

## Boston City Hall and Plaza Study

Community Meeting #1  
[rethinkcityhall.org](http://rethinkcityhall.org)

### Introduction

1. MA introduced the PCMD and Utile team.

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### Presentation

Utile presented the agenda for the meeting. Presentation sent post-meeting for record, summary below:

1. Introduction of the design team, which consists of designers, strategic consultants, and engineers.
2. Three-phase study process that PCMD and Utile have developed.
  - Phase 1 – Establish the Business Plan; build public awareness and excitement, analyze revenue sources and ambitions, programming and space planning, historic understanding and opportunities, existing conditions analysis
  - Phase 2 – Explore Alternative Scenarios; identify opportunities for City Hall and Plaza based on Phase 1, close the feedback loop on previous ideas campaigns, develop design options, city leaders choose preferred scheme
  - Phase 3 – Refine the Preferred Approach; refine and elaborate chosen scheme, develop cost estimate and an implementation phasing plan, final meetings and public presentation of preferred plan
3. Phase 1 progress report.
  - Establishing a business plan
  - Programming analysis and objectives
  - Building analysis
  - Redefining the civic monuments
4. What are your aspirations for the study of Boston City Hall and Plaza?
5. Please check our website [rethinkcityhall.org](http://rethinkcityhall.org) for project updates, meeting notices, and presentations.

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After the presentation, the room was opened for comments, and community members were encouraged to fill out comment cards that were provided on each chair. The following comments/questions were heard:

### Comments

1. Community Member: Was there an assessment of the MBTA station?
  - TLo- While this was not a part of this current study, EK and I were very involved in the design review of that project.

### Present

Maureen Anderson (MA), Tricia Lyons (TL), Gert Thorn (GT), Carlene Laurent (CL) — Property and Construction Management Department (PCMD)  
John Hanlon (JH) — PMD  
Eric Kramer (EK) and Adrian Fehrmann (AF) – Reed Hilderbrand  
Michael LeBlanc (ML), Tim Love (TLo), Mimi Love (MLo), Maressa Perreault (MP), Ingrid Bengtson (IB) — Utile  
Members of Community (see sign-in sheet, attached)

### Location

Boston City Hall, Room 801

2. Community Member: What are you considering for the interior courtyard, as there is a lot of potential? Solutions to mitigate heat loss or capitalize on daylight are often value engineered out.
  - MLe- We will be considering all parts of the building with an open mind, when we get there.
  - MA- We really value the daylighting opportunities of the courtyard.
3. Community Member: More people would be interested in the process if they knew the extent of the project and properties in question. How are you going to make the project more known?
  - MA- The project is still in the early stages, and we will continue our multi-modal approach to publicity through the project website, newspapers, city website, and outreach to immediate neighbors.
  - TL- It is important to note that we are looking at city properties only in relation to the project being done at the City Hall site.
4. Community Member: Working from the inside out seems backwards since most people are concerned with the outside appearance and experience, why not the other way around?
  - MA- We are still in the information gathering stage and completing our due diligence. Our study is reviewing how we can improve the building functions and services along with repair.
  - PL- The Plaza is critical to the project and it will be the first phase of the renovation.
  - ML- We are working with HR+A to program the Plaza space.
5. Community Member: Happy this study is looking at City Hall because it is a great building. The open spaces are being underutilized.
6. Community Member: Glad the study aims to keep City Hall. Are you thinking of an addition?
  - MLe- Not yet, we need to understand the needs and capacities of the existing building first.
  - TLo/MLo- The goal is to make City Hall efficient.
7. Community Member: Some fixes are simpler than others—how will you make sure that big ideas aren't immediately swept away?
  - MLe- We want to have a solid financial scheme, the lack of which is why other projects have failed.

### Architecture & Planning

115 Kingston St.  
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(617) 423-7200  
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- TLo- We want to work keeping both near term and long term in mind, to set a master plan that is both feasible and has a bigger vision.
8. Community Member: City Hall needs defined, activated edges, what are your thoughts on how to achieve this?
    - MLe- We have some limited control on activating the edges.
    - TLo- We can define the edge in more ways than just building on the Plaza. There are some serious structural challenges to building on the Plaza.
    - EK- Things have changed since the original Plaza design. We are thinking of it as an armature that tweaks the way the open space works.
  9. Community Member: Do you have an understanding of the original street layout of the West End? Can we get rid of some of the stairs to make it more accessible?
    - TLo- It is an excellent idea to look to the history of the site, there are many stories to be told.
  10. Community Member: Will you consult the GSA?
    - MLe- Yes, we are meeting with them soon.
  11. Community Member: Have you learned anything about the structure of the Plaza?
    - TLo- We are learning a lot from the current structural study that is underway by BSC Group.
    - EK- We are bringing it up to 21<sup>st</sup> century ecological standards.
  12. Community Member: Are you looking at the extension of the Silver Line to Haymarket?
    - TLo- Not as part of this study, but we are involved in other city planning efforts and we can try to make this a point of collaboration.
  13. Community Member: Let's not rule out building on the Plaza. But also there is no other place for the whole city to gather. City Hall can be that place. We can bring more activities here and take some pressure off the Hatch Shell and Boston Common. Also keep the courtyard open, it's so dark in City Hall. Let's use the monumental spaces for public activities.
    - EK- we need to put in the infrastructure to help realize those big uses
    - TLo- If we improve City Hall, beautification will drive activity here.
  14. Community Member: Homes for Veterans is doing a similar although smaller project right now. We want to be good neighbors and also want the project to be good for us.
  15. Community Member: I don't ever want to walk across the Plaza. Maybe we can look at precedents closer to our climate, like Krakow, Poland.
    - MLe- Yes, we are currently studying a precedent in Montreal very closely, among others.
  16. Community Member: Will it aim to appeal to tourists?
    - MLe- Yes, we want to make it work better for constituents, but also recognizable and inviting. Perhaps realizing the original intentions of porosity and also taking advantage of the amazing existing spaces. We are also looking at integrating a retail component to serve that kind of traffic.
    - TLo- If we can get public stuff on lower floors and open it up, we could even run the Freedom Trail right through City Hall.
    - MA- We want to increase the day-to-day programming on the Plaza.
  17. Community Member: What if you made the rooftop a public destination?
    - MLe- There are great precedents for that.
    - MLo- We need to make it easy to get up there if that is a goal.
  18. Community Member: Have you revisited the old idea of a pedestrian bridge over Congress Street?
    - MA- It was rejected in 1998, but we'll consider it. Accessibility is one of our biggest goals.
    - MLe- Congress Street was originally intended to be more of an arterial road and City Hall was designed to turn away from it.
    - TLo- The traffic patterns and crossings on Congress Street are a great parallel opportunity.
  19. Community Member: How do you envision your final product? Will the master plan be iterative? What is the level of detail?
    - TLo- This is a very complex master plan because everything is up in the air. There will be less detail in architectural design because so many non-architectural questions are in flux. There will be enough detail to get a schematic cost estimate.
  20. Community Member: The community is the victim of Urban Renewal – it is important to be inclusive in the design process. How can the study be more inclusive?
    - GT- We want to focus on both large groups and individual people
    - MLe- We will have more meetings and will need to be more creative about outreach.
    - TLo- We are rethinking what a 21<sup>st</sup> Century civic spaces is. Maybe the process of government can become more inclusive through the design, e.g. the Talking Transition Tent in NYC. We are focusing on both the building and this larger project.

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This memorandum represents our understanding of the events which transpired and the actions which were taken. If they do not conform to a recipient's understanding, prompt written notice must be communicated to the writer. If no corrections or objections are made, this memorandum will be relied upon as a factual interpretation of this meeting.

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115 Kingston St.  
Boston, MA 02111  
(617) 423-7200  
utiledesign.com

# Attendance Sheet

Name	Company/Affiliation	Email
Alison Frazee	Boston Preservation Alliance	afrazee@bostonpreservation.org
DANIEL H. CANTWELL	REGISTERED ARCHITECT DHC DESIGN	danielhcantwell@gmail.com
Emily Goldberg	The Anthem Group	egoldberg@anthemevents.com
Steve Hassell	Shawmut Des&const.	Shassell1@shawmut.com
MICHAEL WILLIAMS	ARCHITECT	MW-ARCH3@GMAIL.COM
David Loutzenheiser	MAPC	dloutzenheiser@mapc.org
Jamison M	Simmons College	-
Natalie Paicopais	Simmons College	-
Bryan Jacob	Halverson Design Partnership	bryan@halversondesign.com
Bob Uhlig	"	bobu@halversondesign.com
ANDREW ANWAY	AMAZE DESIGN	aanway@amazedesign.com
VIRENDRA KALIANPUR	CBT	kallianpur@cbtarchitects.com
JULIA McELHINNEY	CBT	mcelhinnery@ " "
BRIAN Reeves	New England Center & Home for Vets	Brian.Reeves@newenglandcenter.org
BILL WAMB	CPSONC	WLANDBARCH@FENTLINE.NET
DANIEL POLANICO	OFFICE OF MARK CIOMMO	DANIEL.POLANICO@BOSTON.BOV
ASON WRIGHT	SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY	SWRIGHT@SUFFOLK.EDU
Lauren Shurtleff	BRA	Lauren.Shurtleff@boston.gov
SUZANNE O'LEARY	VIEW DYNAMIC GLASS	SUZANNE.OLEARY@VLDWGLASS.COM
Charlie Creed	general Interest	Creed@atlantic-acm.com
LeeAnn Coleman	BRA	LeeAnn.Coleman@Boston.gov
John Achatz	Beacon Hill Civic Assn	ja@johnachatz.com

**Boston City Hall and Plaza Study**

We welcome your feedback and suggestions!

Visit us at [rethinkcityhall.org](http://rethinkcityhall.org)

Please describe yourself (mark all that apply):

- City Hall Employee
- Local Business Owner
- Boston Resident
- City of Boston Employee
- Other:

Please leave your comments here:

- daylighting throughout
- glass in courtyard
- Boston Museum exhibit space - expand parts of building?
- need for more and larger meeting rooms

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- Other:

local advocate

Please leave your comments here:

- glad that the historic character of City Hall is part of the conversation
- how to make these changes flexible so that they can be adapted to the needs of citizens and employees 50+ years from now
- name it "Scolley Plaza"