

BOSTON'S LATIN QUARTER COMMERCIAL STABILIZATION STRATEGY

Addendum to the 2019 Cultural District Plan

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Prepared for

Hyde Square Task Force City of Boston Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture Latin Quarter Advisory Committee







This commercial stabilization strategy was developed by members of the MAPC Economic Development Group in partnership with the MAPC Analytical Service Division. Contributing authors include: Betsy Cowan, Economic Development Manager; Josh Eichen and Jennifer Kaplan, Economic Development Planners; Annis Sengupta, Assistant Director of Arts & Culture, and Sam Wenc, Arts and Culture Intern. The document was drafted as part of the cultural district planning work completed by MAPC for the City of Boston and Hyde Square Task Force between August 2018 and August 2019. It draws on research conducted on business conditions and development activity in Boston's Latin Quarter and is informed by outreach conducted as part of the planning process, including a business survey. More details on the process and data collected can be found in the plan document: Boston's Latin Quarter Cultural District Plan. The strategy addendum was developed in consultation with Hyde Square Task Force and the Latin Quarter Advisory Committee and draws on the knowledge and experience of the MAPC Arts & Culture Department and the Economic Development Group within the MAPC Land Use Department.

Table of Contents

Commercial Stabilization	4
Overview	4
Key Partners	5
Types of Commercial Stabilization Strategies	6
Strategy Recommendations	7
Strategy 1: Business Attraction	8
Strategy 2: Targeted Business Assistance	9
Strategy 3: Commercial Development Guidelines to Support Local Businesses	10
Strategy 4: Community-Oriented Commercial Development	11
Strategy 5: Parking Management	12
Strategy 6: Signage	13
Strategy 7: Mitigation of Residential Displacement	13
Acronyms	14

Commercial Stabilization

Overview

As detailed in Boston's Latin Quarter Cultural District Plan, the cultural district's Latinx-serving and immigrant-owned businesses are recognized by residents, business owners and youth as playing a key role in establishing the district's cultural identity. From the barbershops and salons that function as informal gathering spaces for Afro-Latin residents to the bodegas that carry Latinx foods and advertise area Latinx events, to the local professionals advertising their services in Spanish on signs and banners, the businesses anchor the cultural life of the Latin Quarter. Their contributions help the Latin Quarter maintain its role as the cultural home for Latinx communities in the greater Boston region. The Latin Quarter Advisory Committee, an advisory body of artists, organizations, businesses, and residents formed to guide the cultural planning process, articulated the importance of supporting district businesses as a key value for the district. In addition, focus group participants recognize the Latinx-serving businesses as important for inter-generational connections, preserving Afro-Latin culture, and enhancing the presence of the Spanish language in the district.

Business owners in the district have long been important advocates for improvements to public safety and district beautification. They have worked with the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC), Hyde-Jackson Square Main Street (HJSMS) and Hyde Square Task Force (HSTF) to decrease drug and gang activity and increase public safety and investments in the public realm. Business owners continue to prioritize preserving a safe environment in the district. Today the commercial district boasts a low vacancy rate (less than four percent) and a strong core of long-standing businesses. One sixth of district businesses have operated for over twenty years and half have been in operation for over ten years. With this success has come new challenges. Residents and business owners face growing financial pressures with the growth of Greater Boston's commercial and residential real estate markets. Intentional strategies are required to ensure that Latin Quarter businesses can successfully weather real estate pressures.

Policy Link defines commercial stabilization as

"Strategies that provide neighborhoods with tools to support the economic strength of their neighborhood commercial district, so that it is better equipped to both serve neighborhood residents' needs and withstand gentrification pressures. With these tools, community organizations can play an ongoing role in the management of a commercial district to ensure it serves as a community asset."

THE BASICS

WHAT IS IT?

Tools to support the economic strength of neighborhood commercial districts.

WHY USE IT?

To provide continued opportunities for Latinx-owned businesses to start, grow and thrive in Boston's Latin Quarter.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

These tools combine targeted business support, incubation, and recruitment with community-directed development, district amenities, and displacement mitigation to increase the commercial stability of the Latin Quarter.

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

To address challenges related to a strong residential and commercial real estate market

¹ Policy Link: Equitable Development Toolkit: Commercial Stabilizing. 2002.

This strategy document builds upon the wealth of commercial stabilization best practices as documented by Enterprise Community Partners, the National Main Street Center and as detailed in The Policy Link Commercial Stabilization Toolkit, the National League of Cities Small Business Development Best Practices Report, as well as the Upham's Corner Arts and Innovation District Managing Neighborhood Change report produced by MAPC.

Commercial stabilization can promote Latin Quarter priorities through:

- 1. Providing continued opportunities for Latinx-owned businesses to start, grow and thrive in the district.
- 2. Providing continued goods and services valued by the Latinx residents.
- 3. Creating a safe, welcoming business district with a positive environment for people of all backgrounds.

Key Partners

Implementing this strategy will require the commitment and resources of district partners engaged in business support, district improvements and development of commercial space.

The Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation (JPNDC) has the mission of transforming the lives and amplifying the voices of Boston residents who have been excluded from prosperity by an inequality economic system. JPNDC is an important non-profit developer in and around the Latin Quarter and an important partner in build-out and leasing of new ground floor commercial space and affordable housing. JPNDC also provides quality-of-life programming for residents of their affordable housing, business district support and initiatives to promote the well-being of neighborhood residents. JPNDC Small Business Services (SBS) also plays an important role in facilitating support for Latin Quarter Businesses. SBS has over 20 years of experience providing technical assistance, education and access to financing to local small businesses owned by recent immigrants, minorities and women. SBS services strengthen the socio-economic relationships among livelihood businesses, entrepreneurs, investors, anchor institutions, and consumers. Core activities include the delivery of high quality technical assistance and training to small businesses and entrepreneurs and facilitating the flow of investment capital to strengthen businesses rooted in, and meeting the basic needs of, Jamaica Plain and adjacent neighborhoods. To date SBS has facilitated the access to over \$10,000,000 in capital for over 150 businesses.

Urban Edge has a mission of strengthening communities and families through building affordable housing and vibrant, prosperous neighborhoods. The organization works with partners across the City of Boston and region to promote high quality, sustainable and affordable communities. It is a key partner in development projects in and around Boston's Latin Quarter, including the Jackson Square developments.

Hyde-Jackson Square Main Street was founded with the mission of creating a safe, visually vibrant, economically sound business district in Hyde and Jackson Squares. To achieve this mission, the organization has developed several initiatives including a district beautification program, public art installations, a theater series, promotional events such as the sidewalk sale and business assistance programs. The organization manages the design and installation of light-pole banners in the district as well.

The City of Boston provides individual business assistance and district-level support through the Office of Economic Development. The assistance is provided directly to businesses, consisting of

storefront improvement grants and one-on-one assistance. Financial and programmatic support is also provided to Hyde Jackson Square Main Street.

Latin Quarter business owners have provided advocacy and promotional support to the district over the years. Recently a group of merchants and business owners has formed the Latin Quarter Business Association with the goal of advocating for district issues such as improved public safety, parking management and district beautification. The association is open to both brick-and-mortar business owners as well as artists and entrepreneurs. The nascent LQBA is a key partner in identifying and responding to business owners' needs and priorities.

Types of Commercial Stabilization Strategies

Business Development and Assistance Strategies

Comprehensive business support is designed to build the capacity of the business district to attract sufficient customers (both residents and visitors) to promote the district's long-term viability. This support consists of business recruitment and business assistance. In the Latin Quarter, targeted business recruitment could attract new businesses to the district that complement and enhance the existing business mix, expanding the service offerings of the district and reinforcing the neighborhood's Latin Quarter identity.

Technical assistance provided to existing businesses could help them reduce their expenses and increase their revenue, promoting their long-term viability and preserving their key role in shaping the identity of the Latin Quarter. Key areas of assistance include succession planning, commercial lease support and marketing assistance.

Commercial Real Estate Development Strategies

Another key element of business district support is the development and management of real estate. Given that the district is significantly built out, with a limited number of commercial development opportunities, these strategies include creative leasing strategies and options for the transfer of ownership to community-based models, as well as recommendations for future commercial developments to be undertaken by JPNDC and Urban Edge.

District Management Strategies

Another key component of business district viability is the management of the district itself, including beautification, parking management and signage. Given the existing beautification work underway, this document includes strategies to address parking and signage.

Residential Displacement Mitigation Strategies

In the past two decades there has been increasing research on the connection between residential displacement or gentrification and retail turnover. While additional research is needed, the evidence suggests that changes in the residential base, particularly the arrival of households with higher median incomes and different shopping habits and preferences could negatively impact the viability of existing businesses that catered to the previous residents in the business district.

The majority of Latinx residents in Jamaica Plain are renters, which necessitates further research regarding rental housing trends in the district as well as residential movement into and out of the district. Given the complexity of residential displacement in Boston and in the Latin Quarter district in particular, this document details strategies to gather additional data in order to inform potential action to address the issues identified.

Strategy Recommendations

This document, provided to the Boston's Latin Quarter managing partner, Hyde Square Task Force, to be shared with district partners, recommends seven strategies to address the opportunities and challenges facing Boston's Latin Quarter. These strategies have been to address the current challenges and priorities for Latinx businesses in the Latin Quarter. Each strategy includes objectives, steps, key partners, and estimated time frame for completion.

1. Business Attraction

Add additional Latinx-owned and Latinx-serving businesses to the district.

2. Targeted Business Assistance

Improve the viability of existing businesses.

3. Commercial Development Guidelines to Support Local Businesses

Improve access to affordable commercial space for artists and local businesses.

4. Community-Oriented Commercial Development

Coordinate commercial development with local community needs and increase community ownership of commercial properties.

5. Parking Management

Improve the efficiency of parking in the district.

6. Signage

Improve signage & other public art in the district to enhance district identity and provide wayfinding.

7. Mitigation of Residential Displacement

Research residential trends to determine displacement risk and design strategies for prevention and mitigation.

Strategy 1: Business Attraction
Add additional Latinx-owned and Latinx-serving businesses to the district.

TASKS	PARTNERS
Fall 2019 - Spring 2020	
1. Convene key partners.	
 a. Discuss business support strategy b. Establish priority work areas c. Agree on roles and responsibilities Resources: In-kind support from project partners.	HSTF HJSMS JPNDC SBS LQBA
2020 - Ongoing	
 2. Identify key gaps in the Latin Quarter business mix. a. Review list of businesses in the district b. Identify opportunities for new businesses to support implementation of cultural district c. Identify gaps in business mix based on previous studies, local knowledge, and consultation with City of Boston and JPNDC SBS. 	HSTF MOAC City of Boston HJSMS JPNDC SBS LQBA
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. 3. Identify Latinx-owned and Latinx-serving businesses interested in expanding or	
 a. Meet with Latin Quarter barbers and stylists to discuss business support needs and business incubation opportunities. b. Conduct outreach to successful Latinx businesses in the LQ in the types identified (restaurants, creative economy) to explore expansion options in currently vacant spaces and expected commercial developments. c. Market the BLQ as a regional destination for the Latinx population towards businesses outside the area that might be interested in relocating or opening a second location. d. Work with City of Boston to identify additional Latinx businesses or organizations to assist with recruitment. e. Network with area business incubators to identify needs of graduating businesses. Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding for marketing and recruitment.	HSTF MOAC City of Boston HJSMS JPNDC SBS LQBA
4. Build support network for Latinx artists / entrepreneurs.	
 a. Convene Latinx creative entrepreneurs for conversation about entrepreneurship support with input from the Fairmount Innovation Lab and other creative support organizations. b. Work with Spanish-language resource providers & Latinx entrepreneur organizations (Amplify Latinx, the Spanish-speaking staff member at the City of Boston, JPNDC SBS) to discuss Spanish-language business support in the district. 	JPNDC SBS UE MOAC HSTF
Resources: In-kind support from project partners.	

Strategy 2: Targeted Business Assistance Improve the viability of existing businesses.

TASKS	PARTNERS
Ongoing	
Provide targeted technical assistance to Latinx-owned businesses.	
 a. Work with LQBA, JPNDC SBS, and HJSMS to identify key needs of Latinxowned businesses b. Develop bilingual individual and group support options for small business assistance (marketing assistance, business development, licensing/permitting support). c. Work with JPNDC SBS to develop a program to provide 1-1 technical assistance and coaching as a critical follow up to the group support options. 	JPNDC SBS HJSMS LQBA MOWD BPIC
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding for program development. 2. Provide succession planning assistance.	
 a. Identify long-term businesses to provide targeted succession planning assistance b. Identify trainers/assistance providers c. Develop cohort for regular meetings/discussions d. Work with business owners to develop succession plan e. Identify potential new owners/managers of those businesses f. Explore potential coop conversions if interested g. Provide support to new owners/managers Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding for trainers and technical assistance providers.	JPNDC SBS City of Boston Financial Planners LEAF COFNE
 3. Provide commercial lease negotiation assistance. a. Work with business owners without leases or with leases soon to be up for renewal to create and negotiate leases b. Provide a workshop on leasing best practices with 1-1 assistance with bilingual attorneys following the workshop. c. Provide pro-bono assistance through the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights or Harvard Transactional Law Clinic. Resources: In-kind support from project partners and technical assistance providers. Funding for workshop planning and execution. 	JPNDC SBS City of Boston Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Harvard Transactional Law Clinic Northeastern Law Clinic
 4. Share the stories of local businesses as a marketing and branding tool. a. Work with HSTF and/or 826Boston or another youth organization to collect stories and photos of local business owners. b. Create vehicles to share the stories (media, public art, etc.). Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Grant funding for creation and dissemination of final product. 	HSTF MOAC 826Boston Local artists Local schools BPLCB

Strategy 3: Commercial Development Guidelines to Support Local Businesses Improve access to affordable commercial space for artists and local businesses.

TASKS	PARTNERS
Ongoing	
Develop leasing guidelines for businesses located in properties owned and managed by non-profit developers.	
a. Convene nonprofit developers, City of Boston, JPNDC SBS, and HJSMS to discuss comprehensive support for businesses in non-profit-developer-owned properties, including creative leasing structures and other supports for priority businesses.	HSTF JPNDC SBS UE TCB BCVI
b. Identify opportunities to incorporate comprehensive support program into business recruitment and retention strategies.	HJSMS LQBA
 Work with JPNDC SBS, HJSMS and LQBA to disseminate information about the program to business owners. 	City of Boston
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to subsidize comprehensive business support programs.	
 Create commercial space design and program guidelines for private developers and non-profit developers to ensure that new commercial spaces are aligned with the needs of Latinx-owned and Latinx-serving businesses. 	
 a. Discuss the details of planned commercial developments in and near the Latin Quarter (including design specifications for the commercial storefronts, priorities for commercial tenants, and tenant recruitment strategies). b. Identify opportunities to tailor new commercial spaces to the needs of existing Latinx-owned and Latinx-serving businesses. c. Match locations to list of business opportunities to determine business recruitment goals. d. Target business incubators with graduating Latinx-serving businesses interested in expanding to a storefront. 	HSTF JPNDC SBS UE TCB BCVI HJSMS LQBA City of Boston
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to subsidize development of affordable commercial spaces and outreach to business incubators.	
3. Work with private developers and local non-profit developers to identify opportunities to support needs of Latinx artists and creative entrepreneurs.	
 a. Convene a conversation to identify opportunities to establish community space that could serve as creative incubator space, gallery, or community area. b. Convene Latinx artists and creative entrepreneurs to refine concept for creative community space. c. Work with non-profit developer to integrate concept into building program in Jackson Square. 	HSTF MOAC JPNDC SBS UE TCB LQBA City of Boston
Resources: In-kind support from project partners and technical assistance providers. Funding to subsidize development of affordable community space.	City of bosion

Strategy 4: Community-Oriented Commercial Development

Coordinate commercial development with local community needs and increase community ownership of commercial properties.

TASKS	PARTNERS
2019 - 2021	
1. Align commercial developments with needs of local youth.	
 a. Convene private developers, nonprofit developers, City of Boston, and HSTF to discuss development opportunities to address the need for youth development facilities. b. Identify opportunities to incorporate youth programming and youth facilities into new building programs. c. Promote need for youth development facilities and youth programming with local property owners, organizations, and developers interested in the Latin Quarter. 	HSTF JPNDC SBS UE TCB BCVI City of Boston
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to subsidize low-income BLQ youth access to new programming and facilities.	
Ensure that a part of the Blessed Sacrament Church will be preserved for community use.	
 a. Convene youth, artists and creative entrepreneurs to discuss opportunities for creative community space in the redevelopment program. b. Convene conversations between selected developer, LQAC, and local non-profits to identify opportunities for non-profit operation of community and/or commercial spaces such as: Mercado model food hub, incubator, co-working space. 	HSTF MOAC LQAC Youth Artists
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to subsidize development of affordable community space.	
Ongoing	
3. Increase community ownership of commercial spaces in Latin Quarter.	
 Work with business owners and artists to identify key property owners interested in exploring flexible leasing options for local businesses and creative entrepreneurs. 	HSTF JPNDC SBS
 Work with experts on commercial affordability to evaluate options for ensuring long-term commercial affordability along Centre Street, including land trusts. 	UE TCB City of Boston
 c. Identify and reach out to owners of commercial condos located on the first floor of residential properties in the cultural district. d. Develop a financing plan for property acquisition either through Master Lease or outsight purchase to establish a non-profit land trust. 	Commercial Affordability Experts
or outright purchase to establish a non-profit land trust. Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to subsidize creative leasing arrangements and for commercial affordability experts.	

Strategy 5: Parking Management Improve the efficiency of parking in the district.

TASKS	PARTNERS
2020 - 2021	
Determine the parking demand and projections based on new uses (e.g. the new dispensary).	City of Boston
 a. Work with technical assistance provider to conduct parking demand study through LBQA and HJSMS. b. Meet with business owners to discuss results of parking demand study and parking management options. 	HJSMS LQBA MDI
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding for technical assistance and parking demand study.	
2. Explore potential for creative parking management solutions to address current and projected parking demand.	
 a. Work with technical assistance provider to develop recommendations for creative parking management solutions such as: i. Parking meters 	City of Boston
ii. Shared parking in private lots (work with the MSPCA, Whole Foods, and others?)	HJSMS LQBA MDI
 Meet with key stakeholders to discuss feasibility and preferences for creative parking management options. 	
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to subsidize development and vetting of creative parking management options.	
Implement and evaluate impact of preferred parking management options. Based on feedback from key stakeholders, identify preferred feasible	
creative parking management solution. b. Work with key stakeholders and City of Boston to pilot implementation of new parking management solution. c. Work with technical assistance provider to evaluate impact of pilot and	City of Boston HJSMS LQBA
determine whether to adopt it as a mid-term solution. Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to subsidize development and vetting of creative parking management options.	MDI
Ongoing	
4. Explore alternate parking management options including improved transit service and structured parking.	HJSMS
 a. Work with technical assistance providers to estimate impact on parking demand of structured parking and improved transit service. 	JPNDC SBS City of Boston MBTA
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to subsidize study on parking demand impact of structured parking and improved transit service.	MDI

Strategy 6: Signage

Improve signage & other public art in the district to enhance district identity and provide wayfinding.

TASKS	PARTNERS
Ongoing	
Identify key signage needs, develop designs, test feasibility, and develop resources for implementation.	
 a. Conduct streetscape audit with residents, business owners to determine priorities for key interventions. b. Develop designs for interventions. c. Work with the City of Boston on permitting. d. Develop funding for pilot intervention. e. Implement pilot and evaluate. 	HSTF HJSMS JPNDC SBS UE City of Boston Local artists
Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to design and implement interventions.	

Strategy 7: Mitigation of Residential Displacement

Research residential trends to determine displacement risk and design strategies for prevention and mitigation.

TASKS	PARTNERS
Ongoing	
 Evaluate residential displacement risk to determine incidence and identify potential contributing factors. a. Evaluate rental and homeownership data by race/ethnicity, household income characteristics. b. Evaluate existing housing stock and development pipeline. c. Research local housing market conditions. d. Document existing and planned affordable rental housing and homeownership options. e. Research availability of artist-specific housing in the surrounding neighborhood. Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to conduct residential displacement risk analysis.	HSTF City Life/Vid Urbana JPNDC UE OHS / DND
 Determine potential interventions to mitigate residential displacement. Based on data, determine mitigation and prevention strategies such as: a. The creation of a Housing Committee/Task Force b. Tenants rights' workshops c. Property owner engagement, advocacy d. Policy advocacy (if appropriate) e. Wealth creation support programs (such as the Family Independence Initiative and others) Resources: In-kind support from project partners. Funding to implement strategies. 	City Life / Vid Urbana JPNDC UE OHS / DND

Acronyms

BCVI Boston Community Ventures, Inc.

BPIC Boston Private Industry Council

BPLCB Boston Public Library Connolly Branch

COFNE Co-Op Fund of New England

HJSMS Hyde-Jackson Square Main Streets

HSTF Hyde Square Task Force

JPNDC Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation

JPNDC SBS Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation Small

Business Services

LEAF Local Enterprise Assistance Fund

LQBA Boston's Latin Quarter Business Association

MBTA Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

MDI Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

MOAC City of Boston Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture

MOWD City of Boston Mayor's Office of Workforce Development

OHS/DND City of Boston Office of Housing Stability / Department of

Neighborhood Development

TCB The Community Builders

UE Urban Edge