Planning (formerly the Boston Planning & Development Agency), the Mayor's Office of Housing, Boston Housing Authority, Operations, Streets, Environment, Energy, and Open Space - including Parks & Recreation - and the Coastal Resilience Delivery team.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

PAC staff have supported the creation of the City's first Community of Practice dedicated to Community Engagement. This new group brings together staff from more than 20 departments who engage directly with constituents to help transform Boston. This shared space enables staff to better collaborate on projects, share best practices and resources, and receive additional support and training.

WHAT'S THE PLAN? SERIES

In November, the PAC, together with the Planning & Zoning Division, launched an important new staff forum, *What's the Plan?* These cross-departmental staff sessions, held monthly, have drawn 220 staff to dive into both the substance of major plans and understand how colleagues are implementing them. These sessions empower staff with knowledge beyond their domain and provide insight into the day-to-day work of peers. Topics have included the city's Urban Forestry Plan by Parks and Boston's first Urban Forestry Team, the City and the MBTA's Transit Priority Vision, Bike Share and Bike Parking, Green Infrastructure, Beacon Park Yard, the Boston Design Vision, and Boston's Heat Resilience Plan.



CREATING ROBUST SYSTEMS TO IMPLEMENT PLANS

The PAC is creating new, scalable mechanisms to systematically track implementation of community priorities articulated in plans. The goal is to ensure both fidelity to plans and improve internal and external accountability.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION TRACKERS

PAC staff have created robust implementation trackers to convert plan priorities into specific projects, with identified owners, resources and status. To date, trackers have been created for PLAN: Mattapan, PLAN: Charlestown and the Franklin Park Action Plan, and work has been initiated on a tracker for PLAN: East Boston. A new staff hire in the coming year will allow the PAC team to continue to scale these efforts.

CROSS-CABINET PROJECT COORDINATION

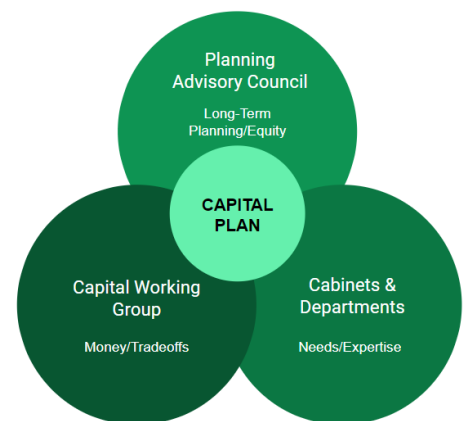
PAC staff, together with department colleagues, have created new systems to improve cross-Cabinet collaboration, including:

- **Franklin Park:** Supported Parks & Recreation in forming a new Franklin Park Working Group to accelerate implementation of the Franklin Park Action Plan.
- **Nubian Square:** Partnered with the Planning and Zoning Division’s Comprehensive Planning team to devise a new approach to cross-departmental project coordination in Nubian Square.
- **Streets Construction:** Supported the Streets Cabinet in hosting an internal Construction Season Briefing to improve coordination and identify potential conflicts.

CAPITAL WORKING GROUP

Prioritizing capital projects is an integral aspect of plan implementation. Capital planning requires trade offs. As such, the PAC Chair and Executive Director joined the Capital Working Group, chaired by the City’s CFO. The CWG was convened to confirm policy priorities, evaluate tradeoffs, and prepare recommendations to the Mayor for the Capital Plan, within the City’s financial framework.

The PAC also convened department-level capital budget owners for the first time, to share prioritization systems and processes at the peer level.



IMPROVING CONSTITUENT TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

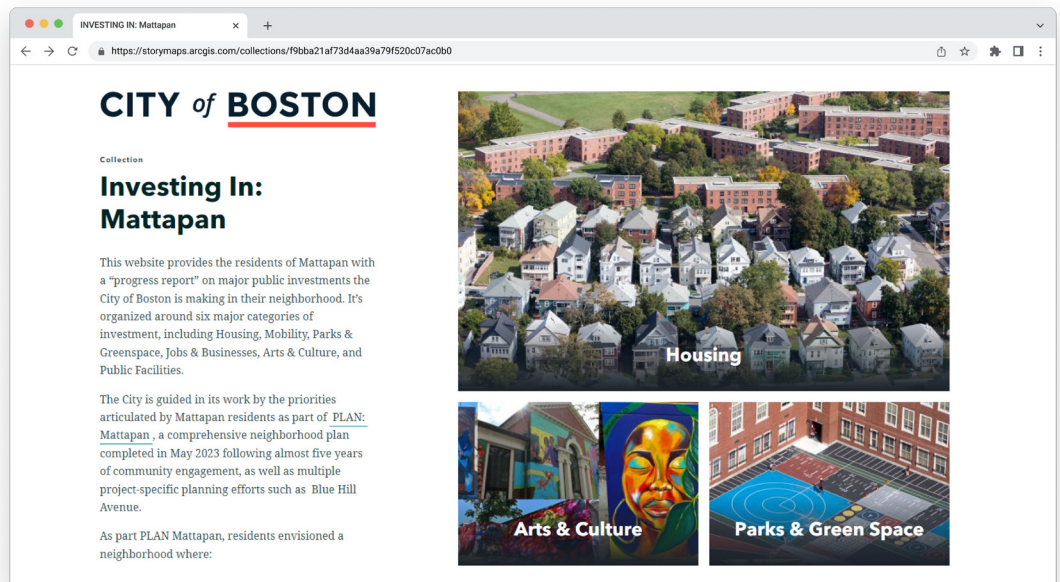
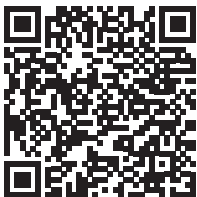
A fundamental tenet of good government is constituent accountability. The PAC is working to create new methods to improve transparency with the public, and better show how and when we are making progress with major projects and plans.

PUBLIC PROGRESS REPORTS, INCLUDING STORYMAPS

The PAC is piloting new public reporting channels designed to help constituents understand progress on a range of public investments in their neighborhood. A new PLAN: Mattapan digital StoryMap, available in English, Haitian Creole and Spanish, and accompanying physical materials represented the first such pilot.

The PAC team will draw on lessons from this first pilot and scale to other neighborhoods and plans.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO VISIT THE STORYMAP:



CAPITAL PROJECT PAGES

The PAC is also partnering with the Department of Innovation & Technology to improve consistency and quality of publicly available information on major capital projects. The goal is to create better Capital Project Page templates and standards, to ensure constituents have the most up-to-date information on major improvements underway at their beloved neighborhood destinations, from parks to schools to community centers and libraries.

ACCELERATING SPECIAL CROSS-CABINET INITIATIVES

Finally, PAC staff dedicate considerable time to accelerating initiatives that span multiple Cabinets and thus benefit from a central coordinating unit. Three major efforts were undertaken this year.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STANDARDS & RESOURCES

The PAC, together with the Planning Department's Community Engagement team, launched a major cross-departmental, staff-led effort to create new community engagement tools, templates, standards, and trainings. This work aims to improve consistency and collaboration across community engagement efforts related to capital projects and plans.



ANTI-DISPLACEMENT ACTION PLAN

The PAC, together with the Mayor's Office of Housing, Planning, Economic Opportunity & Inclusion and the Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture is devising Boston's first anti-displacement strategy. This whole-of-government effort, encompassing residential, commercial and cultural displacement mitigation, has involved inventorying existing tools, understanding best practices, identifying gaps and developing new interventions that help to both stabilize residents and neighborhoods. The Action Plan will be released in early 2025.

ACQUISITIONS WORKING GROUP

This new collaborative unit, led by the Real Estate Division of the Planning Department, was created to coordinate acquisition priorities and share resources across Real Estate, Housing, Parks & Recreation and Economic Opportunity & Inclusion.



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