

# *Charlestown Preservation Society*

*Preserving the architectural heritage and quality of life of Boston's oldest neighborhood*

March 6, 2019

Brian P. Golden  
Director  
Boston Planning and Development Agency  
One City Hall Square, Ninth Floor  
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Charlestown Neighborhood Master Plan

Dear Mr. Golden:

Charlestown is Boston's oldest neighborhood, home to generations of families and young professionals drawn to this historic and tightknit residential community. Our neighborhood's proximity to downtown and availability of underutilized land in Sullivan Square and along Rutherford Avenue also make Charlestown a desirable location for large-scale economic development.

Today, our community is faced with confronting the collective impacts of several transformative development projects currently in design or planned for the near future. The largest of these projects include the 1.7M square foot Hood Park redevelopment, the 3.3M square foot OneCharlestown project and the planned development of publicly-owned parcels in Sullivan Square. Moreover, the completion of the Encore Casino and ongoing development in Assembly Square and North Point Cambridge continue to place more demand on local roadways already choked with commuter traffic.

While the City of Boston has undertaken a transportation study focused on Sullivan Square and the Rutherford Avenue corridor, there has yet to be a coordinated and comprehensive neighborhood-level planning study looking at how these transformative development projects will interrelate and collectively impact our community. The lack of any substantial framework for ongoing and future development has resulted in a project-by-project approvals process and extemporary amendments to existing zoning to meet individual developer's needs.



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Our city is in a transformative period and the pressures of economic development must be balanced against preserving and strengthening our residential neighborhoods. Our community needs a comprehensive master plan establishing the framework for future development in Charlestown and ensuring our community's voice is recognized *before* development occurs.

A comprehensive master plan would provide a framework for balanced and thoughtful new growth and development at the neighborhood's bordering commercial districts and waterfront areas, while preserving and enhancing the quality of life in the community's residential core. In addition to citizen involvement, the planning process would need to include extensive coordination among city departments (e.g. Parks, BTD, BHA) along with regional and state planning agencies and community organizations (e.g. MassDOT, MassPort, Mystic River Watershed Association, etc.).

A comprehensive master plan would be organized around several focus areas (e.g. Sullivan Square, Rutherford Ave, Harborpark/Charlestown Waterfront) and provide recommendations on:

- Land use and development
- Traffic and parking
- Affordable housing
- Open space, athletic facilities and the public environment
- Public safety
- Historic resources and heritage

Most significantly, a comprehensive master plan would provide development guidelines, address regulatory issues and put forth modifications to current zoning (Article 62, a product of 1998) to reflect the type and scale of development we see today. Our zoning regulations are of little value if every development project seeks a variance in height, area density, or parking for approval.

Our community cannot let commercial interests alone shape our neighborhood's future. Massive development cannot continue without a clear framework and vision for Charlestown. We turn our elected officials and government agencies to move swiftly in leading this process. As a community, we are ready to quickly engage in this important endeavor. We look forward to meeting you and working together to establish a process for a comprehensive master plan.



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Sincerely,

The Board of the Charlestown Preservation Society

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