

# West End Branch Library Project

October 26, 2022



City of Boston  
Mayor Michelle Wu



Housing

# Zoom Interpretation Services



## English: For interpretation in [\_\_\_\_],

1. Go to the horizontal control bar at the bottom of your screen. Click on “Interpretation.”
2. Then click on the language that you would like to hear.
3. You are now accessing this meeting in [\_\_\_\_\_]

## Cantonese: 若需粵語口譯服務：

1. 與屏幕下方之長方形控制欄中，煩請點擊“Intepretation.”
2. 煩請點擊您所需收聽的語言。
3. 您即可聽到粵語的會議口譯。

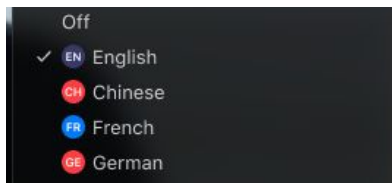
## Mandarin: 若需普通话口译服务：

1. 在屏幕下方的长方形控制栏中，请点击“Intepretation.”
2. 请点击您所需收聽的語言。
3. 您即可收听普通话的会议口译。

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# Agenda

- Welcome!
- Tonight's meeting objectives
- Quick recap of the July 28th meeting
- Development objectives for the Request for Proposals (RFP)
- Questions, comments, and discussion
- Urban renewal “minor modification”
- Next steps



## Tonight's meeting objectives

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- ❖ Present the draft development objectives for the housing on this site, based on the feedback and discussion from the last year.
- ❖ Hear your comments and answer any questions you may have.
- ❖ Discuss the timeline for developer selection.

## Recapping the July 28th meeting

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*Attendees: 25+*

- ❖ We discussed the “building blocks” of the type of housing proposal that fits this site.
- ❖ We talked about what comes next (including tonight’s meeting).

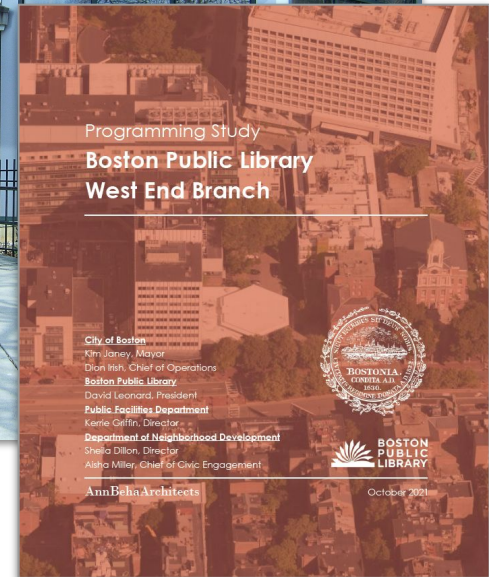
For slides and the recording from July 28th, visit:

<https://www.boston.gov/buildinghousing/west-end-library-housing-public-assets>

# The final programming study included two key findings.

The programming study confirmed that a **new branch library should be built** at the West End site, with updated programming and amenities to best serve the community.

The programming study also confirmed the strong potential for a **mixed-use building with affordable housing above the library**. There was consistent support expressed for this idea at community meetings.



# We've released development objectives to shape proposals for the site.



City of Boston  
Mayor's Office of Housing

## West End Branch Library (Housing With Public Assets)

Draft development objectives for combining a new library branch with high-quality affordable housing.

October 2022

The following draft development objectives will form the basis of a forthcoming Request for Proposals (RFP) for a mixed-use development at the current site of the West End Library, which will include a new ground-floor space for the library and multiple floors of primarily income-restricted, affordable housing above. The objectives that are laid out below are the result of input and discussion gathered during a months-long participatory community process between a multi-disciplinary City of Boston team and residents of the West End and Beacon Hill. The Mayor's Office of Housing (MOH) is seeking any additional comments on these objectives before proceeding to draft the RFP for the development project.

Please share any comments or questions with Joe Backer, Senior Development Officer, at: 617-635-0226 or [joseph.backer@boston.gov](mailto:joseph.backer@boston.gov)

More information on this project can be found at: <https://www.boston.gov/building/housing/west-end-library-housing-public-assets>

### Draft Development Objectives

#### **Deliver a First-Class Library**

The City's primary goal is to build a library branch that offers world-class services in a beautiful landmark for the neighborhood. The library should have a strong street presence, enhancing the street fabric and serving as a gathering place on Cambridge Street. The design of the branch exterior should draw attention to the library and hold its own amidst the other large buildings on the street and the housing above it. The entrance, stairs and elevators for the housing in the building should be distanced from the entrance to the library to give each component a distinct identity. The library's street frontage should include an outdoor area that combines landscaped open space and seating to be welcoming, accessible and connect the library to the active, urban street life of the area.

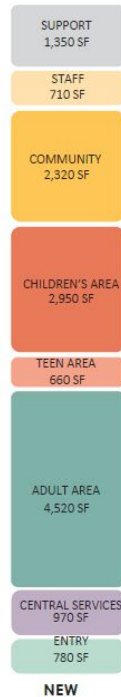
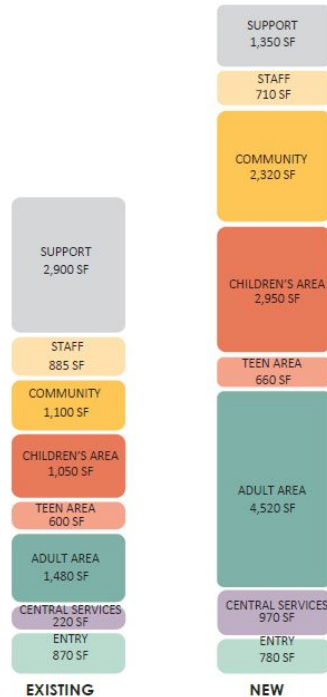
The elements that are called out in this document are:

- ❖ Focused on the residential component of the project (for detailed library needs, see BPL Planning Study);
- ❖ Drawn from many months of community input (surveys, community meetings, submitted comments)

# BRANCH REQUIREMENTS

The developer is to provide a core/shell space for BPL to design and fit out for the branch library

## A LARGER BRANCH Minimum 16,000 usable SF



## A TRANSPARENT FACADE & A PROMINENT ENTRANCE



- Institutional style ceiling heights of 12'
- Acoustic separation
- Completely separate building systems
- Separate stairs and elevator for branch use only

## OUTDOOR SPACE





## Development objectives for the West End library site

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# Building design and characteristics

*Height & Density*

*Open Space*

*Synergy with Otis House*

*Land Ownership*



## Height & Density\*

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### **Match Density and Height to Street Context**

The scale, density and height of the project should match the context of Cambridge Street and the surrounding buildings, especially those that share the northern side of the street with the branch library. Many of the taller buildings near the library are as tall as 80 or 100 feet. Careful consideration to shading should be given to the neighboring Otis House, which is 45 feet tall. Given the surrounding context on Cambridge Street, it is expected that a developer will seek a variance to allow the building to exceed the 65 foot height limit.

# Open Space

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## **Include Programmable Open Space for Residents**

Open space that is accessible, attractive, and inviting to residents is required in City-funded affordable housing, and programmable open space at this development, such as a roof deck above the library, has been raised by the community as an important amenity. This open space should be accessible to all housing residents and distinct from open space supporting the library branch. This residential open space should be mindful of and correspond to what is appropriate for the different categories of residents that will live in the building.

# Synergy with the Otis House and Historic New England

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## **Synergy with the Otis House**

To the east of the site is the First Harrison Gray Otis House, a National Historic Landmark. Built in 1795–96, it was designed by Charles Bulfinch and built for Massachusetts politician Harrison Gray Otis and his wife Sally Foster Otis. It is one of the earliest three-story brick houses that came to represent the Federal style of architecture and the complex represents some of the last remaining historic buildings of the West End. The Otis House complex is owned by nonprofit Historic New England, and comprises the 1796 mansion and two connected 19th-century row houses. It currently serves as a historic house museum, library and archives, and public programming site. Historic New England is engaged in its own ambitious planning project to reimagine the Otis House complex as a civic and cultural anchor in the community, and welcomes collaboration in this effort.

Applicants are encouraged to consider opportunities to collaborate with Historic New England to create a shared cultural district or shared educational experience between the Otis House and the library branch.

# City Land Ownership

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## City Land Ownership

The land will remain under City ownership, with the housing operator entering into a long-term lease agreement with the City of Boston. Each component of the building – library and residential – will be contained within a separate condominium entity of the overall structure. To the extent that some of the residential units are new public housing/RAD units, as described above, ownership may be shared with the BHA accordingly.

**Questions,  
comments, and  
discussion**



# Housing affordability goals

*Maximizing Affordable Units*

*Meeting Neighborhood Need*

*Achieving Deeper Affordability with the BHA*

## **But wait! How do we define “affordable” in City-supported housing?**

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All limits on monthly rents are tied to the “Area Median Income,” or **AMI**, measured annually by the federal government.

For a specific apartment, the monthly rent limit will vary based on a few factors:

- ❖ Household size (number of people living in that apartment);
- ❖ Number of bedrooms in the apartment;
- ❖ The level of Area Median Income that the apartment is targeting.

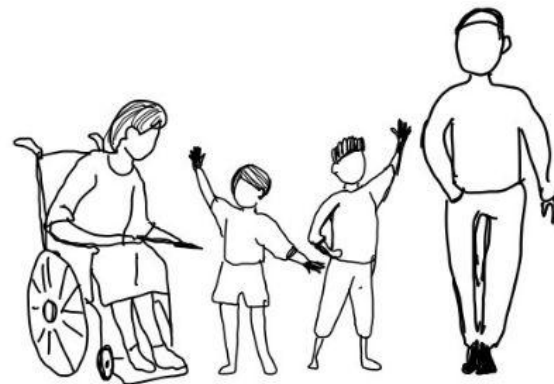


## But wait! How do we define “affordable” in City-supported housing?

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### For a household of 4, looking for a 3-bedroom apartment, this means:

- ❖ In a **80% AMI** apartment... maximum income is \$112,150  
maximum rent is **\$2,745**/month
- ❖ In a **60% AMI** apartment... maximum income is \$84,100  
maximum rent is **\$2,187**/month
- ❖ In a **50% AMI** apartment... maximum income is \$70,100  
maximum rent is **\$1,823**/month
- ❖ In a **30% AMI** apartment... maximum income is \$42,050  
maximum rent is **\$1,094**/month



# Maximizing Affordable Units

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## **Maximize the Breadth and Depth of Affordable Rental Housing**

The special combination of a library with housing on this site makes rental housing the best fit, as it helps ensure a productive management relationship between the housing management entity and the City and Boston Public Library.

Community members have expressed a strong preference for projects which can exceed minimum affordability standards, and applicants should maximize the proportion of income-restricted, affordable units created. Developments which can achieve deeper levels of affordability and/or a higher percentage of income-restricted housing are preferred.

## Meeting Neighborhood Need

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### **Provide Housing for a Variety of Household Types**

Throughout the community process, there has been strong support in particular for both senior housing and family-friendly housing. This site may be a particularly good fit for families, as children will greatly benefit from the resources offered at the library branch, and only 9.8% of households in the immediate area currently have children under age 18, as compared to 22.4% citywide. Proposals should include unit sizes ranging from studios to 3 bedrooms to meet the needs of different households. Proposals should specify what resident services will be available to serve those living in the building.

# Achieving Deeper Affordability with the Boston Housing Authority

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## Partner with the Boston Housing Authority to Add Deeply Affordable Units

This site presents a rare opportunity to partner with the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) to deliver additional deeply-affordable units thanks to a dedicated rental income subsidy, which could expand and deepen the affordable housing available to residents. Boston is approximately 2,500 units below its “Faircloth Limit,” the maximum number of federal public housing units for which Boston can receive subsidy, as set by a 1999 federal law that capped the amount of federal public housing in each city. This project, which will be co-located with another public asset (the West End library) and sits in a neighborhood context appropriate for higher-density development, is an opportunity to include new “Faircloth units” as a portion of the overall housing development. These units could in turn be converted to HUD’s Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, to secure a higher rate of subsidy, and this subsidy could be used as a means to achieving deeper affordability in the overall unit mix of the proposal. This would align with the BHA’s commitment to affirmatively furthering fair housing, as currently only 1% of local households utilize housing vouchers, compared to 4.7% citywide.

# City of Boston requirements for housing proposals

*Participation of minority- and women-owned businesses*

*High labor standards*

*Universal design principles*

*Zero carbon emissions building design*

**Questions,  
comments, and  
discussion**



**Possible minor  
modification to the  
West End Urban  
Renewal Plan**

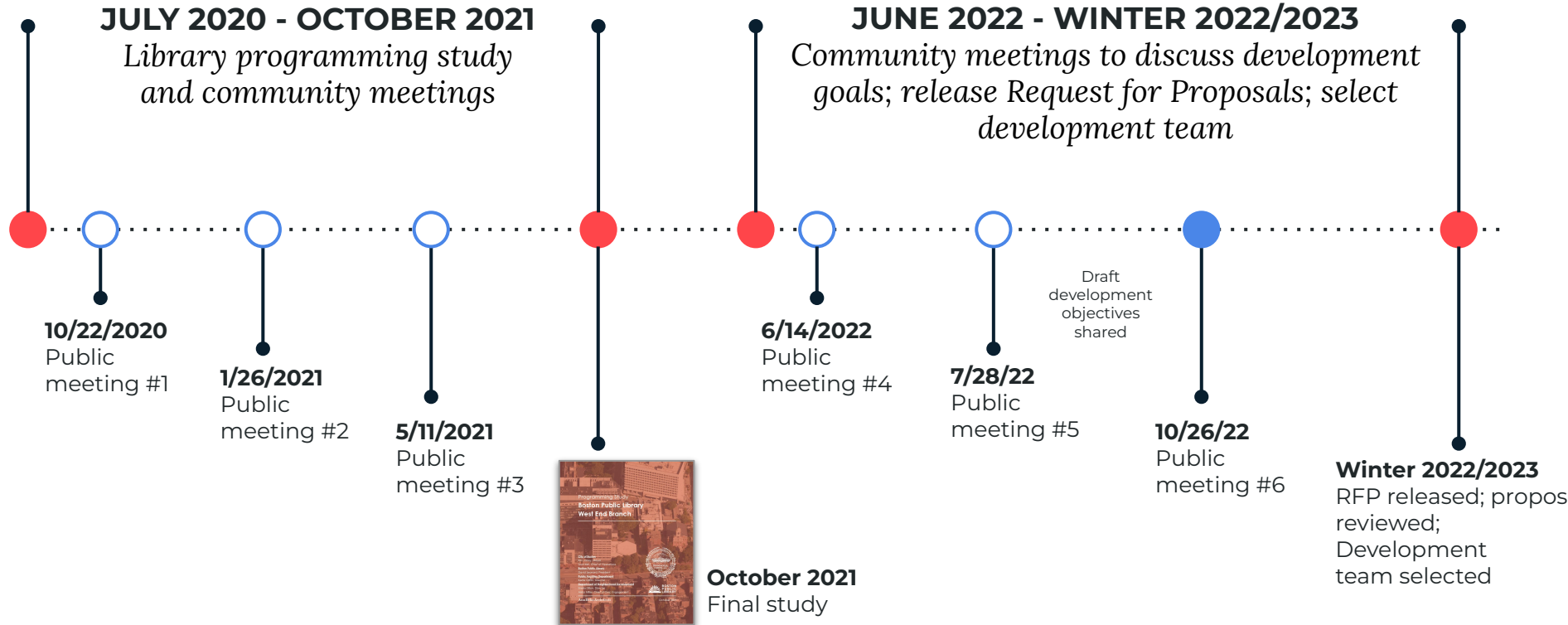


**Looking forward**





# What has happened most recently, and what's coming up?



# **What opportunities remain for public input as we move forward?**

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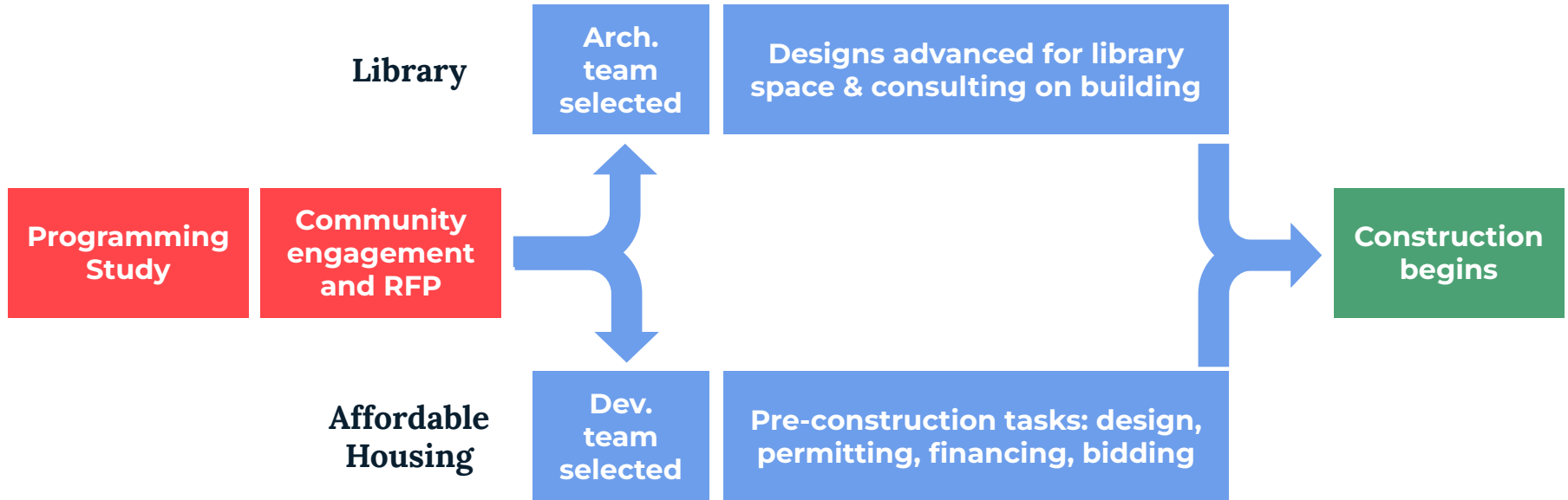
Community engagement for this project will continue as we move to the next phase.

There are still **many** upcoming opportunities to help shape this project, including:

- ❖ Reviewing and submitting feedback on proposals that are submitted in response to the RFP;
- ❖ Attending a public “developer presentation” meeting when all respondents will present their proposals and field questions and comments;
- ❖ Participating in the BPDA-led Article 80 process once a development team is selected and a project proposal begins the formal review process;
- ❖ Reaching out at any time to meet with me or others at MOH and the City of Boston.

# The library and housing planning efforts will move in parallel.

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**Final questions?**





# THANK YOU

*Contact info:*

***Joe Backer, Mayor's Office of Housing***

***joseph.backer@boston.gov***

***617-635-0226***

[www.boston.gov/buildinghousing/west-end-library-housing-public-assets](http://www.boston.gov/buildinghousing/west-end-library-housing-public-assets)