

# Hostelling International Boston to move to Chinatown

By Kaili Xu

*Dec 17, 2009*

A youth hostel that hosts thousands of visitors is planning to move to Chinatown in about two years. Its executives presented the project to the Chinatown Safety Committee at a monthly meeting on December 2. This safe, vibrant and welcoming 24 hour-a-day facility is expected to spur the tourist industry by promoting sustainable cultural interaction and social change.

Hostelling International Boston has recently entered into an agreement to purchase the 55,000-square-foot structure at 25 Stuart Street to meet the increasing level of demand for accommodation, especially during the peak summer season. The hostel is planning to expand its number of beds more than 80 percent, from 205 to 375 to serve 45,000 guests annually. Deborah Ruhe, executive director of Hostelling International's hostels and programs in New England said that the existing Boston hostel, located at 12 Hemenway Street is already at full capacity. This hostel operates at 98% occupancy and provides affordable accommodations for up to 208 guest per day. Since 1995, the Boston hostel has seen a 60 percent increase in beds rented out, with around 65 percent of the hostel's 32,000 guests who stay coming from abroad. At \$32 to \$45 a night, the Boston hostel is a more affordable - albeit less private - option. The hostel offers dormitory-style accommodations with rooms typically holding six beds to travelers.

The hostel provides clean, safe and affordable travel to millions of people from all walks of life. Ruhe said there is no age limit as to who can stay in the hostel, but the average age of guests is between the ages of 18 to 25. According to the executives, guests usually stay for two to four days.

Ruhe also said, "We have strict rules about who can stay and how long they can stay. They can't stay longer than 14 days in a year because a hostel is tended to be for travelers, not for residents. We also have no alcohol allowed on our facility, and we have a great track record in terms of safety security."

She said the hostel provides onsite security and enforces "quiet hours" after 10 at night.

"Anyone who behaves in a way that would impact the common good is asked to leave immediately," said Bob Sylvia, general manager at Hostelling International Boston.

Plans at the new site include a complete structural renovation creating a brand new, state-of-the-art facility whose related costs will infuse between \$21 million to \$33 million into the local economy, along with 355 to 555 project-supported jobs, with an emphasized preference on local hiring. It will also greatly benefit all local businesses with both guests and staff taking advantage of the neighborhood's restaurants, business and shops. According to a study by Suffolk University, the youth hostel's 32,800 guests in 2007 pumped about \$12.5 million into the local economy. The expanded capacity is anticipated to increase direct spending from \$12 million to \$16 million annually in expenditures.