

*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

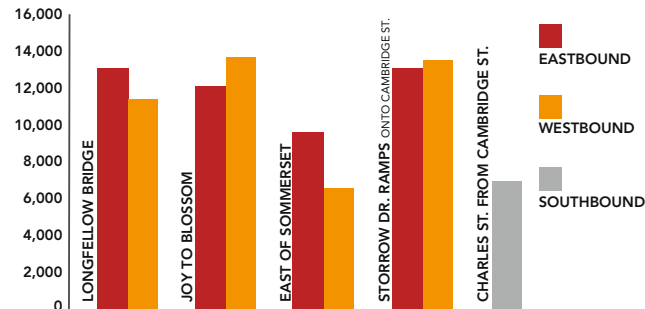
### GOALS:

- 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

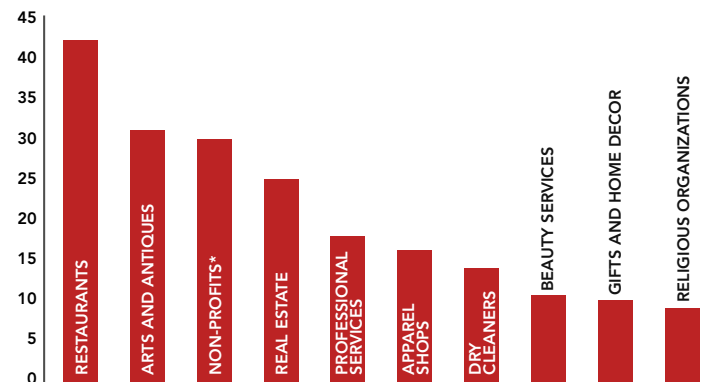


**Individually owned** businesses contribute to the unique character of the Beacon Hill shopping areas. Many non-profits provide services which also enhance residential needs.

**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:

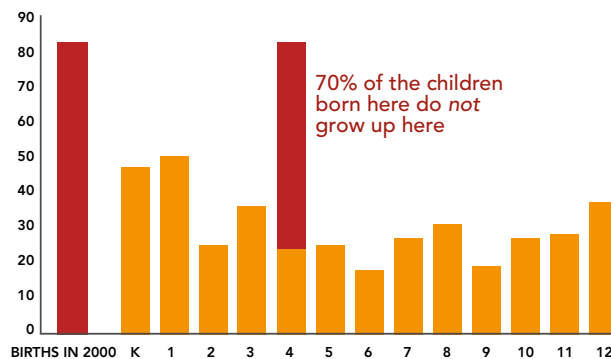
- Work with surrounding neighborhoods to strengthen public K-12 education
- Support the development of a broader range of housing options on Beacon Hill and nearby
- Develop and/or support programs to ensure Beacon Hill is a vibrant place for families



**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](http://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

## 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.



Photo: iStockphoto.com

New technologies will bring new opportunities.

## 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](http://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



## Beacon Hill Civic Association

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*Neighbors Helping Neighbors*