



**LEGISLATION AND PRESERVATION TOOLS SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Boston City Hall Boston, MA, 02201
Held virtually via Zoom

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chelsea Blanchard, Lydia Lowe, Amanda Zettel, Margaret Dyson, Senator Mike Rush

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Michael Creasey, Kathy Kottaridis, Kenzie Bok, Rebecca Tomasovic, Lynn Smiledge, Council President Ruthzee Louijeune, Jean Luc Pierite

STAFF PRESENT: Genesis Pimentel, Commemoration Commission Manager; Dorothy Clark, Assistant Survey Director; Jennifer Gaugler, Architectural Historian

PUBLIC/PRESS PRESENT: Matthew Dickey, Frank O'Brien

A full recording of the meeting is available on boston.gov/commemoration-commission

SESSION BEGINS - 2:00 PM

I. WELCOME

- a. Genesis Pimentel welcomed attendees.

II. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. Meeting minutes were approved.

III. HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY

- a. The commissioners reviewed the survey proposed in the Article 85 memo.
- b. Commissioner Chelsea Blanchard commented that the typology forms that she recommended are accepted by MHC and can include cultural resources like landscapes or monuments in addition to buildings.
- c. Jennifer Gaugler shared that San Francisco might be a blueprint for cultural resources. She shared a project that Wentworth students volunteering with the Boston Landmarks Commission worked on, which is that they mapped the survey work that had been done over the years.
- d. Genesis Pimentel discussed potentially recommending focusing on specific neighborhoods based on how long it has been since a survey had been completed there.



- e. Dorothy Clark and Commissioner Chelsea Blanchard discussed the limitations of current surveys since area forms are being done but not necessarily individual forms, and they are trying to make sure this work aligns with Squares & Streets initiatives.
- f. Commissioner Blanchard discussed why she chose the budget she did.
 - i. Commissioner Margaret Dyson added that it is important to build a cost escalation into the proposed budget.
- g. Genesis Pimentel asked for clarification on what is prioritized in surveys that are currently being done, such as East Boston.
 - i. Dorothy Clark shared that the East Boston survey is an update that is going back to areas that have already been surveyed to see what was missed, not necessarily surveying what hasn't been surveyed.
 - ii. Commissioner Blanchard added that the grant amount allocated for surveys is very low.
- h. Commissioner Dyson asked if this large-scale survey would include literally traveling to every street, identifying in a quick visual assessment potential assets, and if that would be mapped out or if there is more of a strategy involved.
 - i. Commissioner Blanchard responded that the first five years of the survey would include identifying all buildings and items that are out there, and then being able to identify significance of each building, and allowing for updates as things need to be prioritized or become more significant.
 - ii. Jennifer Gaugler added that these surveys wouldn't mean starting from scratch, necessarily, if buildings from the surveys in the 80s have not changed much. She added that the team has found that existing survey ratings have been too low and that many buildings need to be recontextualized.
- i. Commissioner Dyson added that she is unclear on how information is gathered efficiently and how a visual survey will account for buildings that are culturally important but not necessarily visually distinctive. She asked how outreach to communities is budgeted to ensure that those cultural stories are found and how available information is improved.
 - i. Genesis Pimentel stated that this may be easier to explore through conversations with MAPC and MOAC cultural asset mapping and cultural planning projects and how those were undertaken.
 - ii. Public Comment A
- j. There were discussions around crowdsourcing funds.

IV. CULTURAL DISTRICTS INTRO



- a. Commissioner Dyson stated that it is worth noting that 2 of the 4 criteria for petitioning a landmark in Boston are related to history that can't be identified visually in the assessment of a structure, and that there needs to be a plan for how to address a resource at which events occurred or that are associated with historic personages or important cultural, political, economic, military, or social history.
- b. Genesis Pimentel discussed who oversees Cultural Districts.
 - i. Chair Lydia Lowe discussed San Francisco and Illinois legislating cultural districts.
 - ii. Genesis Pimentel mentioned wanting to know what benefit the community of Jamaica Plain/Centre St felt after it was named the Latin Quarter.
 - iii. Chair Lowe stated that she has heard from the Latin Quarter and Little Saigon that the recognition mostly has marketing benefits but that it does not provide any particular protection or resources.
- c. Pimentel stated that she wondered if there was potential for collaboration between Historic Preservation and the groups that work with cultural districts in terms of landmark areas.
 - i. Commissioner Blanchard brought up the fact that this would require a conversation around budget and staffing.
- d. Commissioner Dyson stated that school districts might also be a hotspot for inventory work, and that a place that has been identified as a cultural district might be an indicator for inventory focus.
- e. Public Comment B
- f. Action Items:
 - i. Update the budget by identifying survey needs
 - ii. Define which neighborhoods need to be prioritized and why
 - iii. Connect with institutions who do cultural planning
- g. Commissioner Dyson stated that these conversations should happen now to be ready for formal budget discussions in the fall. She added that the Commission is a good framework and that there needs to be a perspective about not wanting to play catch up in preservation but to be proactive in having a strong base of information.



V. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. Matthew Dickey stated that with tools that track where photos are taken and with social media, this outreach and tracking will not be as hard as it might have been.
- b. Matthew Dickey discussed how Jones Hill surveying began, how it was called an Arts District or cultural center because of the Strand Theatre. He is not sure how that has benefitted Strand Theatre, but he discussed how other buildings got more attention due to the promotion of the theatre.

VI. ADJOURNMENT - 3:14 PM

- a. The meeting was adjourned.

DRAFT