



Are you on board?

15 State Street, Suite 1100  
Boston, MA 02109  
617.223.8671  
[bostonharbornow.org](http://bostonharbornow.org)

February 5, 2021

Via email: [Richard.McGuinness@boston.gov](mailto:Richard.McGuinness@boston.gov)

Richard McGuinness, Deputy Director for Climate Change & Environmental Planning  
Boston Planning and Development Agency  
One City Hall Square  
Boston, MA 02201

Re: 100 Acres Open Space Plan

Dear Mr. McGuinness,

On behalf of Boston Harbor Now, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 100 Acres Open Space plan currently under review by the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA). As you know, Boston Harbor Now has closely followed the development of this plan, and recently hosted the BPDA at our November 2020 Harbor Use Public forum to discuss the plan as part of the public outreach and engagement effort.

Boston Harbor Now is a non-profit organization focused on maximizing the benefits of Boston Harbor for everyone through quality programming, policy, planning, and design. We are committed to a vision of a future Boston Harbor waterfront that is prepared for and resilient to climate change. We work collaboratively with public, nonprofit, and private sector partners to realize this vision. We commend the Boston Planning and Development Agency for its efforts to create a plan that activates the Fort Point neighborhood's Harborwalk and connected open spaces in a way that responds to the threat of coastal flooding identified in the *Coastal Resilience Solutions for South Boston* report. The agency's responsiveness to the extensive public outreach and engagement that the project team has undertaken is evident in the recommendations of the draft plan.

### Resilience

As noted earlier, the plan does a good job of preparing for the effects of climate change anticipated in the *Coastal Resilience Solutions for South Boston* report. The berm that is being designed along the water's edge will provide protection to the neighborhood and seems to be well-aligned and integrated with the design of the adjacent property. In order to verify this, and

to provide comments on the berm as it goes through its eventual permitting, it would be helpful to see how each of the development projects tie into the berm's design and elevations. As we have noted throughout the process, it will be important that this berm be designed in such a way that it is more than just a resilience strategy. It should be integrated into the public realm with thoughtful design and programming that ensures its seamless coordination with the rest of the anticipated open space and the development projects that are currently moving through permitting. We look forward to seeing the evolution of this berm as a critical element of the public realm once it is completed.

In addition to the elevation and design of the berm, ensuring the availability of the Harborwalk as the impacts of climate change are felt is a critical piece of this plan. We are encouraged that the elevation of the Harborwalk will be slightly raised in large parts of the Fort Point channel area to adapt to sea level rise projections. We also support the idea of creating a pathway connection at higher elevations to further ensure that people can continue to walk close to the water even after some sea level rise becomes a reality in the area. Finally, a pathway system along the buildings, in addition to the Harborwalk, would create a sense of openness to public use and further combat the feel of a private campus.

#### Open Space/Facilities of Public Accommodation

The plan emphasizes the importance of extending the public realm and removing the sense of privatization by providing community uses indoors that relate to the outdoor open space. This is a laudable goal, and one that we support fully. Designing spaces with equity in mind must also be a priority of the plan. In order to more fully achieve the goal of welcoming the whole public into the space, and to continue to connect the outdoor space to the interior space, we recommend that the "proprietary seating" areas that line buildings G4 and 15 Necco Street be converted to public seating. These areas, which measure between twelve and twenty feet in width in the plan, line the new open space near the water feature and should be fully integrated with that space and open to the general public, not just occupants of the buildings. This change would support the goal of not privatizing the exterior space as elucidated at the Harbor Use Public forum on this topic. It would also serve to return to public use some of the exterior open space that seems to have been lost in the shifting of the developments adjacent to the park. With respect to the size and orientation of G4, care must also be taken to ensure that the building does not cast a significant shadow on the FT-1 park, making it less appealing for park users and more difficult to keep plants and grass flourishing.

Further, the entire open space network is anticipated to provide a connection from the South Bay Harbor Trail to the Seaport. In order to support and encourage users of the open space and the buildings who arrive by bicycle, we recommend providing bike racks and other facilities that will allow cyclists to come and spend the day. This may include locker rooms and showers in the interior spaces that support the parks.

#### Operation and maintenance

The plan anticipates that the open spaces will be operated and maintained either by a non-profit organization or the City Parks Department. The A Street Park provides a model for public ownership that meets neighborhood needs. We support this model for future park ownership

and care. Whichever model is ultimately chosen, it will be critical that there is enough funding available to operate and maintain the water feature and all of the fields that are anticipated by the plan. The Rings Fountain on the Greenway has proven to be one of the most popular, and most expensive to maintain and operate, features of that space. Creating a truly great destination of similar success at 100 Acres will require that an appropriate level of funding for operation, maintenance, and capital improvements will be available over the long term.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Toffler', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Aaron Toffler  
Director of Policy  
Boston Harbor Now