

September 20, 2022

**CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, AND TRANSPORTATION
HEARING ON DOCKET #0722**

<https://www.boston.gov/public-notices/15914846>

Draft/Preliminary Comments Submitted to: City Councilor Gabriela Coletta, Arroyo, Baker, Bok, Breadon, Fernandes Anderson, Flaherty, Lara, Louijeune, Mejia, Murphy, Worrell, and Flynn.

From: Zachary Cutler: Socio-Ecological Adaptation Anthropologist and founder of a UN Global Compact coastal flood mitigation company. I'm on the Association of State Floodplain Managers regulations committee, a NOAA Weather Ready Nation Ambassador, and a member of the FEMA Resilient Nation Partnership Network (RNPN) and Director of the Ecodesign Urban Design company.

City Council Members:

I am very happy we are beginning to discuss a comprehensive, district-wide planning and transportation process for Boston's continuous waterfront strategies. I apologize for not being as prepared as I'd like, but I hope to participate regularly.

Imminent lethal and economic vast threats have been known for generations and reconfirmed by the First Street Foundation. Worldwide urban planning UN Sustainable Goals and logic demand resilient, equitable, accessible waterfront planning.

I have worked on many Harbor and shipyard resilience urban renewal strategies. In my experience, municipalities bring in high profile engineering firms to ascertain the immediate and long term flood issues of sections of the city or continuous coast and offer solutions without a known budget to work with.

Cities often look toward European models like Holland using massive gates along the coast. Budgets typically do not call for these solutions and often take generations to accomplish. Use of long term estuary gates outside of New York Harbor were set back by nearly a decade.

Private properties can not bank on perpetual drafts of tentative infrastructure and geoen지니어ing scale projects. Gaps in public-private collaborative waterfront resilience action inhibit progress together. The USACE was planning on estuary barriers for New York City which was delayed by a decade due to political winds. This is a region wide example of resilience setback. Long term solutions are taking too long. Near-term private "interim" solutions are difficult to budget according to unknown municipal progress. The result is a decades-long lag in action for a holistic solution.

This leaves private property owners in limbo when it comes to resilience budgeting for their property.

We know that vulnerable communities are less equipped for equity sought.

Communication issues going back generations in Boston include: a lack of a Comprehensive Master Plan, lack of Public Private Project Oversight, perpetuation of status quo spot zoning, lack of a Community Rating System coordinator with FEMA to name a few.

1. FEMA (Retrograde), Lack of Public Private Project Oversight Committee for Boston. PPP this sort of.... Michelle Wu suggested it is a cornerstone of progress lives depend on.
2. A missing Community Rating System coordination with the Department of Homeland Security. This has a detrimental effect on emergency response budgets for Boston. This should be a priority and halt all coastal development for the time being.
3. Spot Zoning practices are also reflected in parcel by parcel flood resilience challenges.
4. Municipal role to protect our waterfront without depending on investments from private entities or developers priority will help remediate the parcel-by-parcel approach. On a district-wide scale use both passive and active permeable landscapes

Piers Park III is a great example of providing environmental justice to a community that has been short-changed for generations as well as Charlestown. They have depended on.... Private financials. This is an important part of the goals of transforming Boston's development pattern.

Flood resilience issue of neighboring properties. This issue is seen in the Sullivan Square development.

It seems a lot of time and meetings are directed at selling the concept.

For the past two years, I have been working for community groups doing preliminary socio-ecological and recreational equity research for Charlestown. Many of these challenges are also faced harbor-wide and Charlestown has several iconic examples of these problems. We seek Socio-Ecological Recreational Equity in Charlestown.

East Boston is making headway in the right direction when it comes to communication with the public. They are still suffering from the Gap. They are overcoming this problem by seeking grants and private donors. The Trustees is a stalwart group for preservation. Charlestown does not have a similar private institution to help coordinate efforts. East Boston efforts for waterfront development are enviable for Charlestown. As Mayor Wu's efforts there will help shape a replicable framework for the rest of the city.

The PLAN initiative seems to have a redundant purpose and mission of Climate Ready Action initiative. The PLAN publications and engagement seems to be a farce trying to convey that the status quo discussions are in some way a Comprehensive Master Plan (for individual

neighborhoods). The initiatives of the PLAN initiative are status quo and repeat concerns and offers nothing new for progress, engagement or action.

I would like to participate as a part of the Advisory Group for Charlestown District-wide planning process for Boston's waterfront.

Public Private engagement is a failure. The mixed Lexicon and Cartography is a complete disconnect with both professionals and the general public.

As this hearing invitation points out, the 2013 Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Plan was 'finalized' in 2017. BRA practice of meeting the quota for public engagement remains ineffective and elusive. Most of the current public engagement materials and discussions are based on this outdated reports. This sort of using decades old subpar reporting is still the MO of of the BRA in public engagement routines. Small targeted public groups with no followup are common. This is one example of a failure to consider public realm improvements that foster inclusive waterfront.

On the first page of the PLAN website there are links for more information and input. Map is outdated and definition of "open space" is used universally according to a meeting answer from a BRA urban planner. It is not defined in such a way that can inform Heat impacts and planning.

Collaboration with academic partners such as UMass Boston Stone Living Lab and as many academic institutions as possible is key to determining large scale solutions.

The entire PLAN: Charlestown Scenarios public engagement website focuses on the Western half. Status quo communications cover bike paths and bus routes to the Sullivan Square massive development.

When asked about the east of the highway and Navy Yard, the urban planner responded that they ran out of paper.

Also not included in the PLAN Charlestown website is the Bunker Hill Housing project. It was left off with a lack of paper. The PLAN media campaign seems to have started in 2020 when many community groups demanded a Boston Harbor Comprehensive Master Plan. The word PLAN is deceptive and does not include the BHH, or Charlestown Harborfront. The Northeast of Charlestown is noted in public data as being a critical area for transportation. The BPDA Charlestown group took a walking tour along the southwest leading to Sullivan Square. This was primarily attended by members of the BRA.

Existing proposals for mixed use developments on the waterfront perpetuate piecemeal approaches to resiliency. This is obvious in Sullivan Square and BHH. Both are in typically vulnerable locations.

I agree there needs a community led holistic Comprehensive District-wide Master Plan for resilience strategies and equity. Since areas most at risk are also current development areas these strategies should apply not only for proposed developments, but also those underway.

The vision of the residents' communications need consideration and proper continuous dialogue.

Financial and other benefits of mitigating multiple continuous properties might benefit PPP collaboration.

A major plus for Boston is the possible use of the harborwalk as a potential circumference/trans-parcel flood mitigation.

The recent 2030 publication has some new hopeful thoughts. It has a lot of recycled language, outdated statistics and cartography.

enhancing environmental justice with a just transition to a green economy and citywide Green New Deal.

I am in discussion with the new Dutch Boston representative to help achieve resilience other cities have such as with New York's Waterfront Alliance. None of his communications to the city have received a response.

Charlestown had the largest Invest in the Future Earthday event this summer.

City events that mean to foster community collaboration including current and upcoming meetings with the city continues to refer to the past and uses cartography and statistics that date back further than 2005.