



Photo: Dan Rabb

# Downtown Planning Goes Back to School

by Dan Rabb

In the Josiah Quincy School lunch room on Tuesday, craft paper and magic markers littered the tables as dozens

of hunched figures earnestly colored cardboard picture frames with clouds, houses and trees. But this was not

*Continued on Page 8*

# A Bridge Is Turning 50

by Dan Rabb

Downtown based Bridge Over Troubled Waters, which provides housing and social services to homeless youth, will be making some dramatic changes in the coming months.

Bridge, as it is known, is looking to expand its emergency housing facilities at its 47 West Street headquarters and will be discontinuing its decades old dental clinic. The changes are part of a year-long internal reevaluation by the Catholic organization that is entering its 50th year in downtown Boston.

“We’re doing a lot of self-reflection on turning 50,” said Elisabeth Jackson, Bridge’s executive director. “We’ve been asking hard questions about ourselves, evaluating the broader situation in the city and state, and looking inwards at what we do best as an organization and going full force from July with a clear direction.”

Jackson describes Bridge as a “university of life skills” for homeless young adults ages 14 to 23. But while the organization provides an array of services, the core of its program is housing. Bridge can currently board 81 young adults, mostly in targeted facilities like its house for Boston Public Schools students or the Liberty House for students entering college. Residents must meet certain performance benchmarks to continue to qualify for the units.

While Bridge is looking to grow its

overall housing stock throughout the city, Jackson says starting in July the priority will be the expansion of its emergency residence program and Welcome Center at its downtown headquarters. The facilities, which currently have around 20 beds, serve as a location where other service agencies can send homeless youth with little or no notice.

“We get calls from the Downtown BID, from the city, the state and the Boston Police Department when they’re out at night and they see an 18 or 19-year-old sleeping in a car,” Jackson said. “That’s not somebody committing a crime, that’s somebody who needs housing, so we want to be able to better anticipate those calls and provide services for those young people as the need comes.”

Jackson says that with a growing downtown neighborhood, she expects the news of Bridge’s expansion to create some unease. She emphasizes that Bridge’s programming does not create some of the issues often associated with homeless services, from drug use to increased crime.

“We’re not a detox or a sober house,” Jackson said. “These are young people that are going to school, going to work and have a full schedule, not just hanging out.”

*Continued on Page 8*

## One island. Thirteen homes. Infinite memories.



 **THE COPLEY GROUP**  
nantucket collection

Nantucket rentals  
available year-round

(508) 901-9877

[guestservice@thecopleygroup.com](mailto:guestservice@thecopleygroup.com)

[www.thecopleygroupnantucket.com](http://www.thecopleygroupnantucket.com)

## Bridge Turns 50

*Continued from Page 3*

Bridge's internal reevaluation also led to the decision to close its dental clinic. According to Jackson, other dental programs available to Bridge's clients made the clinic redundant and a distraction from more urgent priorities.

The organization will also play a greater role in lobbying at both the city and state levels. Jackson says it's all part of a process to keep Bridge laser focused on the state's most vulnerable youth.

"These are kids who are on their own, who don't have a mom and dad where they can go and ask for \$50 for a cell phone bill," she said. "We try to figure out how to provide that support until they're able to fly, but when they fly, they do amazing things."

## Downtown Planning

*Continued from Page 3*

second grade art period. Rather, it was a Boston Planning and Development Agency meeting that could shape downtown Boston for generations.

The unconventional "Vision Workshop", designed by Emerson College's Engagement Lab for the BPDA, was ostensibly intended to gather community feedback and suggestions for the agency's upcoming master plan for downtown. Part of the mandated public process for what is known as PLAN: Downtown, the workshop utilized unusual engagement techniques, from coloring picture frames to exercises with titles like "World Café" and "Speculative Future".

The goal of the workshop, BPDA officials said, was to spark conversations amongst residents about issues that will shape the future of downtown, from neighborhood identity and transportation to climate change resiliency.

"It's really the first point for everyone to really talk through what their vision is as a neighborhood and community for downtown," said Kennan Rhyne, the BPDA's project manager for PLAN: Downtown. "The intent is for this to really be a listening session for us so we can come back and consolidate some of the feedback and then think about how we can incorporate that into the plan."

Due to be completed by mid-2020, PLAN: Downtown would be the first comprehensive development plan for Downtown Boston in over 30 years. Encompassing the Financial District, Downtown Crossing, Chinatown, and Park Plaza, PLAN: Downtown will create zoning guidelines and recommendations governing future building projects. The plan will

consider historic preservation, as well as walkability, access to open space, housing affordability, and the effects of climate change.

The Downtown area covered by the plan is one of the most rapidly changing swaths of the city, with a population that has swelled by more than 50 percent since the turn of the century. This growth is poised to continue with the addition of over 4,000 housing units already approved and set to be built by 2020. Yet despite the area's rapid transformation, Downtown development is still regulated in a piecemeal fashion and subject to guidelines from a scattering of outdated zoning and preservation districts, the most recent of which was created in 1988. The masterplan aims to change that.

Tuesday's Vision Workshop yielded a wide array of ideas, some more feasible than others. The most common refrains centered on improved parkland, improved transit and better activation during winter. An exercise in which participants were asked to imagine Boston had been named the world's best downtown in 2040 drew far-fetched suggestions, from urban ziplines to floating parks.

While BPDA officials insisted the workshop was intended to generate ideas and allow them to listen to public feedback, an internal agency document viewed by *The Boston Guardian* suggested different goals. According to the document, the workshop's primary function was to "build trust in the process and the BPDA."

So was the Vision Workshop actually meant to generate ideas or to humanize a government agency with goofy elementary school activities? That's something downtown residents will learn in time.

**CLASSIFIEDS CALL (857) 265-3022**

### Custom Flooring & Millwork

–Wide Plank & Long Length Flooring  
–White Oak & Antique Heart Pine  
–Genuine Mahogany Decking  
T.S. Mann Lumber 978-249-2206

[www.MannLumber.com](http://www.MannLumber.com)

THE BOSTON GUARDIAN  
To Advertise  
Call 857-265-3022

## MGH Expansion

*Continued from Page 5*

to replace older inpatient rooms with the new building, netting as many as 200 new beds across the campus.

New rooms will all be single bed, which the hospital says is consistent with modern standards of care. Currently, most MGH patients stay in multi bed rooms, and about a third of patients are treated in buildings built before 1970.

"In recent years, the need for the hospital to rebuild and revitalize its Main Campus has become increasingly clear," the hospital wrote in its project notification form.

Many Beacon Hill residents support the project's wider goals but are concerned about traffic disruption, says Bruce Kiernan from the Beacon Hill Civic Association's Board of Directors.

Some residents noted in comments to the BPDA that Cambridge Street is already congested, and hordes of hospital visitors searching for parking could further aggravate those traffic woes. MGH estimates that the expansion could generate upward of 3,000 new vehicle trips per day. As a result, Kiernan says the project calls for careful traffic management.

"Residents understand MGH's need to update its inpatient rooms, and appreciate the importance of MGH as a healthcare and research institution," Kiernan told *The Guardian* in an email. "However, the proposed

project is very large, and will have substantial impact."

Residents are also concerned about the building's carbon footprint. MGH says it will apply for LEED green building certification, but some neighbors commented to the BPDA that the hospital should strive for carbon neutrality.

In a scoping determination two weeks ago, the BPDA asked MGH to provide a plan for traffic and parking management and offer more details about climate mitigation.

Meanwhile, other residents warn about loss of historic buildings. The hospital plans to raze three West End buildings, notes Boston Preservation Alliance Executive Director Gregory Galer, destroying some of the only area structures that survived 1950's urban renewal.

"While the hospital isn't responsible for these efforts, it should make all efforts to help heal the damage of those losses," Galer wrote to the BPDA, "and as stewards of these few vestiges of the West End it has a responsibility to find a way to integrate these buildings into its proposal."

Amid these concerns, Kiernan says the project is an opportunity to overhaul the streetscape and improve its pedestrian and bike accessibility.

"Done well, the project could greatly improve the pedestrian experience along Cambridge Street, and activate the area on evenings and weekends," Kiernan said. "We hope and expect to see MGH strongly support these efforts."

## At the Hynes Convention Center

**Friday, May 3-Saturday May 4**

Massachusetts Teachers Association  
Annual Meeting. 1,500 Attendees.

**Thursday, May 9-  
Saturday, May 11**

National Kidney Foundation 2019  
Spring Clinical Meetings. 2,800 Attendees.

**Tuesday, May 14**

NFIP Adjuster Meeting. 60 Attendees.

**Wednesday, May 15**

Airstream, Inc. National Dealer  
Meeting 2019. 200 Attendees.  
Meeting. 250 Attendees.

## Fenway Film Fest

*Continued from Page 6*

tenants at Our Lady's Guild House, a complex owned by the Catholic Church that is attempting to attract students and short-term renters.

"Our story is not a story from the 1970s, it's an issue that's alive and well in 2019," said Jack Wells, STOP's founder and lead organizer at the time of the fires. "It's actually worse now, and unless you get yourself together and organize, you're not going to get

anywhere."

The Fenway Film Series will continue next month with "The Human Scale," a documentary that examines how cities can be better designed to affect social, environmental and economic outcomes. Organizers say the film's lessons are especially poignant in the Fenway, a neighborhood that is in many ways being reengineered from the ground up. They hope the film drives discussion about how development and design can better serve the neighborhood's most vulnerable residents.