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Shawmut breaks ground on historic Boston City Hall Plaza renovation

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Boston, MA The city of Boston and Shawmut Design and Construction broke ground on a transformational renovation to Boston City Hall Plaza. Beginning with phase one, the project will deliver updated civic spaces and programming capabilities, as well as add infrastructure that will make the plaza a welcoming, everyday destination.

The seven-acre plaza is one of the city's largest civic spaces and for the last 50 years has hosted notable events ranging from sports celebrations and political rallies to seasonal cultural festivals. The plaza design and implementation is led by global design firm Sasaki. Shawmut Design and Construction is the construction manager for the project. The project is managed through the city's Operations Cabinet by the Public Facilities Department in partnership with the Property Management Department and is assisted by owners project manager Skanska USA.

Former mayor Walsh with members of the Shawmut Design and Construction project team

“This renovation is designed to turn our seven-acre space into a welcoming, accessible space for all,” said former mayor Martin Walsh. “City Hall Plaza is one of Boston’s most-used public spaces, and we are working hard to create safe areas for residents to gather as we strengthen our commitment to civic services in our City.”

“We’re incredibly excited to reimagine and preserve such an iconic space that’s woven into the fabric of the city,” said Kevin Sullivan, executive vice president of New England at Shawmut. “This renovation will transform Boston City Hall Plaza into a forward-thinking attraction for all, with universal accessibility, new civic spaces, increased environmental sustainability, and critical infrastructure improvements to create a 21st century destination for generations to come.”

City Hall Plaza’s redesign includes a focus on:

A Welcoming Front Yard for Civic Life: With the renovated City Hall Plaza, this community space will become universally accessible for residents of all abilities. Opening up the plaza for all will include re-opening the second floor of City Hall Plaza to the public, allowing easier access to the building. This public-facing entrance was closed in 2001, and will open again under the new renovation plan.

The renovation also includes 3,000 new welcoming spaces for residents to sit, 12,000 s/f of playscapes for children and families, and 11,000 s/f of terraces for pop-up play and interactive public art.

Flexible and Accommodating Event Venues: Boston City Hall Plaza renovation will right-size one of Boston’s largest event spaces, and create civic event spaces that can be used by all Boston residents. The renovation includes creating seven new “plug and play” locations for community groups to utilize, with space for 10,000 - 12,000 visitors on the main plaza, and room for a 20,000 - 25,000 person gathering on the entire plaza.

The new design will also include three smaller event and gathering places, and a new civic building on Congress St., equipped with a bathroom and other facilities to support public gatherings.

A Model of Sustainability and Resilience: Creating a sustainable City Hall Plaza that meets the city’s environmental goals is one of the key parts of the plaza renovation, and this renovation will make City Hall Plaza one of Boston’s signature civic spaces environmentally sustainable, meeting Boston’s resilience standards.

The renovation includes an increase in permeable surfaces that will soak up stormwater, planning

ahead for severe weather in downtown Boston. The design also includes 100 new trees, improving the shade, scale and air quality of the Plaza. Fifty lights will be replaced with efficient LED technology, and 22,500 feet of granite and brick paving will be reused or recycled.

Boston City Hall Plaza represents the latest in a series of high-profile projects for Shawmut throughout the New England region, including underway projects at Cambridge Crossing, Boynton Yards, Harvard University, Brown University, and Aloft Hotel Providence.

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