MASSACHUSETTS PLANNING

A publication of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association

American Planning Association
Massachusetts Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

Summer 2026

Sparking Fireworks: Celebrating 250 Years of Planning

page 7

2026–2027 APA-MA Chapter Committees and Liaisons

Click on any name below to reach our board members by email.

Executive Board

President | Kenneth Comia, AICP
Vice President | Lee Pouliot, AICP, ASLA
Immediate Past President | Alison LeFlore, AICP
Secretary | Jim Robbins
Treasurer | Sujatha Krishnan
Legislative and Policy Officer | Ralph R. Willmer, FAICP
Professional Development Officer | Bill Nemser, AICP, LEED AP

Regional Representatives

Northeast Region | Brian Creamer, AICP, SITES AP
Southeast Region | Shayne M. Trimbell, AICP
Central Region | Trish Settles, AICP
Western Region | Ben Breger, AICP
At-Large Rep | Sarah L. Raposa, AICP
Greater Boston Region | Claire V. Ricker, AICP

Chapter Subcommittees

APA-MA Chapter Manager
Brian Currie, AICP
Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) Liaison
Katherine Lacy, AICP
Community Development & Housing Committee Chair
Judi Barrett
Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities
Elaine Wijnja, AICP
Economic Development Committee Chair
Kathy McCabe, FAICP
Consulting Planners of Massachusetts (CPM) Liaison
Kathy McCabe, FAICP
***Massachusetts Planning* Editor**
Peter Lowitt, FAICP
Social Coordinators
Alyssa Sandoval, AICP
Melisa Tintocalis
Sustainable Development Committee Chair
Brian Creamer, AICP, SITES AP
Transportation Committee Chair
Vacant

Massachusetts Planning is published quarterly by the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA-MA). Contributions are encouraged. Please send submissions, letters, questions, and high praise to editor Peter Lowitt, AICP, at **peterlowitt1@gmail.com**. Advertising inquiries: **jmcommunications@comcast.net**.

www.apa-ma.org • Follow us on X at @APA_MASS and on LinkedIn (click to launch in browser)

On the cover: Fireworks in Boston (Peter E / Flickr)

From the President

Welcome to another edition of *Massachusetts Planning*!

It has been an exciting and rewarding season for our chapter. This spring, many of our members gathered in Detroit and online for the American Planning Association's National Planning Conference, where planners from across the country came together to share ideas, learn from one another, and celebrate the impact of our profession. It was especially meaningful to connect with fellow Massachusetts and New England planners, chapter leaders, students, and colleagues from across the country, and share in our love for planning.

Closer to home, we were honored to sponsor this year's Distinguished Planner Lecture at MIT, featuring a talk with Catherine Ratté. Her reflections on leadership, public service, and mentorship reminded us of the lasting impact planners can have on communities and the profession. We also congratulate Northeastern University School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs on achieving initial accreditation for its planning program, an important milestone that strengthens planning education and expands opportunities for future planners in the Commonwealth.

We are also proud to celebrate this year's Massachusetts inductees to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP). Fellowship is among the highest honors in the planning profession, recognizing individuals whose careers have made lasting contributions to planning and the communities they serve. Congratulations to our newest Fellows and thank you for your continued leadership and service to our communities and our profession.

While summer often brings a slightly different pace, APA-MA remains active. Planning is already underway for SNEAPA, and we look forward to partnering with our neighboring chapters to develop another outstanding conference at Foxwoods. Be sure to keep an eye on our biweekly newsletter and website for chapter news, events, and opportunities to get involved.

I hope you find time this summer to recharge, enjoy the longer days, and spend time with family, friends, and colleagues. I look forward to connecting with many of you in the months ahead.

Ken

Kenneth Comia, AICP
president@apa-ma.org

The Carol J. Thomas, FAICP Scholarship Fund

As you may know, the APA-MA Chapter has established in the memory of Carol J. Thomas, FAICP, a scholarship fund in her honor. Carol taught planning courses at both the University of Rhode Island and the Harvard Graduate School of Design. She was an ardent mentor to so many students and emerging planners and strongly believed in the value of students and young planners attending and networking at conferences.

Carol J. Thomas

The fund has been used for the past two years to mentor students by awarding scholarships to attend the Southern New England APA (SNEAPA) Conference. In 2025 there were over twenty applications to the fund, but unfortunately only one was funded.

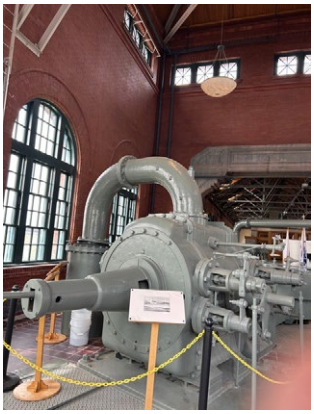
So that more applicants can be awarded, we are challenging our membership to match the APA-MA Chapter's annual contribution to the fund, which is five percent of SNEAPA profits. This year's SNEAPA contribution totaled nearly $2,000. With your kind contribution we are confident this challenge will be successful.

To donate please follow this link to the **Carol J. Thomas Memorial Scholarship Fund**. Thank you so much!

Planners Visit Deer Island Waste Water Treatment Plant

by Daphne Politis, CPM,
Alyssa Sandoval, APA-MA, and
Melisa Tintocalis, APA-MA

On Friday, March 27, twenty-seven public and private sector planners gathered just before 11:00 a.m. at Deer Island for a private tour of the facility—the second largest wastewater treatment plant in the country. The tour was co-organized by Consulting Planners of Massachusetts (CPM) and APA-MA, and began in the original pump station, where participants viewed the historic pump and a scale model of the site.



The program opened with a short video outlining the history of the facility, the clean up of Boston Harbor, and an overview of the wastewater treatment process. This prompted a lively Q&A, with planners engaging on topics ranging from infrastructure design to long-term environmental impacts and operations.

Our two very informative tour guides then led the group through one of the three pumping stations, explaining the primary and secondary treatment systems and the remarkable transformation of Boston Harbor over the past several decades. A highlight of the tour was visiting one of the twelve iconic 140-foot egg-shaped digesters, where sewage sludge begins its conversion into fertilizer. From the top, participants were treated to sweeping views of the Boston skyline.

The tour also covered odor control systems and the engineering of the 9.5-mile-long, 24-foot-diameter outfall tunnel that carries treated effluent into the deep waters of Massachusetts Bay.

Following the two-hour tour, many participants continued the conversation over lunch at Belle Isle Seafood in Winthrop, enjoying fresh seafood and scenic views of the Boston skyline. Lunch was generously hosted by APA-MA.

The tour offered an engaging and educational experience (1 CE Credit and 1 SR AICP credit), bringing together students, practicing planners, and recently retired professionals. Overall, planners gained a better understanding of the scale of the wastewater treatment process and how it can be directly linked to a community's ability to plan for more development. In case anyone reading this is inspired to visit, all visitors to the facility require advance approval from MWRA.

Learn more about the Deer Island operation in this April 30 article from the *Boston Globe*: www.bostonglobe.com/2026/04/30/newsletters/sewage-deer-island.

Congrats to APA-MA's Newest AICP Fellows

APA-MA is proud to congratulate this year's inductees to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Certified Planners (FAICP). This year's Fellows from Massachusetts join a distinguished group of practitioners, educators, and leaders whose careers have strengthened communities, elevated planning practice, and inspired future generations of planners. We are pleased to recognize and celebrate their accomplishments and thank them for the lasting impact they have had on the profession and the communities they have served. A summary statement of their contributions to the profession follows:

David Gamble, FAICP

David Gamble's three-decade career bridges practice, teaching, research, mentorship, and service—redefining the boundaries between planning and architecture. As founding principal of Gamble Associates, he has led award- winning revitalization projects across the country, transforming post-industrial and underutilized sites into inclusive, resilient communities. His books, including Rebuilding the American City and Rebuilding the American Town, demystify urban planning for broader audiences. A sought-after lecturer and longtime educator at MIT and Harvard, David has inspired a generation of urban planners and designers. His national leadership, including chairing AIA's Regional and Urban Design Committee, has connected practitioners and educators around a shared urban future.

Jeff Levine, FAICP

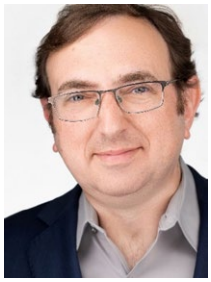
A well-known name in New England planning circles, Jeff Levine has a long record of getting good planning projects done. As a municipal planner in Somerville, MA, he set in motion transit-oriented projects such

continued next page

(left to right): Existing Fellow Bob Mitchell, FAICP; Jennifer Raitt, APA Board Director-at-Large; New Fellow Monica Tibbits-Nutt, FAICP; Existing Fellow Ralph Willmer, FAICP; New Fellow Jeff Levine, FAICP; New Fellow George Proakis, FAICP; New Fellow Ben Frost, FAICP, of Rhode Island; New Fellow Scott Turner, FAICP; Existing Fellow Neil Angus, FAICP.

as the Assembly Square redevelopment and the Green Line extension. In Portland, ME, he secured passage of the city's inclusionary zoning ordinance and developed the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund. He was influential in drafting and passage of Maine's sweeping 2022 zoning reform law, as well as the 2025 successor bill. Jeff has published a book on leadership in planning and currently teaches planning at MIT.

George Proakis, FAICP



George Proakis has influenced planning practice throughout New England, transforming zoning into a placemaking tool. In leadership roles in Lowell, Somerville, and Watertown, Massachusetts he guided stakeholders through inclusive comprehensive planning processes, then implemented each plan through design-based neighborhood plans and innovative form-based zoning. The results are walkable mixed-use neighborhoods: Lowell's Hamilton Canal Innovation District; Somerville's Assembly and Union Squares; and, the ongoing revitalization of downtown Watertown. George has become a leading influencer of New England placemaking practice: presenting conference sessions, teaching college courses, cofounding the CNU New England Chapter, and volunteering with Smart Growth America's Center for Zoning Solutions.

Monica G. Tibbits-Nutt, FAICP

Over a two-decade career, Monica Tibbits-Nutt, has advanced planning that centers equity, accountability, and public trust. A first-generation college graduate and nationally recognized transportation leader, she served as Secretary of Transportation for Massachusetts and as the first Black woman to lead the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, where she championed justice-based planning, fare equity initiatives, innovative data tools, and new approaches to suburban mobility. Her leadership reshaped transportation governance and expanded access to opportunity across the Commonwealth. Today, she serves on the Global Program Management team at Jacobs, supporting complex infrastructure projects and climate-aligned mobility initiatives worldwide.

Scott D. Turner, FAICP

Scott Turner's work advances environmental sustainability and community resilience by planning and designing projects and infrastructure that reduce environmental impacts and empower communities to adapt to climate change challenges. He has planned and built equitable projects that balance human, ecological, and economic wellbeing. His most notable accomplishments include award winning Green Infrastructure projects, planning and redeveloping historic urban properties into mixed use economic centers, and reimagining university campus' utilizing sustainability and resilience principles. He has served APA in numerous leadership capacities at the national level for ten years, leading and developing important resources for all APA planners.

Sparking Fireworks: Celebrating 250 Years of Planning

by Mark Favermann

Coronation of Alexander II (1856) by Achille-Isidore Gilbert

With the 250th Anniversary of the founding of the United States in 2026, it is valuable to review and even reconsider significant achievements of planning and urban design during these past two and a half centuries. Many were actually realized in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Even prior to 1776, starting essentially at its 17th-century founding, Massachusetts has had a rich history of city and regional planning firsts, starting with the 1634 establishment of the nation's first public park (the Boston Common), Boston Latin School (the first public school in 1635, introducing the concept of municipal free education), and the founding of Harvard University (North America's first university) in Cambridge in 1636.

In the 19th century, Massachusetts created the country's first master-planned neighborhood in 1856-1859 with Boston's elegant Back Bay. A major component of the Back Bay and other parts of Boston was the thoughtful infilling of watery swamp land that incorporated a massive planned, grid-based development project expanding Boston's residential neighborhood areas. These topographical transformations included Charlestown, East Boston, The South End, and the Financial District (South Cove). Massachusetts also pioneered regional planning in the 1890s with the Metropolitan District Commission's park-and-parkway system.

Other parts of the Commonwealth included firsts as well. In 1821, the City of Lowell was the first planned industrial city in North America. It was strategically planned and developed as a textile manufacturing center with housing, factories, and water-powered canals designed as integrated parts of a whole municipality. In 1893, the City of Springfield paved the first concrete street in the United States, revolutionizing municipal infrastructure and surfacing of durable roadways across the nation. Perhaps this was the location of the first potholes in the U.S. as well?

In 1955, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to pass legislation allowing cities to designate local historic districts. Boston, Cambridge, Nantucket, Marblehead, Ipswich, Concord, and Lexington were early pioneers in using zoning and design review to protect and preserve 17th- and 18th-century architectural heritage.

Additionally, the first comprehensive landscape park system across parts of Boston and neighboring Brookline, the "Emerald Necklace," was created by the preeminent landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1880s. This continuous 1,100-acre network of linked parks is one of the earliest greenway planning projects in the United States.

continued next page

Rick Harris

Boston Public Garden.

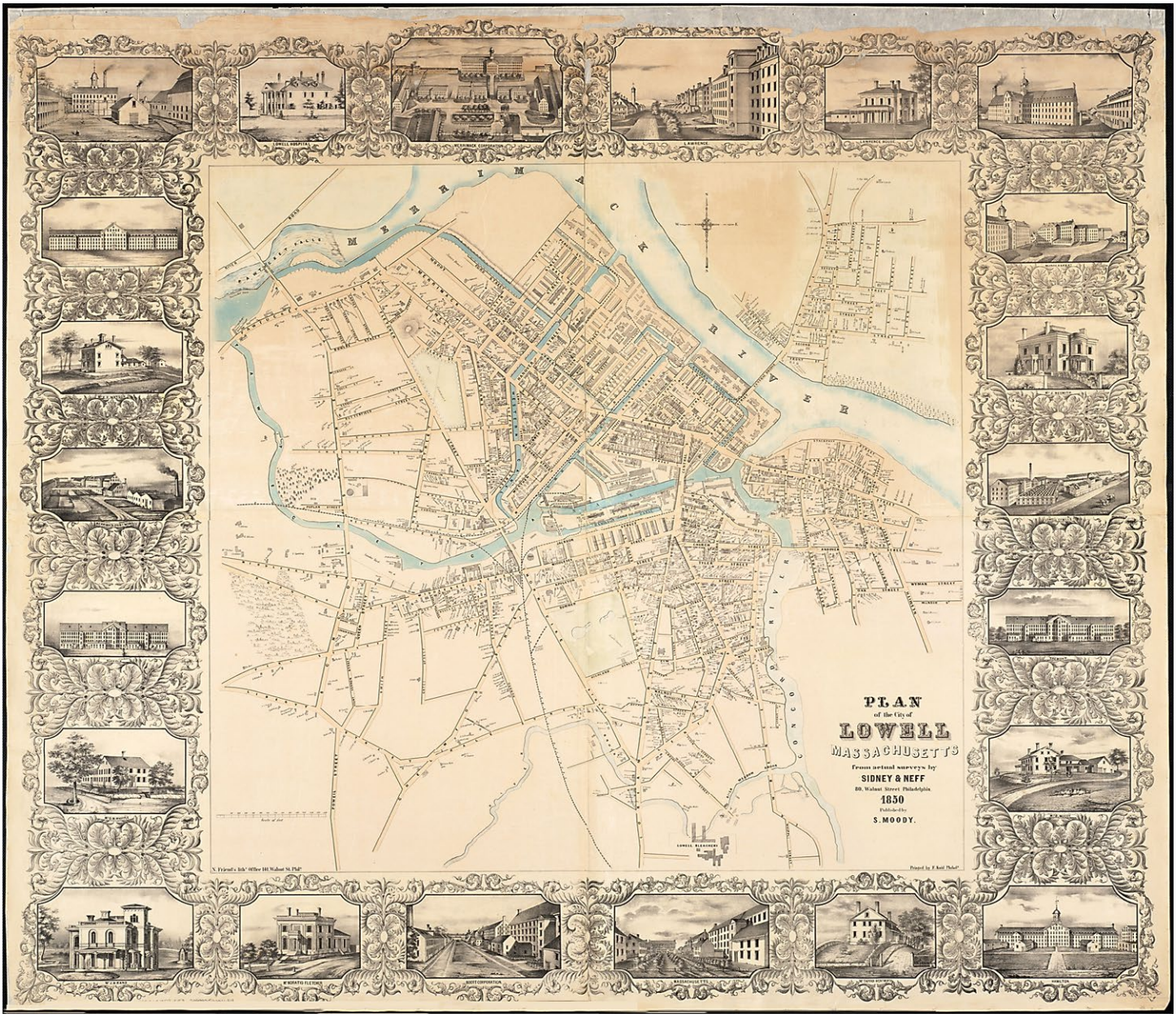
250 Years of Planning *cont'd*

In 1897, Massachusetts opened North America's first subway system. This was preceded by the first planned "Streetcar Suburbs." The expansion of horse-drawn railways in the mid-19th century, and later electric streetcars in the late 1800s, profoundly altered the Greater Boston region. Strategically, this gave birth to the United States' initial phase of streetcar suburbs, allowing working class and middle class residents to commute into the city center while living outside the urban core. Much later in 1964, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) was established by law, becoming the first combined regional transit system in the U.S.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Massachusetts-based planning and urban design educational institutions have proliferated and led the country. Each program has a distinctive approach. The University of Massachusetts Amherst Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning (LARP) was founded in 1903 by Frank A. Waugh as an undergraduate program in Landscape Gardening. As part of the new Landscape Architecture Department (established in 1900 by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. and Arthur A. Shurcliff) at Harvard University, the first course in urban planning was taught in 1909. The first formal North American programs in city and regional planning (1923) and urban design (1960) were established at Harvard. Established in 1933, part of the architecture department, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) offers a Master in City Planning (MCP) focused on policy and institutional intervention. Having

continued next page

The Emerald Necklace, a continuous 1,100-acre network of linked parks, is one of the earliest greenway planning projects in the United States.



The City of Lowell was the first planned industrial city in North America.

250 Years of Planning *cont'd*

been started in 1973, Tufts University's Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning (UEP) offers a master of arts focused on policy and planning. Begun in 2006, Northeastern University offers a Master of Science in Urban Planning and Policy with specialized concentrations in urban sustainability, analytics, design, and development.

Since 2015, The University of Massachusetts Boston grants a Masters in Urban Planning and Community Development that emphasizes the theory and practice of planning with strong community partnership practicums. Started in 1976, Boston University (BU) Metropolitan College has a Master of Science in City Planning (MSCP) and a Master of Science in Urban Affairs.

Now ubiquitous, allowing us to see the where and why on a map, the Geographical information System (GIS) was first refined at Harvard University's Laboratory for Computer Graphics and Special Analysis beginning in 1965.

Politically connected, architect Charles Bulfinch in the late 18th and early 19th century reshaped Boston from a colonial town into a significant capital city. He also directed Beacon Hill's development. Another significant player was Mayor Josiah Quincy, Jr. (1802-1882) who extensively modernized Boston's infrastructure. His father and grandson were also mayors of Boston. A plethora of Boston Brahmins (19th century) who apparently talked to each other, as well as to God-Cabots, Lowells, Lodges, etc., often used their wealth and prominence for the public good, influencing the development of civic institutions, parks, and cultural landmarks.

In the early decades of the 20th century, prominent "first women" were active in the City of Boston's planning process. The editor of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.'s

continued next page

papers, Theodora Kimball Hubbard (1887-1935) was an important figure in urban planning in Boston during the 1920s. A librarian and researcher for the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture, she was the only woman member of the American City Planning Institute, American Planning Association's predecessor, in 1918. She had a key role in analyzing Boston's urban growth.

Initially hired to be a strategic clerk assistant to Boston Mayor "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald (JFK's maternal grandfather), Elisabeth May Herlihy's career spanned a formative period of urban planning in the United States and is a significant representative of the evolution of the planning profession. Appointed Secretary of the Boston City Planning Board in 1914, she shaped the city's zoning policies, transportation studies, and institutional planning framework. Through successive mayors, she continued to serve Boston as commissioner on the Boston City Planning Board until her retirement in 1950. She quietly shaped every major planning initiative of the first half of 20th-century Boston.

During the second half of the 20th century, Carol R. Johnson (MLA,'57, Harvard GSD) and Carol Thomas (MCP, '51, MIT) were prominent, award-winning landscape architecture and urban planning practitioners both throughout Massachusetts and abroad. Carol Johnson served on the City of Boston's Civic Design Commission for 10 years. During her 60-year professional practice, Carol Thomas taught for many years at both Harvard's GSD and the University of Rhode Island. She was also a founder and the first president of the Consulting Planners of Massachusetts (CPM).

Besides the Brookline-based father of landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmsted and his brilliant, adopted son, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., we should celebrate many other Massachusetts planning and design contributors. A few of the most notable include individuals with a variety of viewpoints. With one of their publications, the group includes Sam Bass Warner, Jr. (*Streetcar Suburbs*), Kevin Lynch (*The Image of the City*), Herbert J. Gans (*Urban*

continued next page

John Bachmann's 1850 Bird's-Eye View of Boston.

Villagers), Ian McHarg (*Design with Nature*), Charles Waldheim (*Landscape as Urbanism*), Rem Koolhaas (*Delirious New York*), Diane E. Davis (*Cities and Sovereignty*), Jeff Speck (*Walkable City*), and David Reisman (*The Lonely Crowd*). *BTW, David Riesman was my esteemed next-door neighbor when I was in graduate school in Cambridge.*

In the next 250 years, urban planning and design will be further translated and transformed by new and evolving technologies. Future software evolution, 3-D GIS, immersive Google Earth, and of course Artificial Intelligence (AI)—as well as technologies not yet imagined—will challenge and enhance urban planning and design practice. This should be creatively energizing.

So as the semiquincentennial celebrations begin, we need to remember to applaud all the contributions of luminous explosions of brilliant insights and wisdom that our Commonwealth has made to the advancement of land use planning for the betterment of our communities.

Happy 250th! Let the fireworks continue!

—Mark Favermann is an urban designer and planner with a practice focusing on human scale issues. In 2024, he received APA-MA's Journalism and Communications Award for his decades of writing on the built environment. From the Mass Cultural Council, he is a recipient of the Creative Individual Artist Award 2025 for his sculpture.

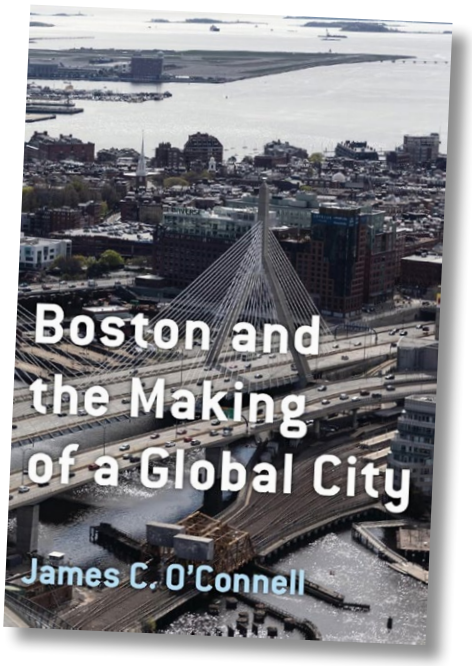
Boston and the Making of a Global City

by Jim O'Connell, FAICP

Knowledge of the workings of the regional economy is necessary for effective planning. This is what spurred me to write my recent book *Boston and the Making of a Global City* (University of Massachusetts Press), in which I explored the essential role that globalization has played in shaping the economic position of Greater Boston, from the colonial era of Atlantic trade to the knowledge economy of today. This topical book examines how Boston has emerged as a global city, a hub for innovation led by higher education, medicine, and technology.

To start, what do I mean by a "global city"? The concept, which has been in general use since the 1980s, is used to identify the urban hubs that thrive in the global marketplace. At that time, the propulsive economic activities of global capitalism transitioned from large-scale manufacturing to the financial and advanced professional services that manage complex, far-flung economic activities as well as a cornucopia of innovations spun off by the knowledge economy. The "global cities" that have emerged are nodes in networks of investment, trade, knowledge exchange, telecommunications, transportation, travel, and migration. It is not enough for a city to be simply very large or famous. The measure of a global city is the extent of the international networks with which it is connected.

The great financial centers of New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, and Shanghai which provide the broadest range of business management and financial services, are at the apex of the urban hierarchy. Boston has a place among the leading centers of technological innovation, higher education, and healthcare (though it also has proficient financial and business consulting sectors). Its peers include San Francisco-Silicon Valley, Seattle, San Diego, Toronto, Paris, Bangalore, and Tel Aviv. These knowledge-economy cities are creating new products and services that drive economic development. They have the best-educated workforces and the highest productivity levels.



Boston, spurred by such universities as MIT and Harvard, is a global leader research and development. The city's orientation toward the global marketplace builds upon a tradition of engagement with global exploration, trade, and migration dating back to its establishment as an English colony in 1630. Currently, Boston is a leading hub for the life sciences, AI, robotics, 3-D printing, and climate tech. With its tech innovation economy, Boston has achieved a metropolitan GDP of $650 billion (#13 in the world). World Intellectual Property Organization ranks it #6 in the world for patents and scientific papers. *Bloomberg* has reported on Massachusetts's success in attracting venture capital, ranking only behind California, New York, and Texas in the U.S. Boston's global competitiveness is bolstered by Logan International Airport, with its non-stop flights to 60-plus international and 90-plus domestic destinations.

Boston's superior talent base is due to half of its age 25+ workforce having at least a bachelor's degree. Surprisingly, 43% of adult immigrants in Massachusetts have a bachelor's degree. Twenty-five percent of biotech company founders in Massachusetts are foreign-born. The 80,000 international students (2024) in Massachusetts have potential to contribute to the talent base. There is

continued next page

also an essential role for less-credentialed immigrants who work on construction, landscaping, building maintenance, home care, nursing care, and hospitality. If it were not for the foreign-born population, which has been responsible for 90% of net population growth since 1990, the Massachusetts economy would be suffering a debilitating labor shortage. The bifurcation of the workforce by educational level, for U.S.- and foreign-born alike, has resulted in widening socio-economic inequality, which is harmfully affecting less-advantaged people in cities everywhere.

Like many global cities, Boston is being challenged by socio-economic inequality, political upheaval, environmental threats, and technological disruptions affected by the rise of artificial intelligence. There is concern that federal policies for diminished scientific research and draconian immigration restrictions are having negative impacts on the region's innovation sectors. In fact, the Greater Boston economy may be the most vulnerable of any U.S. metro area to cuts in federal research monies. Meanwhile, many other countries, especially China and India, are intensifying their support for scientific R&D and their reach in global trade.

For the state to maintain its economic vitality and quality of life, the governmental, institutional, and business sectors will have to be sure-footed and creative. Perhaps the foremost challenge under state and local control is addressing the region's high cost of living driven by the affordable housing shortage and the need to build at least 220,000 new units over the next decade (state government estimate). This may be the single most effective economic development initiative. Given that Boston's talented workforce is its foremost economic asset, one would expect that retaining a fair proportion of the region's 200,000 college students in the local workforce would be a top economic development goal. In order to stem the widely-reported flow of the 22-35-year-old cohort to such relatively affordable markets as Austin, Raleigh, and Atlanta, creating more affordable housing options is critical. Other challenges for the state and region include maintaining a stream of research funding for the innovation sectors, further upgrading the MBTA, and maintaining the health care and social services in the face of reduced federal support. These are issues that every community can help address through their planning and community development efforts.

– Jim O'Connell, FAICP, teaches in the City Planning-Urban Affairs Program at Boston University. Boston and the Making of a Global City *is his seventh book related to Massachusetts-related history and planning. Readers can obtain a 20% discount at the UMass Press website, www.umasspress.com/9781625348623/boston-and-the-making-of-a-global-city. Use promo code: UMASS20.*

Archive Research: What a Planner Should Know

by Molly Linde, Assistant Archivist, Hancock Associates

When beginning to work on any kind of project, there is always the same first step: research! But for planners, when it comes to land records, utilities, zoning, prior surveys, and related information, relevant research comes from different places that professionals should know to access. Research can come from physical, paper files. It can also come from digitized or online historical resources. Archives exist in many forms and can cover any subject imaginable, including that of land surveying and engineering. Archivists are here to aid you in your research, whether it be looking up old deeds, utility information, previous work done on a site, or even information about surrounding wetlands. You may be surprised by how much an archivist can help you uncover.

There are many examples of archives, both physical and digital. Such records can reside within private company archives. Records from resources such as these can span back to the 19th century. For example, Hancock Associates owns the records of surveyors whose catalogue of work spans from 1852 to the present day. Some of these records may be too delicate to put through a scanner and thus remain in their physical format. When this is the case, an archivist can carefully lay out the documents for one to review in person. These older records are quite fragile and thus safely stored to preserve their condition. Other companies' records are more contemporary, with work that spans from the early 20th century to the present day. These records are a mix of both physical and digital files. In archives such as these, if there is a specific location being worked on, that location could be found within an archive setting to see if that company has records of previous work performed at the site or in the surrounding areas. While work may not have been performed on a specific lot, it may have been performed adjacent to it or nearby, and that research would have a beneficial basis on which to base your planning. You never know what relevant information may be waiting for you in an archive.

From there, other methods of research can be conducted online. Resources like MassMapper are particularly helpful. Here, research into many different avenues of land surveying, engineering, and other helpful information for planners can be accessed. MassMapper is a

continued next page

digital map of the state of Massachusetts where you can find information like land ownership, census records, conservation and recreation resources, environmental monitoring information, and more. Research from online sources such as these goes beyond the general field notes, plans, mark-ups, etc., from a company's archive of land survey and engineering records and helps to expand your knowledge and the subject property. Other helpful sources such as municipal GIS maps can give professionals detailed information at a glance, such as the last sale date of the land, the year the property was built, as well as available infrastructure, zoning, and other overlay restrictions. If that still is not enough information to start a project, there is always the Massachusetts Land Records and Registry of Deeds websites (North/South). These websites contain digital documents ranging from recorded land documents to registered land plans and contain important information for planners to reference. Archives such as these help planners work off information that has already been documented, making it easier than starting a project from scratch. Archivists are familiar with these online resources and can help guide your online search to find exactly what you need.

So, what should planners know about research, archives, and archivists? They should know that research can be conducted in many different places, and resources exist both physically and digitally. Archives, both online and in person, can be searched with the help of an archivist whose job is to help you find the relevant records you're looking for. There are digital ways of conducting research, from MassMapper to the state GIS map, from the Registry of Deeds to the Mass Land Record website. Professionals should know that not all the information needed will necessarily be in one place. Technology is changing every day, and not everything is digital yet. Planners, land surveyors, civil engineers, and the like should know that archivists are here to help! They can help you find a wide variety of information that you may not have even thought of. In summary, professionals should know that research is a lot more accessible than people may think thanks to archives. So please, ask an archivist! We are here to help.

—Molly Linde (*mlinde@Hancockassociates.com*) is an archivist at Hancock Associates in Chelmsford, Massachusetts.

The PDO Corner

by Bill Nemser, AICP, MA Chapter PDO

Hello, Massachusetts planning community! I hope you all are ready for summer, because I sure am. Enough stinko weather.

I'm glad to see that the kerfuffle with the APA website switchover seems to be worked out and people can again log their CM credits, take care of accounts, etc. now…at least as far as I've heard.

As you can tell from the APA-MA Chapter calendar, we've been setting up quite a few programs for spring and summer for our chapter members to learn from, get some CM credits if you need them, and hopefully enjoy what is presented.

A few issues back I discussed the idea of presenting programming featuring a "hyper local" approach. The idea was that it might be good for our audience in these rather uncertain times. Reviewing our list of programming since last summer, I started wondering what events the Chapter presented and/or sponsored that highlighted this. It turns out there were a lot that demonstrated ways to work at a very local level or at least ideas that you could easily adopt in your community. For example:

- Initiating local transportation alternatives
- Creating new planting programs for areas that might benefit from a better tree canopy
- Working with neighboring communities on climate initiatives
- Development of localized "creative spaces"

All were some of the topics presented in the last 12 months that struck me as having exceptional potential at the local level. I think this remains a good approach for upcoming Chapter programming.

I also wondered what takeaways we have learned from the 30-plus programs the Chapter presented—programs that may provide a foundation for future relevant and interesting topics the Chapter could offer as sessions. Here's a few that I thought might have merit. I would love to hear your thoughts on this:

- "**Creating a Community Instead of a Crowd**"—As more high-density housing (3A etc.) begins to get built, local infrastructure capacity and regional transportation efficiency will be tested. Are we ready?
- "**Collaboration, Resource Sharing, and Compromise**"—Budgets are stretched as far as any time in recent memory for many MA municipalities. Are some of the ways we have been doing our "own thing" still practical or even possible? Where can communities collaborate to stretch their dollars more efficiently?
- "**Is the Car Still King in Metropolitan Boston**?"—Oh boydee, all it takes is a quick check on the comments section of any *Boston Globe* article on congestion pricing or bike lanes and you'll find out an awful lot of people believe some very strong things about cars, public transportation, pedestrians, and funding allocations. In any major and dynamic metropolitan area (much less Boston) is it reasonable (I'm being polite) to expect infrastructure investment that prioritizes individual automobiles as the primary way to commute in and out of actual downtowns?
- "**Location, Location, Location**"—Yes, Massachusetts is expensive to live in. We all get it. But we also understand that there are many reasons for that, be it employment, education, quality of life, etc., etc. How can communities better embrace the advantages we offer to help spur new investment and sustainable development that utilizes our locational benefits?

As you can tell from the APA-MA Chapter calendar, we've been setting up quite a few programs for spring and summer for our chapter members to learn from, get some CM credits if you need them, and hopefully enjoy what is presented.

Those are just a few things to chew on. Let me know what you think and as always, feel free to reach out with any questions to pdo@apa-ma.org.

Hope to see you all soon!

NEWS FROM CPM | Consulting Planners' Perspective

by Kathleen McCabe, FAICP, Leonardi Aray, AIA, CPHC, CPHB, and Anne McKinnon, AICP

20 MPH Is Too Fast for a Bike Lane and Shared-Use Path

While Vision Zero identified 20 mph as a safer speed for motor vehicles when there is a crash involving a pedestrian, causing fewer severe injuries to pedestrians than faster speeds, bike lanes and shared-use paths are different from streets and roads. A bike lane is typically only five-feet wide with little spare room for passing bicyclists. E-bikes are heavier than pedal bicycles. The combination of speed, weight, acceleration, and constrained space creates a dangerous mix in the bike lane.

Shared-use paths frequently have strolling pedestrians who are often ambling unaware of other users, especially speeding e-bikes and scooters. Shared-use paths are commonly recreational in character and design. Two-way shared-use paths in urban areas can be heavily used by commuters and recreational cyclists together. Pedestrians opt for shared-use paths for refuge for walking a distance from traffic risks. Inclusion of 20 mph e-bikes on shared-use paths poses a safety risk to walkers and pedaling bicyclists.

Planning for healthy, livable, and resilient communities needs to include alternative transport modes: pedestrians, bicycling—pedal and e-bikes, scooters, mopeds. Promoting alternative means of transport cannot sacrifice safety, urban design, and good planning. The newly built

continued next page

The recent streetscape and mobility "improvements" in Inman Square have many praise-worthy features — street trees, a planting strip serving as a rain garden, a dedicated one-way bicycle-track separated from cars and trucks, and a bus shelter. However, people cannot sit on the bench without entering the bike lane, and their feet are in the bike lane. There is no separation between the bicycle track and the sidewalk for pedestrians. Imagine a busy Saturday morning or a weekday after work with pedestrians, including parents with children and elders, as well as Sl pedal bicyclists, along with scooters and e-bikes traveling up to 20 mph. Lower speeds for alternative modes would make for safer conditions.

separated bike lanes in Inman Square in Cambridge have mixed pedestrians, commercial activity and transit stops. This transportation intervention aims to improve the quality of an urban neighborhood center, however, it is becoming a hazard because of the fast moving and unregulated micromobility devices. Safety and quality of our public spaces must be balanced with access to micromobility.

The use of e-bikes is growing. Twelve million Americans by 2030 are projected to be e-bike owners. E-bike usage is higher in the Northeast than nationally.

The Town of Hopkinton has taken the lead and Hopkinton Town Meeting in May enacted by an overwhelming majority a 10-mph maximum speed on local shared-use paths for e-bikes and electric mobility devices, as part of the effort to promote slower speeds and educate users. When some residents questioned how the 10-mph speed limit would be enforced, the Police Chief indicated that enforcement mechanisms would be developed when enacted. The local Trails Committee cited the bylaw limit as a critical step to educating users to slow down with posting the 10-mph speed limit along the shared-use trails.

Although the Special Commission on Micromobility (see page 20) suggested a statewide maximum speed of 20 mph for e-bikes on bike lanes and share-use paths, 20 mph maximum has not yet been enacted into state law. The senate bill, S.3077 — the proposed "Ride Safe Act," includes a 20-mph maximum speed limit for Tier 0 e-bike and micromobility devices on bike and shared-use paths, and was just filed in May 2026. In many cases. 15 mph or slower may be more appropriate depending on the volumes, facility design, and other characteristics.

Local planners and owners/managers of bike paths, rail-to-trails paths, and other shared-use paths should assess their specific conditions and if appropriate, establish local maximums at no more than 15 mph and possibly lower for e-bikes and micromobility devices using bike paths and shared-use paths. The planning community is urged to advocate with their state senators and representatives for a lower statewide maximum speed for Tier 0 e-bike and micromobility devices.

E-bike Speeds are a Key Safety Issue

Letter to the editor published in the Boston Globe *on May 1, 2026.*

The *Boston Globe*'s editorial on the report of the Legislature's Special Commission on Micromobility was an adequate summary but did not consider the full implications of the proposals ("E-bikes and mopeds and scooters, oh my," April 20). The report's recommendations may be a good start, but my concern, as someone who served on the commission, is that they don't fully address issues regarding safety. The Legislature should seek additional information and comment from the public.

The editorial misstated the commission's charge. It was not "to defuse growing conflicts…over shared spaces" but, rather, as the report says, "to study and recommend ways to regulate micro-mobility vehicles ... and to support the expansion of micromobility vehicle use...."

The editorial thus makes it seem as if the commission's recommendations would significantly improve safety. However, I believe the commission erred in assuming that the slowest class of e-bikes — those that are designed for speeds up to 20 miles per hour — should be treated like a pedal bike or other human-powered devices. This "slow" group, which includes pedal bikes, electric skateboards, powered and kick scooters, and cargo bikes, makes up the majority of available micromobility devices. Even the commission's name for this category — Tier 0 — seems to imply little or no regulation is needed for these devices. An e-bike moving 20 miles per hour presents more danger and could cause more injury than a pedal bike because it's heavier and accelerates faster.

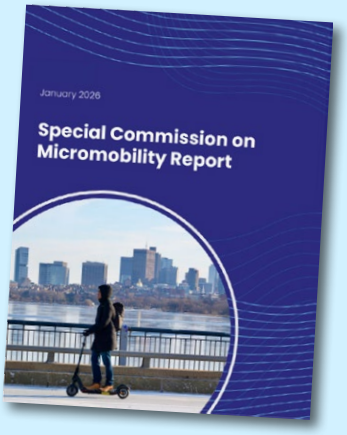
The default speed for micromobility should not be more than 15 miles per hour, and devices going 20 miles per hour should not be mixed in with slower bikes and other users in protected bike lanes with no wiggle room.

The Legislature must recognize and act on the fact that speed kills. The commission's recommendations need speedy rethinking.

— Leonardi Aray
President, Consulting Planners of Massachusetts

Leonardi Aray served on the MA Micromobility Commission, and is also an avid bicyclist and bike commuter.

Micromobility Commission Recommendations



The Special Commission on Micromobilty was established by the state legislature and issued a report and recommendations earlier this year. For a complete copy of the report visit: www.mass.gov/doc/special-commission-on-micromobility-report-january-2026/download

1. **Legislative and Regulatory Changes**. The legislature should add the necessary legal definitions to Massachusetts General Law and update all existing relevant definitions or remove those that are no longer relevant to accommodate these new definitions. Additionally, the legislature or the relevant regulatory body should enact appropriate statutory and/or regulatory changes that would provide the legal framework for the classification schema.

2. **Speed-based Classification Schema**. The Commission recommends that the legislature adopt a methodology to classify micromobility devices; define requirements for operating a device based on its classification; place restrictions on where a given device can be operated; define what standards a device should be manufactured to; and devise a way to identify an individual device.

3. **Micro ID.** The legislature should establish a time-limited working group with funding to design a statewide Micro ID Decal pilot. This should enable MassDOT, acting through the RMV, to convene a multi-agency working group to develop a light-touch micromobility identification framework using a tamper-evident decal with QR/NFC that links to a record confirming device tier, basic safety compliance, and limited, opt-in personally identifiable information for authorized parties.

4. **Police Training**. The MA State Police Academy and the MA Police Training Committee should develop and deliver training for law enforcement

continued next page

officers, consistent with new and current micromobility laws, regulations and guidelines.

5. **Crash Report and Vulnerable User Data**. The legislature should amend state law to enable the inclusion within MassDOT's crash data system of micromobility-involved crashes that don't also involve an operated motor vehicle. Following this statutory update and with specific funds appropriated by the legislature, MassDOT should implement the expanded data collection system within 15 months of enactment, with functionality to distinguish between crash types and updates to the Vulnerable User section of the MA Crash Report to improve reporting accuracy. All law enforcement agencies should adopt the updated crash reporting forms within three years of system implementation. MassDOT should continue to study methods to improve the accuracy and reliability of micromobility crash data once incorporated into the state crash system.

The legislature should authorize automated enforcement on infractions that impact vulnerable users, such as speeding, the improper use of bus and bike lanes, and red light running.

6. **Default Maximum Speeds on Paths**. The legislature should establish a default maximum speed of 20 MPH on shared use paths, applicable statewide, unless otherwise posted. Path operating entities retain the authority to lower the limit based on context specific factors such as user volume, path width, crossings, geometry, and adjacent land uses.

7. **Education Campaign**. Law enforcement and state and local stakeholders, such as Safe Routes to School, should collaborate with relevant community partners, such as local bike shops, to develop and deliver an educational campaign to inform micromobility users about state laws, regulations, local ordinances, and safety practices.

8. **Automated Enforcement**. The legislature should authorize automated enforcement on infractions that impact vulnerable users, such as speeding, the improper use of bus and bike lanes, and red light running.

9. **Model Municipal Traffic Control Ordinance**. MassDOT should include model micromobility traffic control regulations and prohibitions on obstructing bicycle lanes in its Sample Regulation for a Standard Municipal Traffic Code.

10. **Design Guidance**. MassDOT and DCR should develop context-sensitive design guidance for state and municipal trails and shared use paths that establishes recommended design parameters. The guidance should address the separation of pedestrian and wheeled modes, design speed, signage, and emerging micromobility, incorporating variations appropriate to urban, suburban, and rural contexts.

11. **Micromobility Integration.** The MBTA and other RTAs should adopt and implement a micromobility integration plan that includes:

- Providing secure micromobility parking at park-and-ride lots, subway and commuter rail stations, intermodal hubs, and bus centers;
- Designating micromobility-friendly rail cars, subway cars, and buses where feasible, taking into account space, safety, and accessibility constraints;
- Exploring opportunities for fare integration and/or discounts with micromobility providers (e.g., Bluebikes and ValleyBike), while recognizing the complexity and long timeline of current fare system upgrades;
- Evaluating the potential for charging infrastructure at select locations, in alignment with safety protocols and emerging best practices regarding battery fire risk.

12. **Funding for Upgrades & Expansion**. The legislature should increase appropriations for existing state programs, particularly the Complete Streets Funding Program and the Shared Streets & Spaces Program, to further assist municipalities in expanding their networks and transitioning from interim infrastructure treatments, such as paint and flex-post delineation, to designs that provide durable, physical separation for vulnerable users and/or overall traffic calming. In parallel, MassDOT should enhance its training, technical assistance, and outreach efforts through the Complete Streets Program to support municipalities in planning, designing, delivering, and maintaining this infrastructure.

13. **Expanding Bikeshare**. The legislature should establish a reliable and sustainable funding mechanism to support publicly owned, docked micromobility share systems by expanding the Last Mile Grant

continued next page

program to explicitly include bikeshare, or through a new dedicated program. A combination of formula-based operating support and competitive grants for system expansion should be explored.

14. **Fund More E-Bike Subsidies**. The legislature should fund, and MassCEC should expand the statewide e-bike rebate program that was launched in 2025.

15. **Commercial Use Micromobility Study**. The legislature should allocate funds for MassDOT to commission a study from an academic partner to understand how micromobility is used in commercial settings, particularly in the package delivery and food delivery industries to learn what, if any, additional regulations are appropriate to apply to commercial use vehicles.

16. **Presumed Liability Study**. MassDOT should work with an academic partner to study the hierarchy of responsibility in a crash and the potential effects of introducing a "Presumed Liability" law.

Download the full report.