

# BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

www.bostonpreservation.org

February 12, 2025

Mayor Michelle Wu  
Boston City Hall  
1 City Hall Plaza  
Boston, MA 02201

## **RE:PLAN: Downtown**

Dear Mayor Wu,

The Boston Preservation Alliance is Boston's primary, non-profit advocacy organization that protects and promotes the use of historic buildings and landscapes in all of the city's neighborhoods. With 40 Organizational Members, 100 Corporate Members, and a reach of over 100,000 friends and supporters we represent a diverse constituency advocating for the thoughtful evolution of the city and celebration of its unique character. We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on projects that impact the historic character of the city.

The Alliance has engaged in the PLAN: Downtown process since its inception and is pleased to continue to collaborate towards its conclusion and implementation through zoning. This most recent iteration shared in January took us by surprise as it ignores much of the work we—and so many others—have put towards this effort.

Boston is a historic city, and as such, our historic streetscapes are our greatest asset as they cannot be experienced anywhere else but here. This includes the Ladder Blocks, a rare, surviving example of 19<sup>th</sup>-century commercial street life. We also understand that Boston is not only a historic city, but a vibrant, growing, and living city. We believe a more direct focus on preserving our historic buildings and adapting what we already have is the best way to add density, create unique consumer experiences, and ensure Boston remains a vibrant place to live, work, and visit.

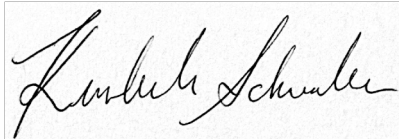
- Building reuse is climate action. Boston will never be a Green city without factoring in embodied carbons and adaptive use into the climate plan.
- Historic buildings are naturally occurring affordable housing. They are already there! In fact, there are at least 46 buildings built before 1948 in the study area, some of which exclusively serve section-8 tenants. Adapting or expanding a building is a much quicker process than building new, supplying much needed housing at a faster rate. A nearby example includes the 44 Bromfield Street conversion from office to residential with 44 units ranging from studios to two bedroom apartments. Adapting our historic spaces, balanced with new construction, will honor our unique, tourist-worthy streetscapes and continue to add housing for many income levels.
- The historic storefronts are the right size for local businesses. They encourage walking and supply affordable space for mom-and-pop shops, giving Boston legacy businesses of the future.
- Facadism is not where a plan begins, it is only an ending point once all other options fail. We know there is a better compromise that lets Boston's history shine and allows adapted uses for our growing city.

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The City is already putting some noteworthy initiatives into action including the Office-to-Residential conversion program and ADUs. We are enthusiastic fans of both. We hope the same vision and creativity will continue with PLAN: Downtown.

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to safeguard Boston's treasured historic resources as the city continues to grow and change. We look forward to further engagement on this and future planning initiatives.

Thank you,



Kimberlee Schumacher  
Interim Executive Director  
Boston Preservation Alliance



Regan Shields Ives  
Board President  
Boston Preservation Alliance

cc:

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