

Working Together for the Future

A PLAN FOR THE
NEIGHBORHOOD



Beacon Hill Civic Association

The Neighborhood Plan is the result of over two years of extensive community input and research. The aspirations and goals provide a proactive view for the future and offer an opportunity to collaborate with others who share a similar vision.

BHCA Mission:

The Beacon Hill Civic Association (BHCA) was established in 1922 by a small group of neighbors whose goal was to protect Beacon Hill's historic residential character.

Today, the BHCA continues as a volunteer organization that helps preserve and enhance the quality of life on Beacon Hill, a historic, urban, residential neighborhood in downtown Boston.



Beacon Hill is a neighborhood of approximately 10,000 people living in an area less than ½ mile square.

How was the Plan created?

In 2008 the BHCA's Planning and Research Committee was charged with leading the effort to create a proactive plan aimed at preserving the past and enhancing residential life in the future. The planning process included:

- Sponsoring two neighborhood-wide forums to solicit input
- Conducting nearly 100 interviews with elected and appointed city and state officials, as well as leaders of local non-profits and other neighborhood institutions
- Analyzing data on neighborhood demographics, housing, public school attendance, and major development projects

What is the Plan?

Neighborhood Plan Vision Statement:

Beacon Hill is a good place to live. It is beautiful, sociable, and distinctive. It is a desirable residential neighborhood in downtown Boston. We have friendly shops and restaurants. We can walk to work and have many convenient options for traveling farther. We benefit from the persistent efforts of residents before us who built, preserved, and improved Beacon Hill. We aspire to continue to preserve and improve our neighborhood to ensure it is a community where...

- 1 Residents enjoy a livable residential neighborhood in the in the middle of a vibrant city
- 2 Neighbors know each other and are engaged in their community
- 3 The mix of residences, businesses, services, institutions, and visitors enhances residential life
- 4 Families of all ages and financial capacities thrive
- 5 Historic architecture and character are preserved while new technologies and green living are encouraged
- 6 Nearby development enhances downtown living



ASPIRATION 1

Beacon Hill is a livable residential neighborhood in the middle of a vibrant city

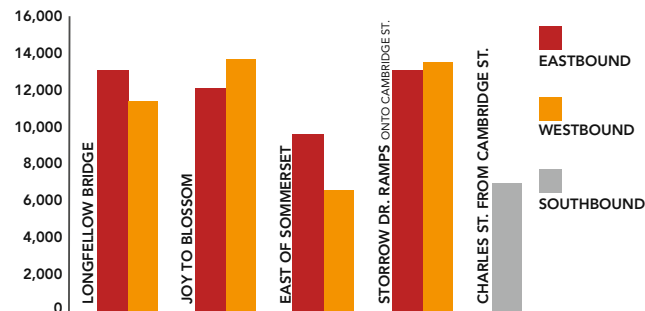
GOALS:

- Improve cleanliness of the neighborhood
- Promote attractive and easily accessible public spaces
- Improve the pedestrian experience



Beacon Hill's location offers residents convenient access to public transportation, major parks, and a variety of city activities. At the same time, however, the neighborhood's compact size and dense population combined with many visitors and daily commuters necessitate the constant monitoring for proper trash disposal and other challenges of urban living. The maintenance of public spaces, sidewalks, and streets is a top priority for the quality of life of residents, visitors, and daily commuters alike.

WEEKDAY TRAFFIC VOLUMES ARE HIGH ON COMMERCIAL STREETS



SOURCE for graph and first bullet of Did You Know:
Draft Environmental Impact study for Red/Line Blue/Line Connector Project, 2009

Nearby public spaces offer places to play and relax.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Beacon Hill area is a busy place
 - Each workday 9,000 individuals board at the Charles St./MGH T station
- Workday workers and students include:
 - ~ 17,000 MGH*
 - ~ 1,500 Mass Eye and Ear**
 - 1,900+ Suffolk employees***
 - 5,000+ Suffolk undergraduate students attend classes

SOURCES: *MGH Human Resources, April, 2011; Mass Eye and Ear Human Resources, April, 2011; *** Suffolk IMP, 2006

ASPIRATION 2

Neighbors know each other and are engaged in their community

GOALS:

- Increase social capital
- Increase civic engagement
- Identify, support, and develop the next generation of neighborhood leaders

When residents know each other, they are more likely to be involved and care about the well-being of their community and their neighbors. Developing the next generation of leadership in the neighborhood will ensure programming that continues to support neighbors' needs.



Photo from BHCA files

Young Professionals, a part of the BHCA, participate in neighborhood activities, as well as integrate philanthropic work into their community building efforts.

ASPIRATION 3

The mix of residences, businesses, services, institutions, and visitors enhances residential life

- Support a vibrant and diverse business community made up primarily of non-franchised, locally owned businesses that meet residents' needs
- Protect residential housing stock from conversion to non-residential use
- Support the health of non-profits and institutions that serve residential interests while ensuring their activities do not negatively impact residential life

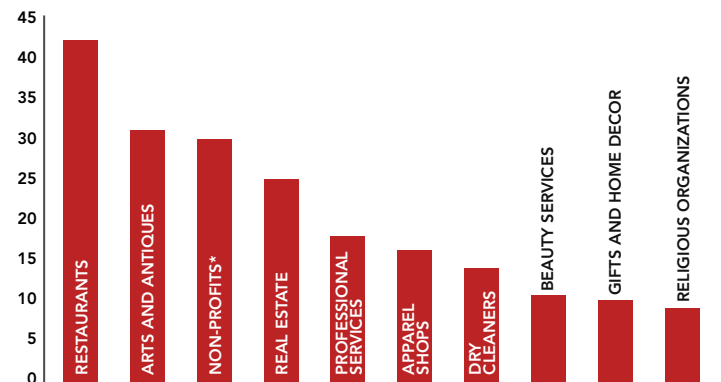


Individually owned businesses contribute to the unique character of the Beacon Hill shopping areas. Many non-profits provide services which also enhance residential needs.

Maintaining the delicate balance of residential housing stock, non-profit organizations, institutional growth, and local businesses and services is an ongoing focus.

BEACON HILL BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Top 10 Types of Organizations in Beacon Hill (n=291)



*Non-profit category includes services, government, clubs and museums.

SOURCE: BHCA Committee Fieldwork, April 2009.

Neighbors, visitors, and commuters support the diverse mix of businesses and organizations.

ASPIRATION 4

Families of all ages and financial capacities thrive

GOALS:

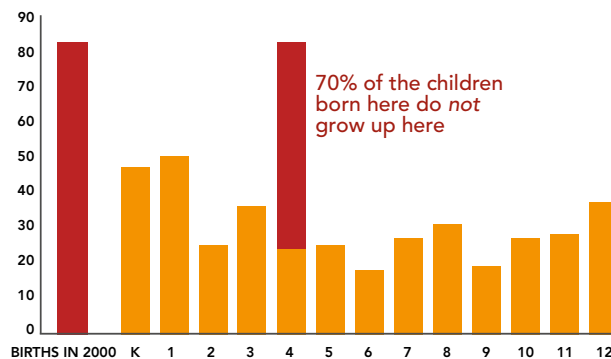
- Work with surrounding neighborhoods to strengthen public K-12 education
- Support the development of a broader range of housing options on Beacon Hill and nearby
- Develop and/or support programs to ensure Beacon Hill is a vibrant place for families



Families are a critical element in the success of any neighborhood. In order for families to thrive, there must be housing that meets their needs, nearby public schools, and programs that support family life. If these are not available, many families are forced to move out of the city.

MANY FAMILIES LEAVE BEACON HILL

Number of Children in Neighborhood



All School-Aged Children in Beacon Hill by Grade, 2008.

SOURCE:

Births in 2000, 2000 Census; All School-aged children, Boston Public Schools, 2007-2008.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Beacon Hill's population is made up of:
 - 48% aged 22-34
 - 27% aged 35-64
 - 17% aged 65 & above
 - 8% aged 0-21
- The cost difference in owning a two-bedroom home vs. a three-bedroom home is nearly 1 million dollars.**
- In 2007-2008, Beacon Hill children were scattered across 25 Boston Public Schools.***

SOURCES: *2,000 Census; when available updates will be posted at bhcivic.org. **Brewster and Berkowitz, 2005-2010 analysis of 1,195 unit sales. ***Boston Public Schools, 2007-2008.

The current trend shows most children born on Beacon Hill no longer live here when they are moving through elementary school.

ASPIRATION 5

Historic architecture and character are preserved while new technologies and green living are encouraged

GOALS:

- Support preservation of the Beacon Hill Historic District
- Encourage green technology and lifestyle, within the context of our historic neighborhood
- Research, advocate for, and integrate new technologies that will improve our community



While preserving and maintaining a historic neighborhood of 18th-19th century homes, life in the 21st century requires implementing new technologies and being sensitive to environmental impact. By staying current with “green” best practices and advances in technology, historic preservation and new technologies can be integrated for mutual benefit.

Although energy efficiency can be achieved by installing new insulated windows, the repair of existing windows is less costly, reduces heat loss, and preserves the unique character of historic glazing.

SOURCE: BHCA Green Forum, 2011; Frank McGuire, Moderator

DID YOU KNOW?

- Buildings designed by renowned architects Charles Bulfinch, Asher Benjamin, Cornelius Coolidge, and Alexander Parris have been preserved throughout the neighborhood.
- The African Meeting House, Abiel Smith School, Charles Street Meeting House, the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Phillips School, and Vilna Shul are linked to significant events in American history.

ASPIRATION 6

Nearby urban development enhances downtown living

GOALS:

- Encourage effective communication and consultation among neighboring residential communities to address mutual planning and development concerns
- Develop parameters that ensure compatibility of planning and development
- Engage early in significant planning and development initiatives and advocate for enhancements to urban residential life
- Ensure elected officials are informed and appropriately engaged throughout the process

DID YOU KNOW?

- Residents are liaisons to 13 city, state, and institutional ad hoc committees that deal with issues impacting the Beacon Hill neighborhood.
- Since the 1970's, neighborhood volunteers have advocated for the preservation of an economically diverse population. Below market rent or subsidized rent is available for low income elders, people with HIV, and even small families. Projects include: Bowdoin School Apartments, Anderson Park, Beacon House, Faneuil House, and Joy St. Residence.

SOURCE: *Beacon Hill: The Life and Times of a Neighborhood* by Moying Li Marcus; *Rogerson Communities*

While the Beacon Hill neighborhood benefits from nearby medical facilities, a thriving downtown business and financial district, educational institutions, and accessible transportation options, constant monitoring and ongoing communication among nearby neighborhoods and elected officials are necessary to maintain the delicate balance of residential living with growth and development.

The traffic calming, wider sidewalks, new lighting and traffic signals, and beautification on Cambridge Street were the result of several groups working together for many years. Today, the beautiful Cambridge Street landscaping is maintained by a consortium comprising Mass General Hospital, Mass Eye and Ear Infirmary, and BHCA, with additional contributions by Davis Marcus Partners (Charles River Plaza), Holiday Inn, Suffolk University, Peter Swartz and Talanian.



Photo from BHCA files

Photo: iStockphoto.com



New technologies will bring new opportunities.

What's next?

While one never knows what the future will bring, the BHCA will work to further the Plan on behalf of the Beacon Hill residents. This vision for the neighborhood is designed to be a dynamic plan that can incorporate new thinking and new technologies.

PLANNING MATTERS

Photographer unknown



Photo from BHCA files



A RESULT OF PLANNING IN THE LATE 1960'S IMPLEMENTATION IN THE EARLY 1970'S.
TEMPLE STREET BEFORE AND AFTER

What can you do?

TAKE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Do your part to clean the sidewalk in front of your home. Work with your neighbors on beautification, tree planting, or other projects to enhance your street. Call the Mayor's Hotline or use the Citizens Connect phone app to report missing sidewalk bricks, broken gaslights, or other service issues.

VOLUNTEER TO HELP

- If there is an Aspiration or Goal that interests you, please contact the BHCA office.

JOIN AND CONTRIBUTE

- Become a member of the BHCA
- Some projects will require funds to complete. To make a contribution, please contact the BHCA office.

LEARN MORE

- For more information about the six Aspirations and how they are evolving, please visit www.bhcivic.org. For quick access, smartphone users may scan the Quick Response (QR) code



FIND OUT MORE!

Use your smartphone to scan the QR code that will take you directly to BHcivic.org.



Planning and Research Committee:

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A special thanks is extended to those who helped shape the Neighborhood Plan by attending Community Forums, participating in surveys and interviews, and contributing to the publication of this brochure.

Front and back cover photos courtesy of Vin Cantania

*A society grows great when old men plant trees
in whose shade they know they will never sit.*

—Greek Proverb



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Neighbors Helping Neighbors

A Plan for the Neighborhood
A Summary of Recent Accomplishments, 2013

Since the development of the Plan for the Neighborhood (2008 -2011), many Beacon Hill residents have worked on projects and issues related to the six Aspirations of the Plan. The following highlights accomplishments that support the stated aspirations and goals:

Aspiration 1: Beacon Hill is a livable residential neighborhood in the middle of a vibrant city

- ✓ Project Place is sweeping the Charles Street sidewalks; a partnership between the Beacon Hill Civic Association (BHCA) and the Beacon Hill Business Association (BHBA).
- ✓ The BHCA supported the extension of the City Street Sweeping, now beginning in March and ending in December resulting in fall leaves no longer blocking storm drains and winter grime being removed more quickly.
- ✓ The 90th Campaign honoring 90 years of the BHCA neighborhood efforts raised funds dedicated to the beautification of the Charles Street tree pits with wrought iron guards and plantings.
- ✓ The BHCA received two Beautify Boston grants from the Boston Parks and Recreation department for the maintenance of the Charles Street Tree Pits and Plantings and for the Philips Street Park and Playground.
- ✓ A crosswalk light was added at the north end of Charles Street.

Aspiration 2: Neighbors know each other and are engaged in their community

- ✓ Holiday decorating has become an established tradition in which hundreds of residents participate.
- ✓ BHCA sponsored traditions include a summer Evening on the Esplanade, the fall Block Party, and the Winter Gala along with special interest events, such as jazz evenings, author talks, etc.
- ✓ Informational election forums are offered for various city and state elections with candidates in attendance.

Aspiration 3: The mix of residences, businesses, services, institutions, and visitors enhances residential life

- ✓ The BHCA's Retail Vacancy Task Force has surveyed residents to understand the types of businesses the residents want on Beacon Hill.
- ✓ The BHCA has worked with the BHBA through a joint committee to maintain and beautify Charles Street.
- ✓ BHCA coordinates bi-monthly meetings of the neighborhood nonprofits with the objectives of sharing best practices and providing a peer network for the nonprofits.



Aspiration 4: Families of all ages and financial capacities thrive

- ✓ In 2011 Beacon Hill Children were scattered around 18 public schools. (An improvement from 25 in 2007-2008).
- ✓ Neighborhood leaders led efforts in forming Downtown Schools for Boston, www.downtownschools.org, an organization of downtown neighborhoods working for added public school capacity (schools, space); efforts led to announcement from Mayor Menino’s office identifying a new location for a downtown school with the possibility of opening, fall 2015. Work continues for additional capacity.

Aspiration 5: Historic architecture and character are preserved while new technologies and green living are encouraged

- ✓ The BHCA Architectural Committee has provided input to the City of Boston’s Beacon Hill Architectural Commission (BHAC) regarding the historical and architectural appropriateness of projects coming before the Commission for approval.
- ✓ The BHCA Zoning and Licensing Committee has provided input to the BHCA Board and then to the City’s Zoning Board of Appeals regarding the appropriateness of variances and conditional uses that businesses and property owners on Beacon Hill are seeking.

Aspiration 6: Nearby urban development enhances downtown living

- ✓ Represented residents’ interests in the following:
 - Mass Eye and Ear Infirmary’s proposal to expand into the neighborhood.
 - Capital One Bank’s efforts to open a branch bank on Charles Street.
 - Suffolk University’s over-all plans and impact; announcement that 20 Somerset will be developed for general classroom use, several buildings on Hancock, Derne and Cambridge will be sold; and Temple St. buildings will become administrative.
 - Filed formal request with Mass DOT for BH to be a billboard sign free area.
 - Comment and monitoring Parcels 7 & 9, as the public market comes to fruition.

Other work includes:

- Continued strong communication:
 - publication of Neighborhood Guide,
 - monthly e -newsletters
 - e-mail notifications for time sensitive issues (approaching severe storms, utility work, water sewer shut downs, etc.)
 - Facebook, Twitter presence established
 - Began conducting small meetings, 15-20 attendees, around particular issues of interest

2010 Census Update

