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BRA

STATUS REPORT ON CHINATOWN MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT

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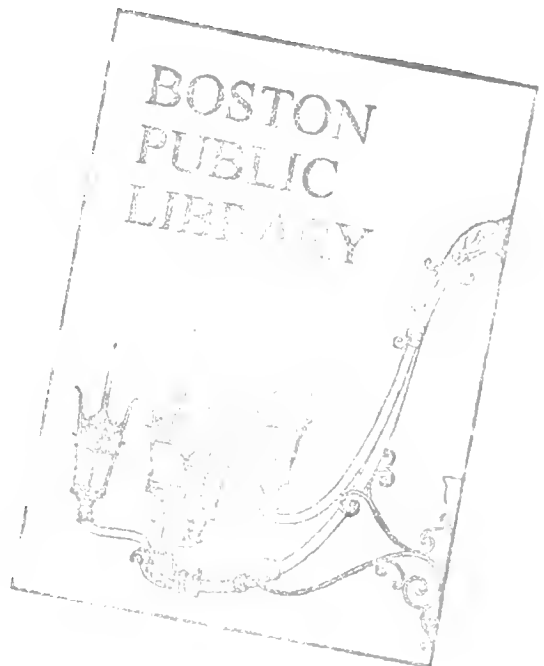
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I. PREMISE

A community-based master plan process has been established as the benchmark for future planning and development in Chinatown. The basic framework was set forth by the Director in the June 12 memo to the Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council (CNC) and in the July 16 report to the Board of the Authority regarding the New England Medical Center garage proposal.

On July 20, the CNC voted for collaboration with the BRA as an independent partner with the goal to develop a master plan that can be officially approved by the City. The CNC previously began the preparation for an independent master plan process in the fall of 1986.

The Chinatown Special Study provided in the Downtown IPOD will be fully incorporated into the master plan process.

BRA Role

The CNC voted for collaboration with the BRA based on the understanding that the agency, in addition to final review and approval, will provide:

1. technical data,
2. technical assistance,
3. technical consultation, and
4. liaison with other agencies, institutions, and interest groups, when appropriate.

Other public agencies involved in the process included:

City: Transportation Department, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS), Jobs and Community Services (JCS);

State: MBTA and MTA.

CNC Master Plan Sub-Committee

The CNC functions as the reviewing body representing the neighborhood in regard to private and public initiatives affecting Chinatown. It is comprised of 21 members appointed by the Mayor in late 1985 when it was first organized. Nominees were selected from the community. The current members are associated with over a dozen major community organizations in the area of business, human services, community advocacy, land use, housing and development. The 21-member council is scheduled for an election/ re-appointment by the end of 1987.

The Master Plan Sub-Committee was officially adopted by the CNC on July 20. It is to serve as technical advisor to the Council which remains as a policy-making body in the Master Plan development. The Sub-committee is comprised of three technical advisors, including Tunney Lee (planner/architect, MIT), Lawrence Cheng (architect, Cambridge Seven), and Jeffrey Young (transportation planner, currently employed at Macomber Development Associates); CNC members, Carol Lee (moderator) and Stephen Yee (Chair, Housing and Land Use Sub-Committee) who have volunteered to date. Other CNC members may

join the sub-committee once the master plan program is finalized at the end of August. During the master plan process, various consultants will be brought on board, as needed.

The core group will be limited to seven or eight members for efficiency and effectiveness. It will present progress report and financial statement to the General Council on a monthly basis. The sub-committee will be the major interacting party with the BRA throughout the master plan process. Active community outreach and participation will be facilitated through the CNC.

II. PLANNING AREA

Three versions of study areas have been identified.

1. Chinatown Special Study District defined in Downtown IPOD.
2. Existing Chinatown Boundaries defined by the CNC Master Plan Sub-Committee.
3. Future Chinatown Boundaries defined by the CNC Master Plan Sub-Committee.
4. Recommended Chinatown Master Plan Study Area.

There is some agreement on the premise that the boundary between Chinatown and Cultural District is a "very soft" one. But the western boundary drawn along Harrison Avenue for the special study district is clearly in question -- especially the exclusion of the corner lot at Essex Street and Harrison Avenue.

III. TIMEFRAME

The Council is aiming at a 6-month concentrated effort in completing the basic plan by end of 1987. Final rezoning should be accomplished within a year. Other related planning activities will continue thereafter, if necessary. The timeframe has been set with reference to the on-going development of the Kingston-Bedford/Essex Street project, the Midtown/Cultural District, and various transportation plans.

IV. APPROACH AND FORMAT

The approach is to establish objectives and develop related policies and strategies regarding critical issues impacting the neighborhood, instead of a finite and all inclusive physical plan.

The format and organization adopted for the "Chinatown Community Plan" in San Francisco has been used for reference by the CNC Master Plan Sub-Committee. The plan, which was jointly developed by the Asian Neighborhood Design, Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and Chinatown Neighborhood Improvement Resource Center, is one of three contending plans for the neighborhood that have been involved in an extended review with the City.

V. GOALS AND AREAS OF CONCENTRATION

A preliminary community development plan titled "Chinatown on the Move: Toward a New Neighborhood Economy" was outlined by the Council in spring, 1987. A set of goals and subgoals were tentatively identified. These are currently being reviewed, refined, and restructured along with a community-based process by the CNC Master Plan Sub-Committee. Phil Herr from MIT and the Philip B. Herr & Associates has been retained as its consultant for this particular phase of master plan. The revision is scheduled to be completed by end of August.

The preliminary master plan program and subsequent discussions identified the following sets of goals and priorities.

Preliminary Goals

1. Stabilize the core of Chinatown: identity, vitality, and culture.
2. Diversify the economic base.
3. Enable empowerment, entitlement, and control.

Preliminary Sub-Goals

1. Database Development
 - housing
 - business
 - employment
2. Business and Enterprise
 - new and small business
 - jobs and training needs
 - new resources for existing agencies
 - community support services
 - tourism
3. Real Estate and Housing
 - expansion/growth
 - mixed income
 - mixed use
 - high density
 - community activities
 - cultural activities
4. Urban Design
 - boundary and transition/interface (height, use)
 - traffic and environmental improvement
 - open space and public amenities
 - connections to downtown and within neighborhood

5. Community Development

- methods for public participation/input into the planning process
- related goals for Kingston-Bedford project
- resource for community planning needs, and the creation of community development corporations
- delivery of human services by building on existing social service agencies and organizations

Potential Areas of Concentrations and Priorities

With regard to the 6-month initiative and the final rezoning of Chinatown through the Downtown IPOD, the following areas have been identified to date for immediate attention and concerted efforts.

1. Definition of boundary in relation to neighborhood expansion.
 - interface with and expansion into the Midtown/Cultural District
 - continued expansion into the South End expansion track
2. Control of land use, height, bulk, and density.
 - especially the development scenarios and regulatory controls being considered for the Midtown/Cultural District
3. Regulating institutional expansion in the context of neighborhood cohesiveness and future growth.
4. Housing regulation and production, including the Chinatown Housing Improvement Program proposed by the BRA.
5. Affordable space for neighborhood-based organizations, human services, recreation, communal functions, and cultural activities.
6. Improvement of neighborhood traffic and transportation.
 - assorted areawide transportation plans, including the Orange Line Replacement
7. Increase in public amenities, including open space, Beach Street and Tyler Street improvement, among others.

Members on the CNC Master Plan Sub-Committee are particularly attentive to the potential problems and critical implications regarding the Midtown/Cultural District developments and the various transportation plans under study.

VI. COMMUNITY-BASE MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Background

- The CNC began preparation for funding requests from the BRA and private foundations for a master plan at the beginning of 1986.

- BRA appropriated \$50,000 for staff and technical consultants for the Kingston-Bedford project and related master plan development in the fall of 1986.
- The CNC developed the preliminary master plan program through the fall of 1986 and the spring of 1987.
- BRA recommended the Downtown IPOD with ten special study districts including Chinatown in May, 1987.
- An ad hoc group began, in mid-June, the discussion on a joint effort with the BRA in relation to the framework of a community-based master plan process that was set forth in the Director's June 12 memo to the Council regarding the Medical Center garage proposal.
- On July 16, the BRA Board authorized up to \$60,000 for a neighborhood-based house-to-house survey and other related planning activities in support of the agency's planning initiative in a community-based master plan for Chinatown.
- On July 20, CNC voted to try collaborating with the BRA on the Master Plan and established the Master Plan Sub-Committee.
- BRA Chinatown planning team was organized at the Director's request. The first interdepartmental coordination meeting took place on July 31.

Preliminary Structural Outline of the Process

Detailed structure of the collaborative process is currently being developed along with a broad-base community outreach program. It should be finished by the end of August. Critical aspects include the timing and the format of interaction with other non-community interest groups in the area, e.g. the Medical Center.

1. Initial Preparation

- Develop neighborhood database and a critical planning context.
- Trust building by sharing information on issues/questions of particular significance to the community.
- Finalize master plan program and schedule.

2. Exploration of critical issues and decision with respect to planning goals, priorities, and phasing established in the master plan program.

3. Community outreach and working sessions with focus groups.

4. Interim report and recommendation

5. Final report and recommendation

In terms of building up a positive working relationship between the BRA and the Council, the initial collaboration on the Chinatown planning survey and the development of relevant database and planning context will be critical.

Flexibility and respect for the independence of the Council will be essential, particularly during the initial stage, when it is consolidating an equal footing in the collaborative process.

Community Outreach and Involvement

Methods suggested for community involvement to date are:

1. Working sessions with different focus groups;
2. Periodical newsletters;
3. Supplements to Sampan, the only bilingual paper in the community;
4. A working model supplementing 2-dimensional graphics and images;
5. Collection of oral history and community memorabilia.
6. Outreach station.

It has also been suggested that the master plan and the related planning survey be formally announced to the community during the upcoming August Moon Festival on August 23. The half-day street fair is a unique annual event in Chinatown.

VII. CURRENT STATUS

The following is an update on the status of:

1. Finalizing master plan program and related process based on collaboration between BRA and CNC.

CNC Master Plan Sub-committee continues to review and finalize the Master Plan program, budget, and participatory process, with BRA assistance and consultation. Completion is scheduled at the end of August.

2. Developing a neighborhood data base and critical planning context.

BRA Research Department has begun working with the CNC on designing, contracting and organizing a four-part Chinatown planning survey. (For details, please refer to Appendices 1 and 2.)

Meanwhile, CNC has launched the "Asian Bostonians Seeking Job" survey which it sponsored with an anticipated grant from JCS. Participating agencies included Chinese-American Civic Association, the Chinese Economic Development Council, the South Cove YMCA, Quincy School Community Council, and South Cove Community Health Center.

3. Independent preliminary analysis by the CNC Sub-Committee, including inventory, problem areas/issues, objectives, and possible solutions/actions.

The discussions were recorded on 1/100 maps which are being graphically reorganized with BRA staff assistance.

4. Chinatown Housing Improvement Plan (CHIP)

Preliminary site and financing analysis has been continued by the BRA for the Program which is to be developed in consort with the master plan.

VIII. IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

1. Inter-departmental efforts in identifying related tasks, critical issues, and concerns regarding
 - structure of the collaborative process
 - master plan program and related goals
 - Chinatown database
 - critical planning context
2. Preparation for the August Moon Festival on August 23. Announcement will be made by the CNC regarding sponsorship of the Chinatown planning survey by the BRA, and the collaborative effort on the community-based master plan.

The above suggestion was forwarded by the CNC Master Plan Sub-Committee. The half-day street fair is an annual event in Chinatown. Display model, presentation boards on development context and issues have been requested.

3. Land use base maps for preliminary analysis and studies, including development profile.
4. Developing a neighborhood-based transportation study.
5. Compiling an information package of related transportation plans for use in preliminary planning analysis by the CNC Sub-Committee.

IX. RELATED TASKS (August and September)

1. Environmental Area
 - Information on transportation plans/studies that will impact on the downtown and Chinatown area, including the impending Orange Line Replacement.
 - Information on air-right developments (studies, proposals)
 - Developing a neighborhood-based transportation study.
2. Neighborhood Housing and Community Development Area

Master Plan

- Program
- Planning data and context

Chinatown Housing Improvement Program (CHIP)

300-400 units to be produced on three public parcels and one parcel with mixed ownership in Chinatown. The majority of the units will be affordable.

- Design/development scenarios
- Inventory of funding sources
- Input in survey on housing condition and demand
- Information on housing development projects and sites in the Chinatown-South End areas

3. Planning Area

- Information on zoning regulation and other control mechanisms
- Information on existing planning data
- Input in master planning process

4. Research Area

Chinatown Planning Survey

(design, contract, and analysis)

- Comprehensive land use survey
- User-group survey
- Building survey
- Business/Employers survey
- Other planning and analytical data

5. Urban Design and Development

- Base maps and graphic inventory
- Assistance in land use survey, including development profile
- Assistance in neighborhood-based transportation data
- Update on (planned) developments in the Midtown/Cultural District and the South Station area
- Identification of potential sources and amount of linkage (Housing and Job)

Appendix 1

CHINATOWN PLANNING SURVEY

Based on discussions with the CNC Master Plan Subcommittee during the last working session on July 30, a four-part Chinatown planning survey has been tentatively organized and developed.

1. Goal

The overall goal is to find out

- (1) Who uses Chinatown?
- (2) What is missing in Chinatown?
- (3) Where are the opportunities for improvements?

Information generated through the survey should lead to a better understanding of the diverse use profile and needs, daytime population/density, business and employment opportunities, development/design guidelines for housing, strength/shortcomings of existing community support services, potential/problems in the existing building stock, and development potential/pressure points in and around the Chinatown core.

2. Survey Organization

The components of the survey will be:

- I. A comprehensive land use survey of the Chinatown neighborhood, including development profile. By staff (Research/Urban Design and Development).
- II. A building survey of the core area of Chinatown, north of Kneeland Street, focusing on building stock, physical condition, use/under utilization, mix, and number of users for reference regarding potential re-use, rehab, conversion as well as existing housing condition. By consultant and staff (Urban Design and Development, Neighborhood Housing and Development, with community members).
- III. A business/employer survey of the core area of Chinatown, north of Kneeland Street, focusing on business type, scale, employment needs, and growth/expansion. By staff (Research) with assistance by the Council.
- IV. A user survey of the Chinatown neighborhood, focusing on place of origin of users, purpose of coming to Chinatown, about housing condition, community support services, and the general functions provided by Chinatown. By consultant with community members.

SURVEY SCOPING, DESIGN, AND METHODOLOGY

The four-part survey outlined above will be further modified and coordinated by staff and the prospective consultant with the CNC Subcommittee.

The following criteria have been proposed for scoping the survey:

- (1) There should be no unnecessary duplication of census data where a profile, a pattern, or a trend can be established from either existing census data or other sources;
- (2) Non-census data pertinent to the planning goals and related analysis should be collected; and
- (3) The four-part survey will primarily focus on housing conditions, business/employment, ^{user} profile and attitudes.

Other current thinking on the implementation of the four-part survey is to include the following:

- I. land use survey: city-wide computer database, computer graphic system, and surveyors.
- II. building survey: observation and coding by trained community members.
- III. business/employer survey: bilingual mail survey with coordinated community outreach.
- IV. user survey: street interviews and extended interviews conducted by bilingual community members.

Basically all survey-related materials and activities will be bilingual. Community participation will be a key element.

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Appendix 2

Chinatown Planning Survey

LAND USE SURVEY

Principal Departments: Research, Urban Design and Development

SURVEY FORMAT

The following information about each parcel will be collected by surveyors:

- parcel and block numbers
- street address
- current use of parcel (including appropriate sub-designations)
- current zoning of parcel
- parcel owner (institutions, organizations, whether Asian)
- business tenants¹
- building/land condition² (under use, mix)
- parcel square footage
- building square footage
- building and land value/Rent¹ (differences over recent years)
- parking information (i.e. number of cars³, type of facility)
- parcel disposition status (SENHI, CHIP)³
- designation status³
- development soft spots³
- key development parcels³
- built-out area

SURVEY PRODUCT

The survey will result in the following products:

1. Land use database containing all above information (disk and/or printout to be made available);
2. Land use base maps; and
3. Land use summary report.

-
1. Supplemented by Business Survey.
 2. Supplemented by Building Survey.
 3. Assisted by Department of Neighborhood Housing and Development.

