

# The Opportunity of Growth

Today, Boston is in a uniquely powerful position to make our city more affordable, equitable, connected, and resilient. We will seize this moment to guide our growth to support our dynamic economy, connect more residents to opportunity, create vibrant neighborhoods, and continue our legacy as a thriving waterfront city.

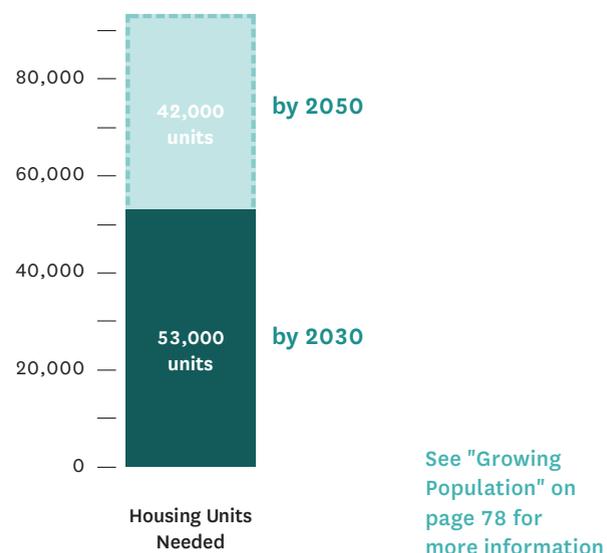
# A Growing City

Boston is experiencing phenomenal growth that, through careful management, can create new housing units, spaces to work, and improve quality of life throughout the city.

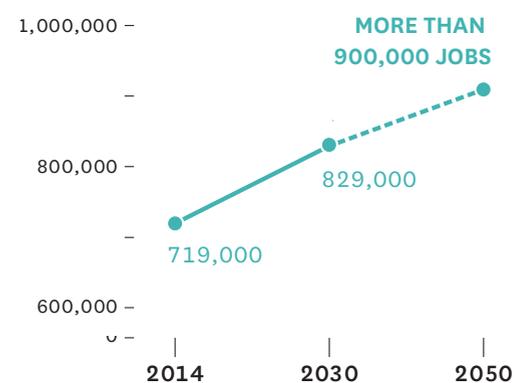
Population Growth Projections



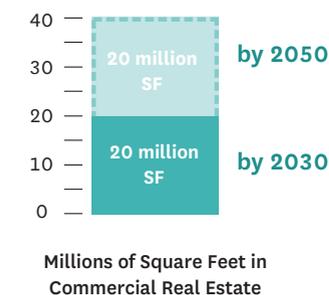
Projected Demand for Housing



Job Growth Projections



Projected Demand for Space to Work



Between 2010 and 2014, our population grew by 6 percent to more than 656,000, twice the rate of the nation.<sup>1</sup> The coming years are expected to bring continued strong growth. By 2030, Boston will be home to at least 724,000 residents, an increase of 8 percent from our current population and a number Boston has not seen since before 1960.<sup>2</sup> Continued population growth at the same rate after 2030 would put Boston on pace to return to its 1950 peak population of 801,000 by 2050.

Alongside population growth, Boston added more than 60,000 jobs between 2010 and 2014. The city is projected to be home to 829,000 jobs by 2030 and more than 900,000 jobs by 2050.<sup>3</sup> This growth is a remarkable

achievement for Boston, which, like many cities in the northeastern United States, was in decline in the middle of the twentieth century. It is a testament to the talented residents, businesses, and institutions that have created Boston's strong twenty-first century economy.

Growth provides Boston with the opportunity to expand access to opportunity and enhance the quality of the urban experience for residents and workers in neighborhoods citywide. To house our growing population, increase affordability, and reduce pressure on the housing market, we can add tens of thousands of additional housing units that meet the needs of our families, older population, and students. To support new jobs

and strengthen career pathways for Bostonians, we can encourage growth of diverse new spaces to work—from lab space for our growing biotech sector to commissary kitchen space for food production—where established companies and small emerging startups alike can create quality jobs. This growth can reconnect neighborhoods and support investment in main streets, parks, and transportation.

While the benefits of growth are significant, growth must be managed to serve all Bostonians and avoid displacement that can occur if growth is not harnessed effectively. By proactively identifying areas for growth, Boston will be able to accommodate more than 53,000

total units of housing by 2030 and an additional 42,000 units by 2050, creating a release valve for existing neighborhoods that are seeing immense pressure on housing prices.<sup>4</sup> Boston will be able to encourage continued job growth by providing 20 million square feet of space for jobs by 2030 and another 20 million square feet by 2050.

Source: Imagine Boston 2030 analysis, BPDA, Housing A Changing City: Boston 2030

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# Land to Grow

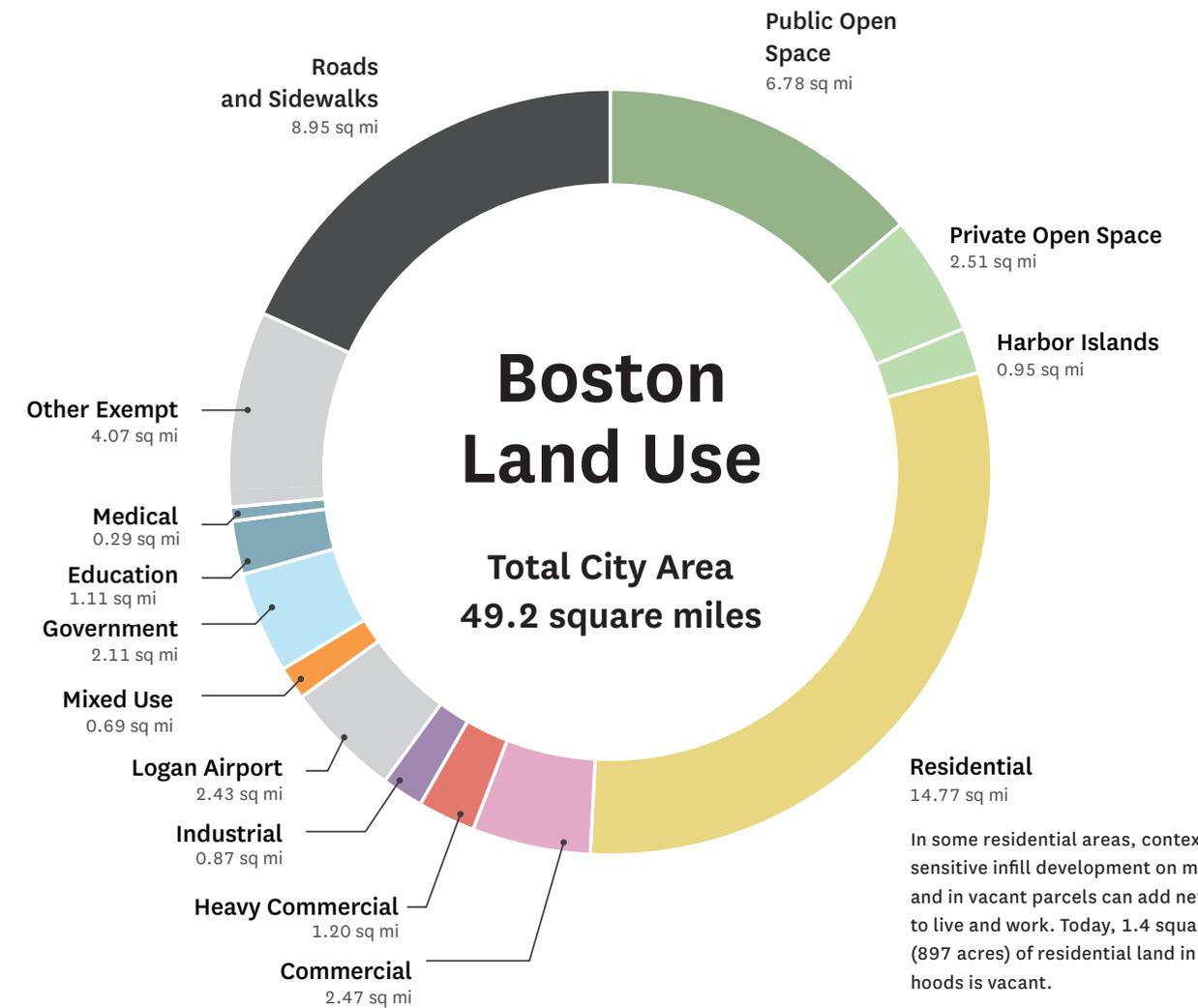
**Boston is a dense, historic city with limited land area for development. Many existing uses will remain stable over the coming decades, while others can evolve to meet the city’s projected growth.**

Measuring only 49.2 square miles with stable neighborhoods, many large institutional and governmental land owners, and a vital open-space network, Boston is a city whose land uses will remain stable over the coming decades. However, other areas can evolve to meet the City’s needs and support residents’ vision of a

more mixed-use, mixed-income city. Our goal is to find ways to accommodate our population and job growth that improve quality of life for residents in all neighborhoods, expand access to opportunity, and foster economic dynamism.

Approximately half of Boston’s land is tax exempt. Tax exempt land includes Public Open Space, Harbor Islands, Logan Airport, Government, Education, Medical, Roads and Sidewalks, and other exempt uses.

Much of Boston’s land is occupied by stable uses—like open space, roads, and established residential neighborhoods—that are unlikely to see significant change.



Some mixed-use, commercial, heavy commercial, and industrial areas have potential for transformation that strengthens existing uses and supports housing and job growth. Others will remain stable or grow in their current use, continuing to provide jobs and serve as the engine of the city’s economy.

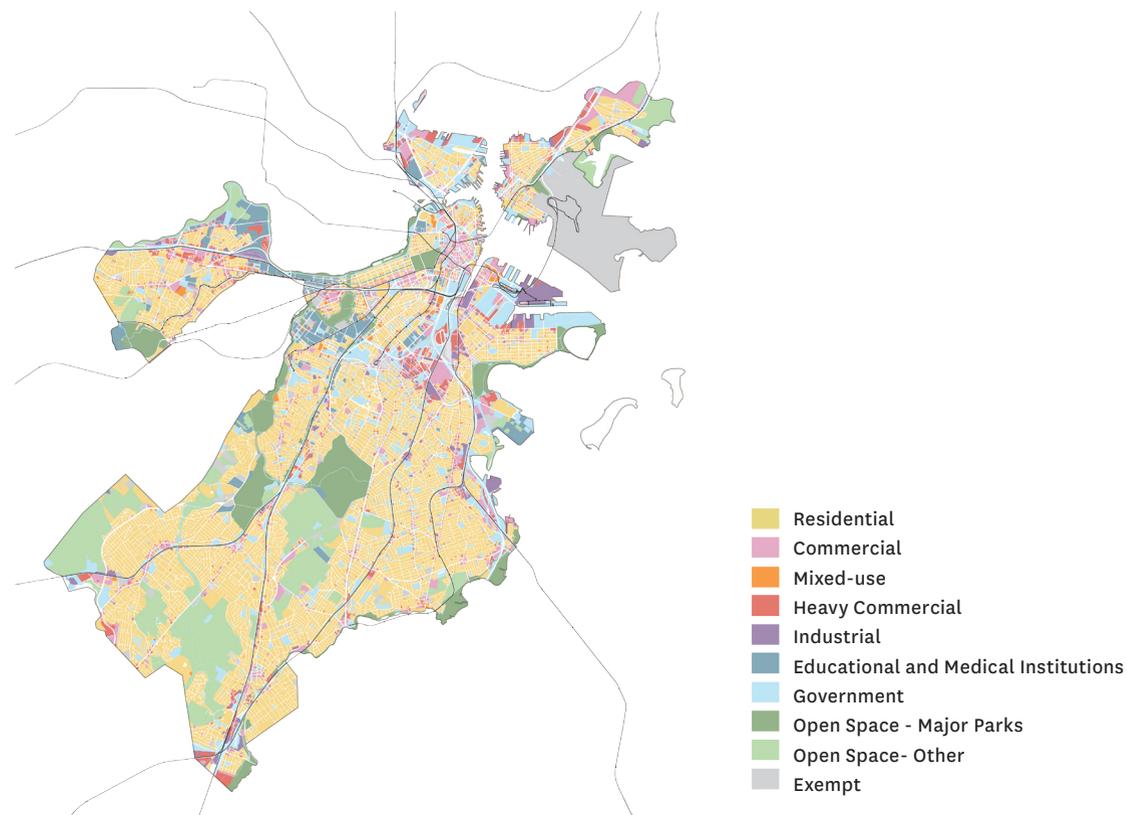
Heavy commercial uses are those that are classified as commercial property by use codes (per the City’s tax assessor database) but have a form, character, and density similar to industrial uses. This includes bus terminals, auto repair shops, garages, and the like.

Mixed-use is comprised of uses that are not exclusively residential or commercial. This includes anything that is classified as “multiuse property” in the tax assessor’s database.

Other exempt includes land owned by religious organizations, nonprofits, retail, and office uses that are tax-exempt.

**Residential**  
14.77 sq mi

In some residential areas, contextually sensitive infill development on main streets and in vacant parcels can add new places to live and work. Today, 1.4 square miles (897 acres) of residential land in neighborhoods is vacant.



Source: City of Boston 2015 Assessor’s Data; BPDA Citywide Open Space Layer

Source: City of Boston 2015 Assessor’s Data; BPDA Citywide Open Space Layer

## The Importance of Growth

Growth is essential to making our city more affordable and reducing displacement.



"We should be building more housing with much more density in order to increase the housing supply to meet the increased demand from new millenials and retirees and others who want to move to Boston. Otherwise, only the current landlords win out as rents and property values increase upwards while everyone else loses."  
**Back Bay resident via text message**

The Fenway neighborhood has seen a recent building boom, which has slowed increases in housing costs.  
→

### Increasing residential and commercial supply increases affordability

Boston homes are 2.6 times more expensive than the national average, despite household incomes that are on par with the country.<sup>5</sup> With more and more people looking for housing, constructing new housing units and commercial space can help keep real estate prices in check, so a wider range of residents and businesses can afford to stay in Boston. Additionally, by carefully deploying a variety of tools, including density bonuses, we can aspire to higher levels of affordability in new development than what is already prescribed by the Inclusionary Development Policy. This will produce more housing that will be affordable for Bostonians.

### Expanding Boston's leading industries can increase economic competitiveness and create more pathways to living wage jobs.

Through continued job growth, Boston's economic clusters, like technology and healthcare, can retain and attract global brands and businesses that create thousands of jobs, act as hubs in supply chains, are more likely to be active in global trade, and invest in capital-intensive research and development.<sup>6</sup> These industries also provide an important pathway for residents to access higher wage jobs and stable careers. Supporting the growth of Boston's strongest sectors is critical to sustaining Boston's position as a center of innovation and job creation.

### New development boosts funding for schools and city services

Boston relies on property taxes for two-thirds of the revenue the City needs to fund schools, public safety, and all other services. New development generates revenue that can be captured to fund these important community benefits. New commercial development is particularly beneficial for City finances because of its high assessed value and tax classification but also because it has lower service costs and consumes fewer city services than other property types in the city.<sup>7</sup>

Boston's actions to increase housing production are already having a positive impact. Based on a new City analysis of rental trends, stabilization appears to be underway in several of the neighborhoods that saw the most new construction. For example, Central Boston saw 3,030 units completed since 2014, growing the area's housing stock by 25 percent. Rents in older units in this neighborhood have now declined by just over 1 percent. In the Fenway, where new construction led to a 6 percent increase in housing units, rents in older units declined by 0.4 percent. And in the South End, which grew by nearly 10 percent, rents in older units only rose 0.3 percent.<sup>8</sup>

## Consequences of Limiting Growth



Allston ↑

### Constraining housing supply in the face of significant demand could drive housing costs higher.

Adding housing is one of Boston’s most powerful tools to address rising prices, particularly when accompanied by regional actions to increase supply. Without new supply to act as a “release valve,” increasing demand will result in more rapid price increases for existing stock. Although new housing that is not dedicated as affordable is often delivered at higher price points, new supply lessens the competition for existing units, helping to restrain price increases over time. In this way, the development of new market-rate housing, in concert with production and preservation of dedicated affordable units, is particularly important in enhancing housing opportunities for moderate-income households.

As Boston grows, the City will guide new housing development in evolving neighborhood edges, where growth can improve affordability, introduce vibrancy and opportunity, and complement preservation and enhancement of existing neighborhoods.

### High housing costs have a significant impact on all residents, but especially low- and middle-income residents.

Limited housing supply is especially problematic for Boston’s 165,000 renter households, who are put at greater risk of displacement but do not benefit from additional equity as homeowners do when values rise.<sup>9</sup> Even for Boston’s homeowners, especially those on a fixed income, the increased tax burden posed by increasing home values can threaten their ability to remain in the community.

### Price pressure can stymie local businesses' growth.

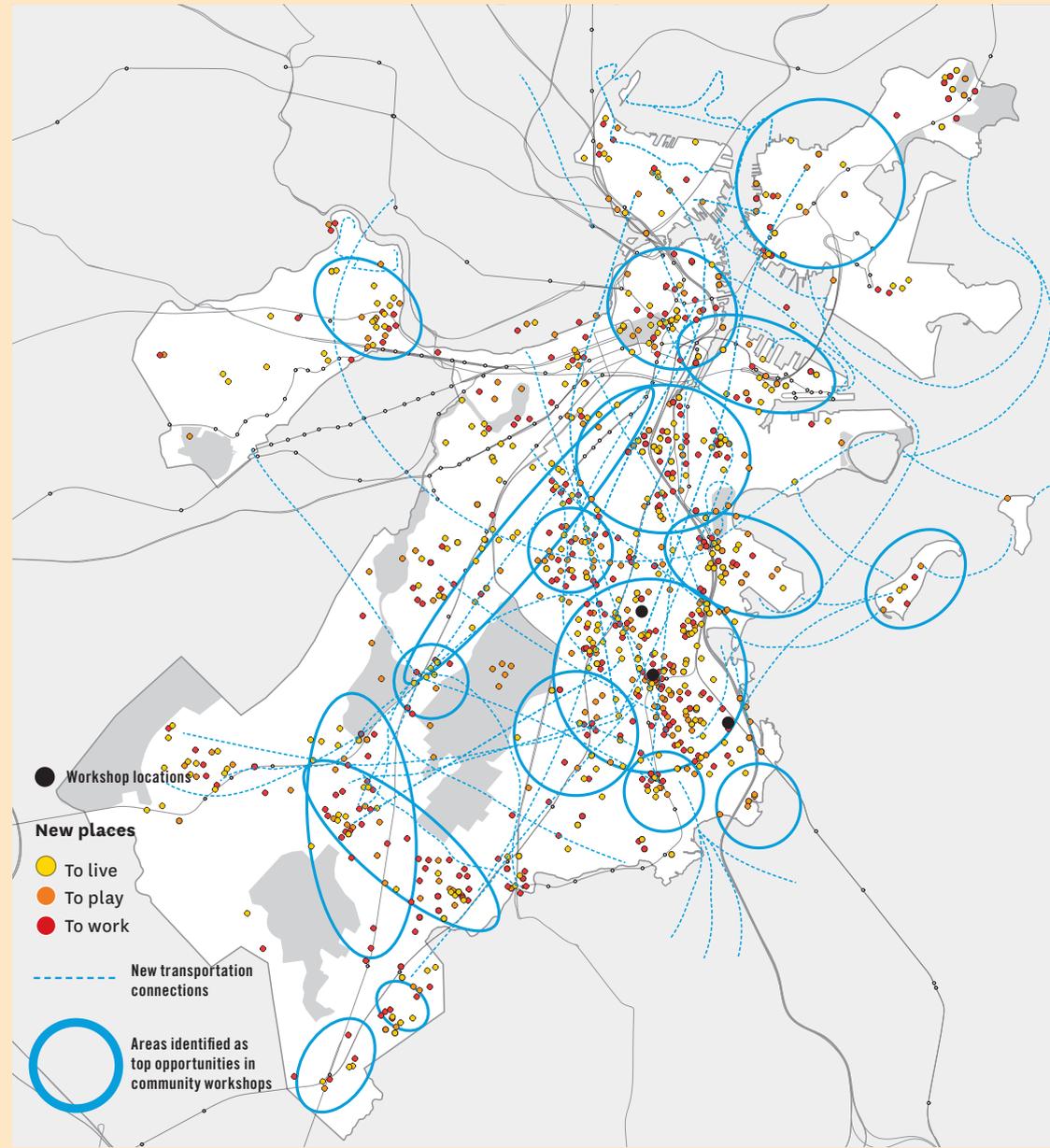
Just as limits on housing supply can increase housing costs, limiting commercial and mixed-use development can increase commercial rents above prices that mom-and-pop shops, local businesses, and creative economy tenants can afford. An absence of these small and start-up businesses threatens the diverse character of our main streets, weakens important sources of local wealth generation and job creation, and stymies the entrepreneurship that fuels growth in established and emerging economic sectors.

### A high cost of living makes Boston less attractive to new workers and businesses.

Empirical evidence gathered by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston finds that in many U.S. metropolitan areas, high local housing prices can increase the costs of living and doing business and reduce local employment growth over time.<sup>10</sup> Because land supply in these cities is largely fixed, a small increase in demand for land can push the city’s land cost higher, thereby raising rents, and drive some businesses and workers to leave for cities with lower rents. Businesses operating in areas with a high cost of living often need to offer a wage premium or other financial incentives to attract and retain a skilled workforce.<sup>11</sup> This type of wage premium adds to the cost of doing business, which can make it difficult for some businesses to start or sustain existing operations.

# Boston Voices

At eight community workshops and in online platforms in Spring 2016 residents identified new places to live, work, and play. Participants saw potential for growth and enhancement in their own neighborhoods and throughout the city as a whole.



This map shows the combined ideas of 79 participants at three Dorchester community workshops. Residents identified opportunities for growth and enhancement within their own neighborhood of Dorchester, but also in many other places throughout the city.

More than 1,000 ideas were added to an online and mobile mapping tool in Spring 2016. Participants were asked "Where are there opportunities to enhance and grow Boston?" The responses encompassed the entire city and ranged from small-scale neighborhood improvements, like playgrounds and more walkable intersections, to big transformations, like redeveloping Suffolk Downs in East Boston into a new neighborhood.

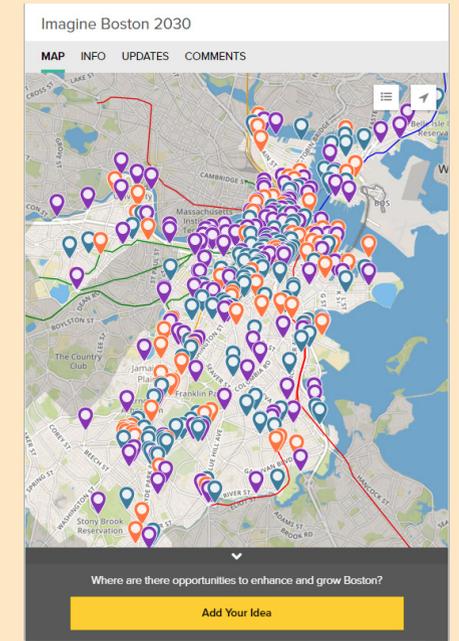
Residents at a workshop in Chinatown in March 2016 use stickers and markers to share their ideas on a map of Boston.



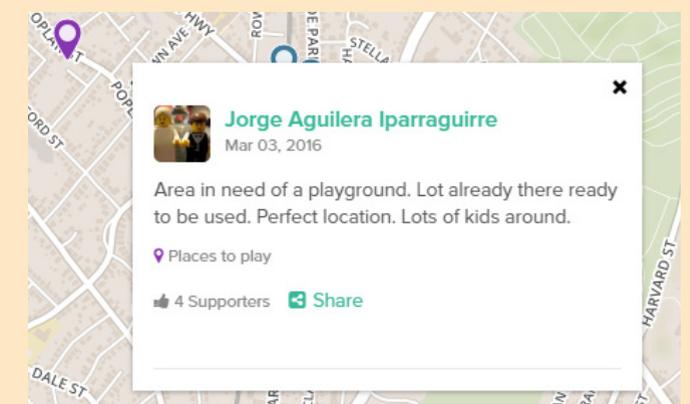
Residents at a Mattapan workshop in March 2016 draw new places to live, work, and play on a map of Boston.



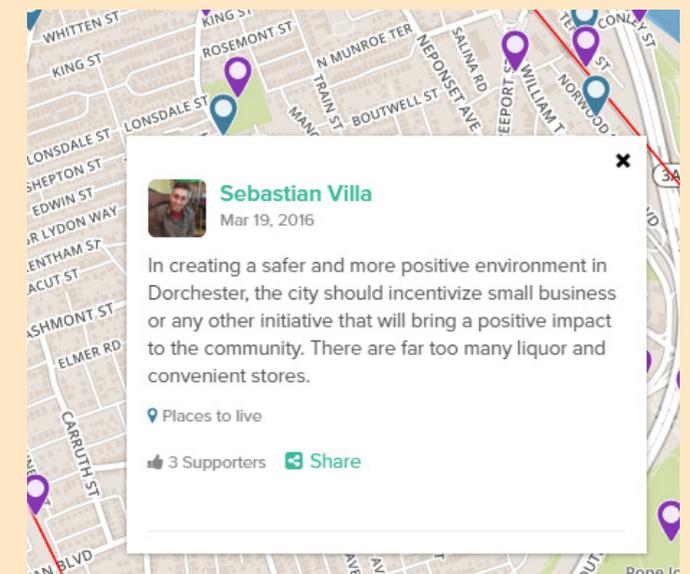
Residents contributed more than 1,000 ideas for new places to live, work, and play using an online and mobile mapping tool.



Roslindale



Dorchester



# Approach for Growth and Enhancement

Today, Boston’s land can be categorized into three distinct types, each of which can accommodate different kinds of growth and enhancement.

Our approach for guiding growth begins from the premise that growth and enhancement should be responsive to the existing and varied fabric of the city. It should help the city achieve its goals of strengthening its dynamic economy, becoming more equitable, improving quality of life, and preparing for climate change.

Jamaica Plain ↓



## ↑ Existing Neighborhoods

Predominantly residential neighborhoods that are experiencing significant pressure from rising housing prices and are in need of neighborhood amenities and investment to enhance quality of life and increase access to opportunity.

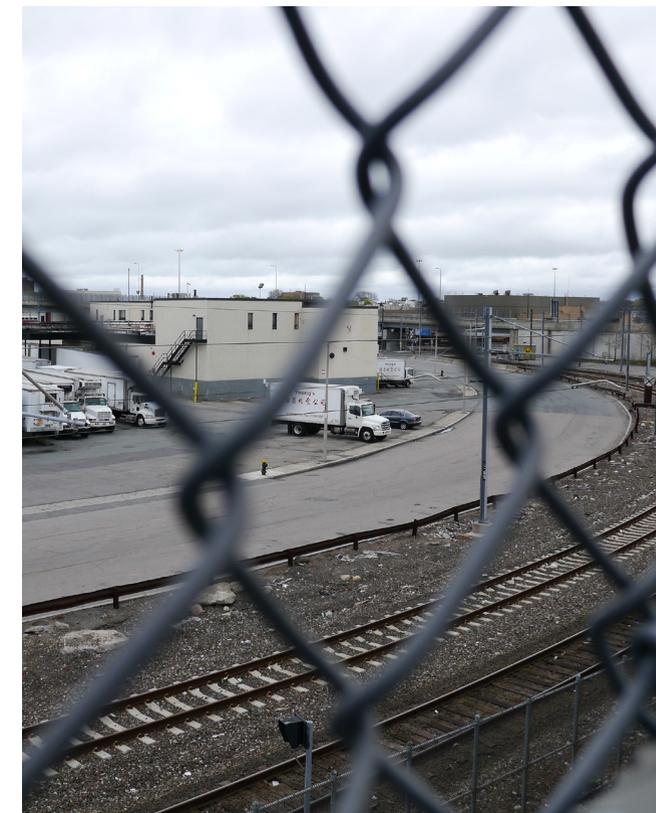
Downtown Crossing ↓



## ↑ Commercial Core

Centers of industry, commerce, and institutions supported by dense, high-rise buildings, walkable streets, and transit infrastructure that are in need of continued growth and investment to make these areas more vibrant and mixed-use.

Widett Circle ↓



## ↑ Edge Areas

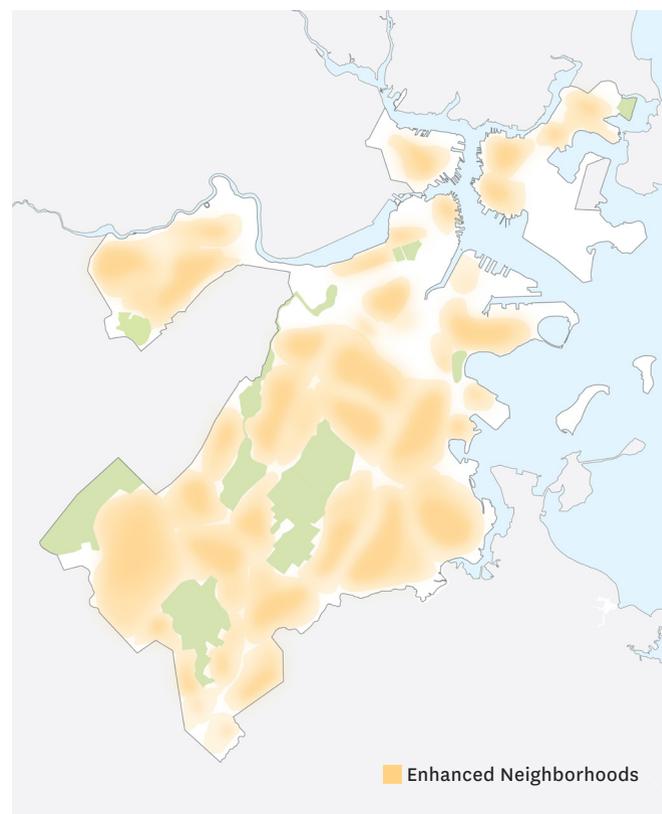
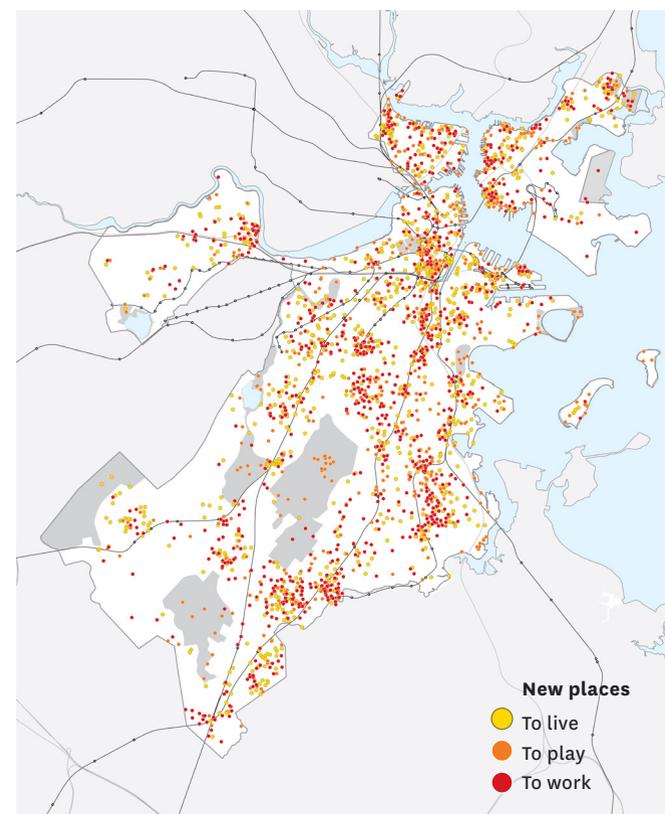
Boundaries, both large and small, between neighborhoods and the commercial core, that are occupied by industrial and transportation infrastructure and vacant land but have potential for transformation that supports pressing needs for job and housing growth.

"Commercial 'downtowns' in the neighborhoods, more mixed-use blocks and buildings."  
**Dorchester resident via web survey**

"Infill development...could help rejuvenate neighborhoods and inform other efforts to increase the availability of housing."  
**South End resident via online mapping comments**

"Rezone the city to allow for more density and more height in appropriate areas. There's no reason that our city can't handle more height and density in specific areas (downtown, along transit lines, in areas of the city that haven't been as developed and present an opportunity to allow for growth). This will allow for more housing in these areas, which can assist in keeping people in the city and allowing them better access to transit."  
**Dorchester resident via text message**

Each of these areas requires a customized approach to growth, enhancement, and preservation to respond to Boston’s citywide goals. In each area, different policies and regulatory tools will be needed to shape this growth.



↑ **Community feedback**

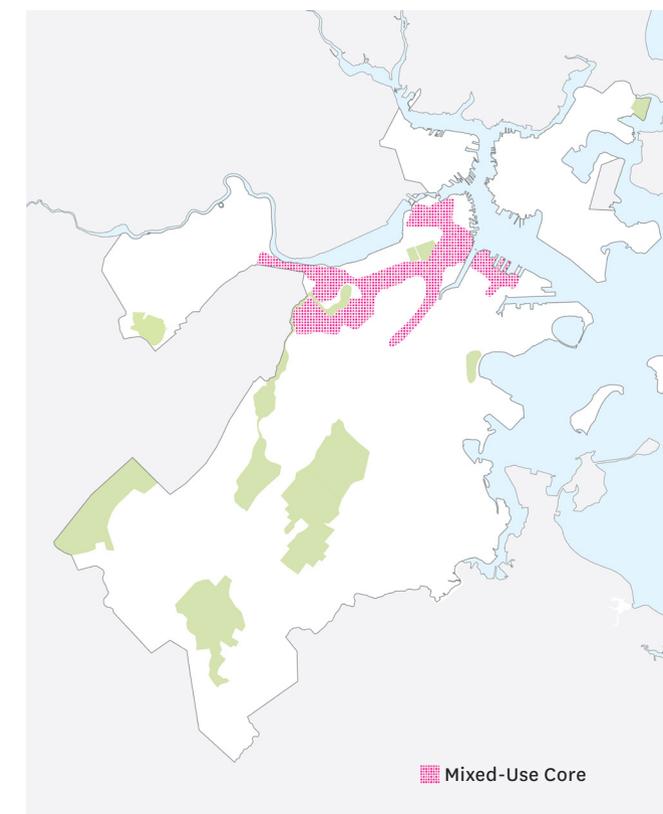
At community workshops across the city in March 2016, Bostonians shared a vision of mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods where home, work, and play are closer together. Residents want growth and enhancement in neighborhoods throughout the city.

↑ **Enhance neighborhoods**

Improvement of the public realm and contextually sensitive development will improve neighborhood vitality, services, and affordability, while affirming each neighborhood’s distinct identity.

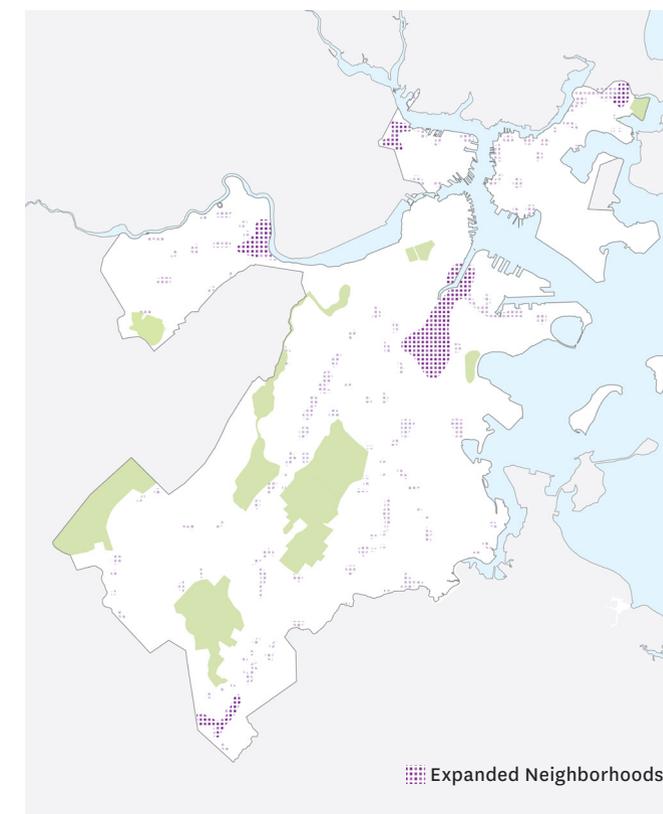
In our existing neighborhoods and commercial cores, our approach focuses on contextually sensitive, mixed-use development. However, this kind of development alone will not accommodate all the jobs and housing units we need, therefore we need to look at larger clusters for transformative growth.

These clusters are our larger “expanded neighborhoods.” However, many of these areas are in Boston’s future floodplain. Developing in these expanded neighborhoods means committing to multilayered protections to make them safe for current and future residents and workers. Although we do not know all the solutions for protecting these areas, we are committed to exploring solutions to protect these areas. Based on further study, we will guide the implementation of multilayered flood protection strategies that leverage some of the value created by new development to support protection.



↑ **Encourage a mixed-use core**

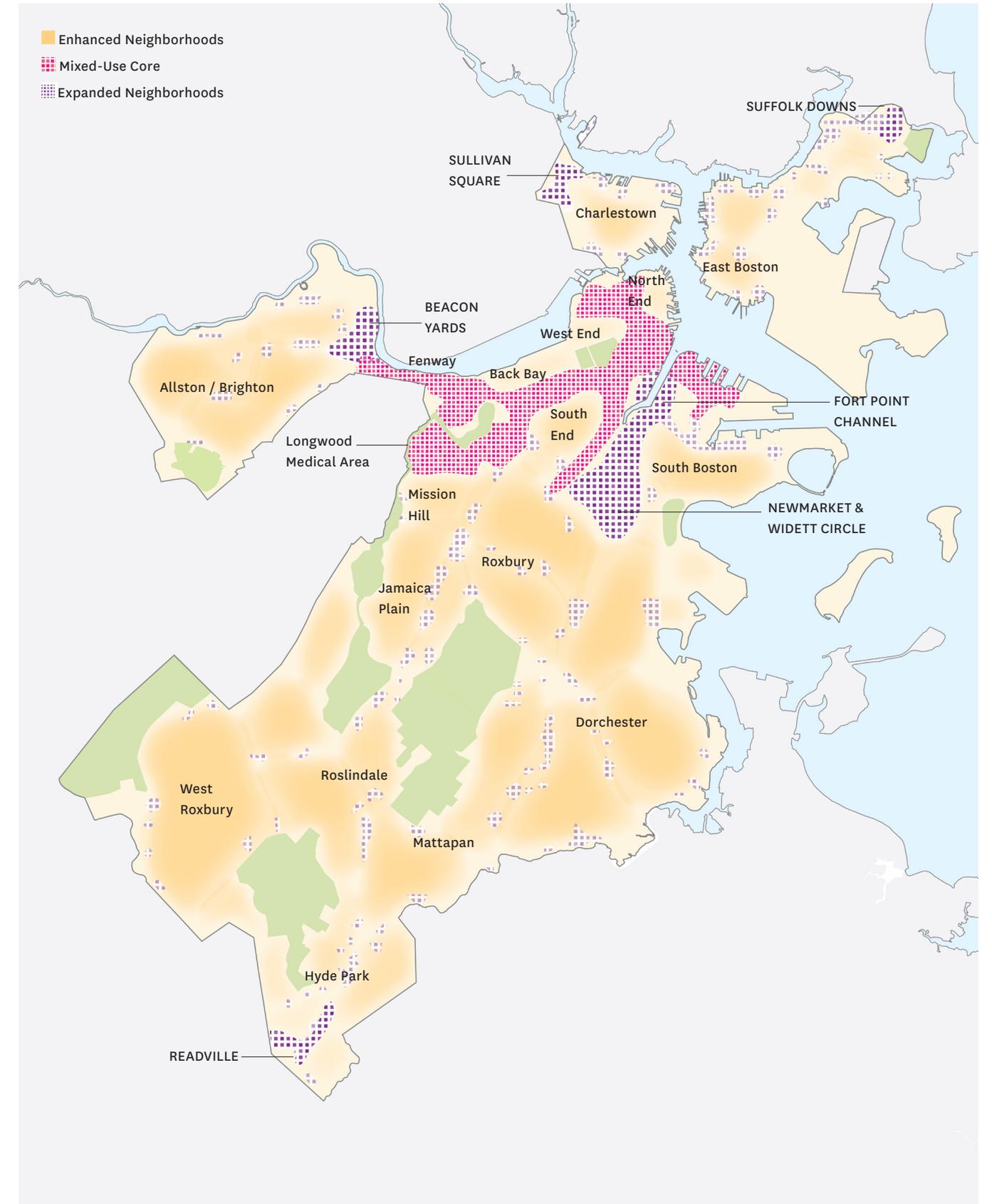
Continued dense, mixed-use development and public-realm improvements in the commercial cores—such as Downtown and Longwood—will support job growth and new housing opportunities, add amenities, and create active, mixed-use centers for residents, workers, and visitors.



↑ **Expand neighborhoods**

Significant new mixed-use housing and job growth in transit-accessible areas at the edges of neighborhoods will reduce housing-price pressure, expand access to opportunity, and stitch together the physical fabric of the city.

Together, the existing neighborhoods, commercial cores, and neighborhood edges have more than enough capacity to accommodate Boston's projected growth in 2030 and beyond 2050.



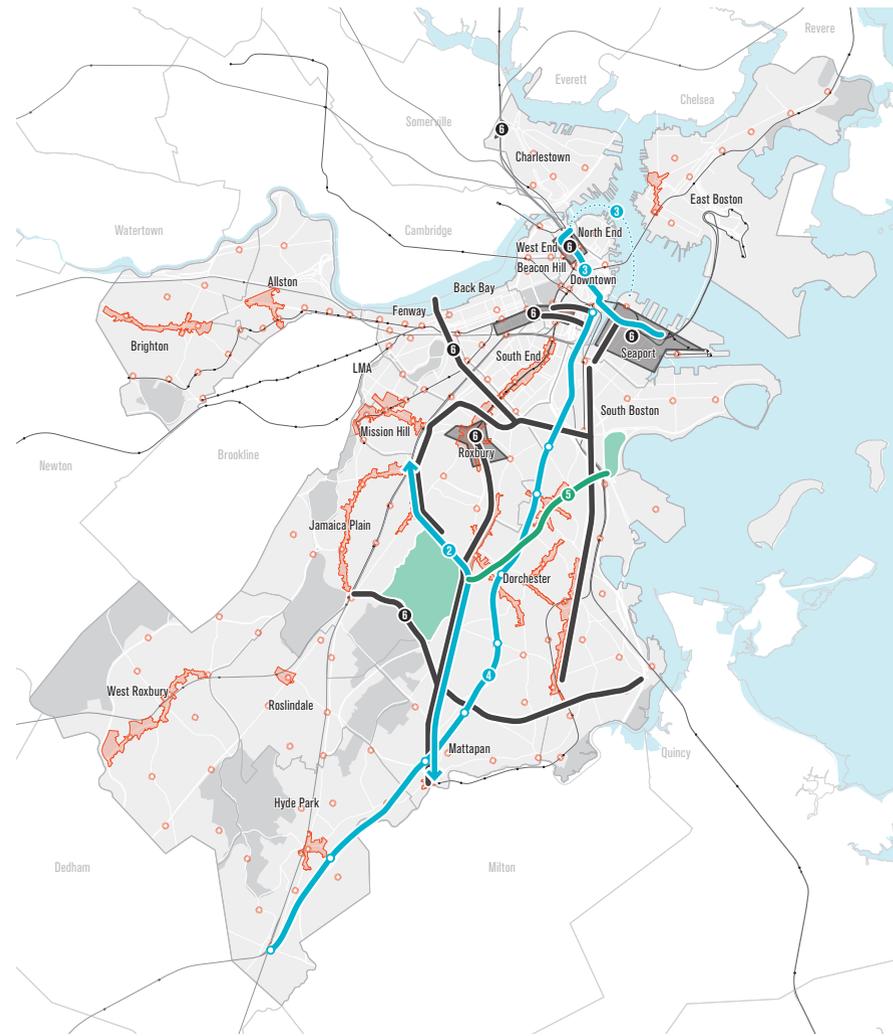
"Affordable housing near neighborhood workplaces."  
**East Boston resident via street team survey**

"Mixed-income senior housing downtown."  
**Dorchester resident via online mapping comments**

"Adding transit-oriented development and density along existing industrial corridors in outlying neighborhoods. Adding height in exchange for affordability."  
**Roslindale resident via web survey**

# Connected Growth

A connected city leverages transportation and open-space networks and supports development that strengthens these critical resources.

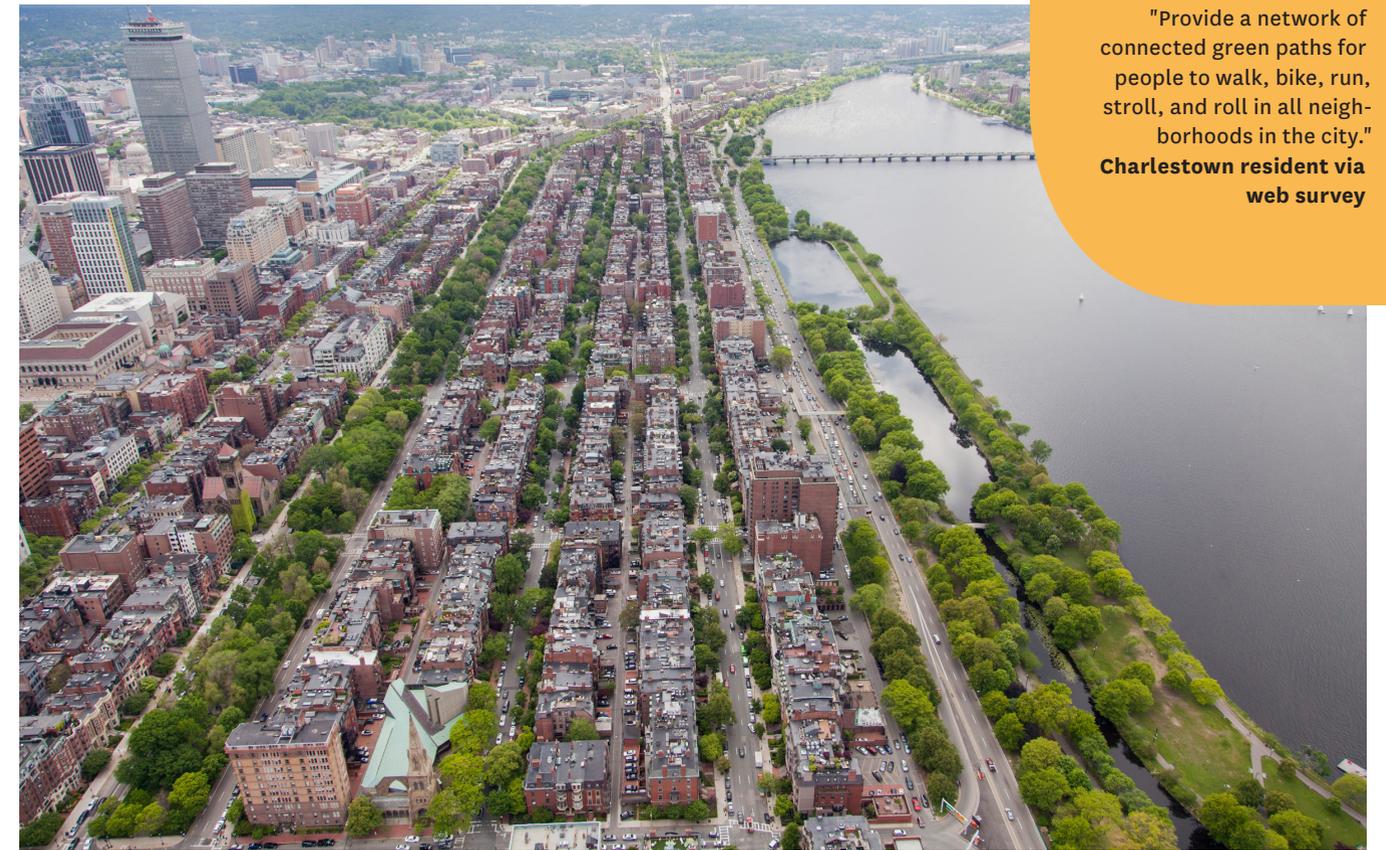


- 1 Walking and Bicycle Friendly Main Street Districts
- 2 Mattapan to LMA Rapid Bus
- 3 North Station to South Boston Waterfront Rapid Bus and Ferry
- 4 Fairmount Indigo Line Service Improvements and Urban Rail
- 5 Columbia Road Greenway
- 6 Smart Signal Corridors and Districts
- Neighborhood Mobility microHUBS

Source: City of Boston 2015 Assessors Data, City Of Boston Open Data, MassGIS, Go Boston 2030 Early Action Projects

## An Accessible, Safe, and Reliable Transportation Network

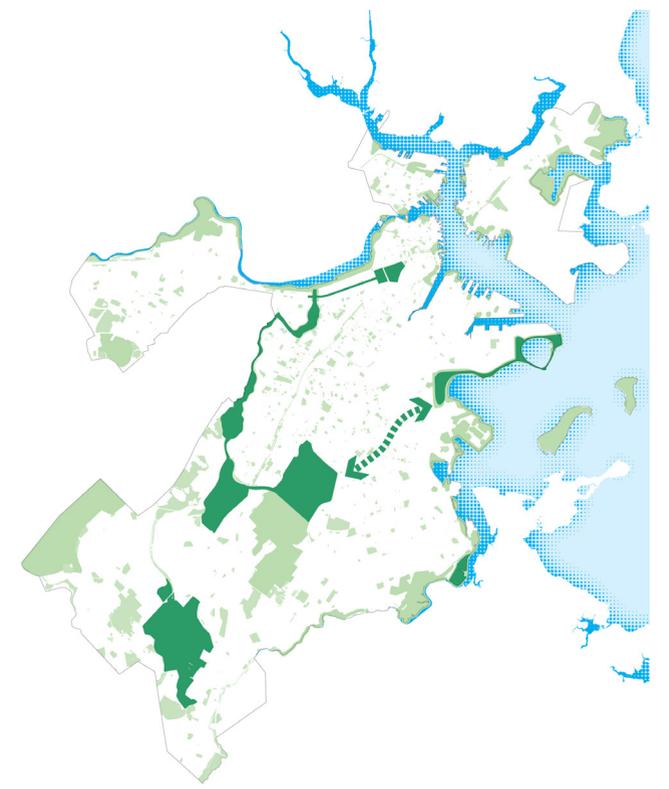
Boston's network of roads and rails has informed the city's development patterns for centuries. Today, as Boston's job centers become more distributed across the city, there is an even greater need to ensure that the transportation network connects residents to jobs efficiently and reliably. Go Boston 2030, the city's mobility plan, is working to identify more accessible, safe, and reliable ways to get around Boston. Proximity to Boston's existing transit network and the new and improved connections Go Boston 2030 is proposing was a significant factor in identifying areas for new growth. Potential expanded neighborhoods where significant new mixed-use housing and job growth can be accommodated—from Suffolk Downs and Sullivan Square—are located in areas with strong existing or planned transportation infrastructure. Growth in the mixed-use core will be supported by the area's dense network of existing transportation. The efforts identified by Go Boston 2030 to improve transit and bike access and reliability in neighborhoods will enhance existing neighborhoods.



"Provide a network of connected green paths for people to walk, bike, run, stroll, and roll in all neighborhoods in the city."  
Charlestown resident via web survey

## A Vibrant Open Space Network

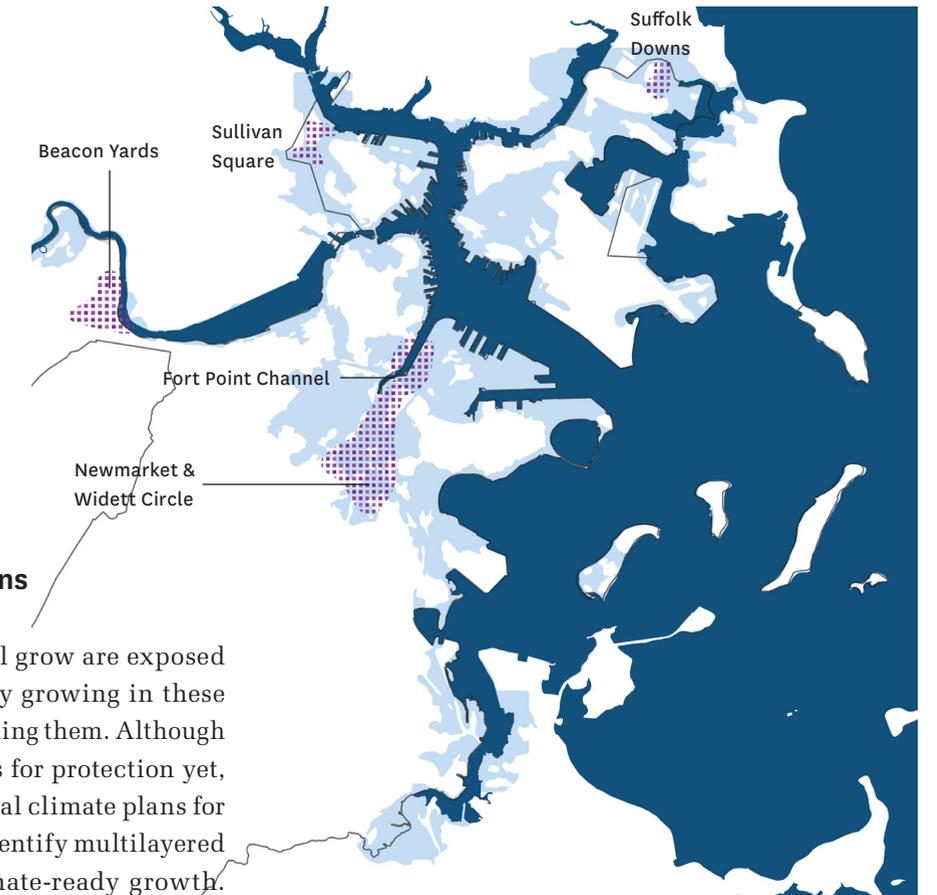
With 95 percent of the population living within a five-minute walk of open space, Boston's existing parks network connects many residents to a diversity of places for recreation. As Boston grows, the City will work with partners to improve the quality and connectivity of our open spaces. The City also will direct strategic investment in existing and new parks that support our increased population and enhance quality of life for all residents. In some expanded neighborhoods, Boston will guide the development of new open spaces, funded in part by revenues from development in these areas. In the core, Boston will strengthen existing jewels like the Boston Common and support a vibrant public realm along the waterfront. In existing neighborhoods, Boston will invest in parks, from local pocket parks and tot lots to signature parks such as Franklin Park, and enhance paths and greenways that connect neighborhoods to open spaces and to the waterfront.



# Climate-ready Growth

A climate-ready city protects our existing housing and job centers and enables future resilient growth.

36 Inch SLR, 1% Annual Chance Flood  
Expanded Neighborhoods



## Boston will develop climate plans for vulnerable areas.

Many of the areas where Boston will grow are exposed to flooding risk as sea levels rise. By growing in these areas, Boston is committing to protecting them. Although we do not know all the mechanisms for protection yet, Boston is investing in developing local climate plans for vulnerable areas. These plans will identify multilayered investments needed to enable climate-ready growth. Boston will approach this topic dynamically, regularly gather the most up-to-date information, and respond to new information as we have it.

## Climate Ready Boston is taking a multilayered approach to climate preparedness.

The City's climate adaptation strategy is developing a multilayered approach to climate planning and investment that will be employed in all of the areas where Imagine Boston is guiding growth and enhancement. Layering multiple strategies will enhance their effectiveness and reduce the risk of failure associated with a single line of defense.

### Climate Projection Consensus

- › Ensure that decision-making in Boston is informed by the latest Boston-specific climate projections.

### Prepared & Connected Communities

- › Support educated, connected communities in pursuing operational preparedness, adaptation planning, and emergency response.

### Protected Shores

- › Reduce Boston's risk of coastal and riverine flooding through both nature-based ("green") and hard engineered ("gray") flood-protection systems.

### Resilient Infrastructure

- › Prepare the infrastructural systems that support life in Boston to adapt to future climate conditions, and create new resilient systems

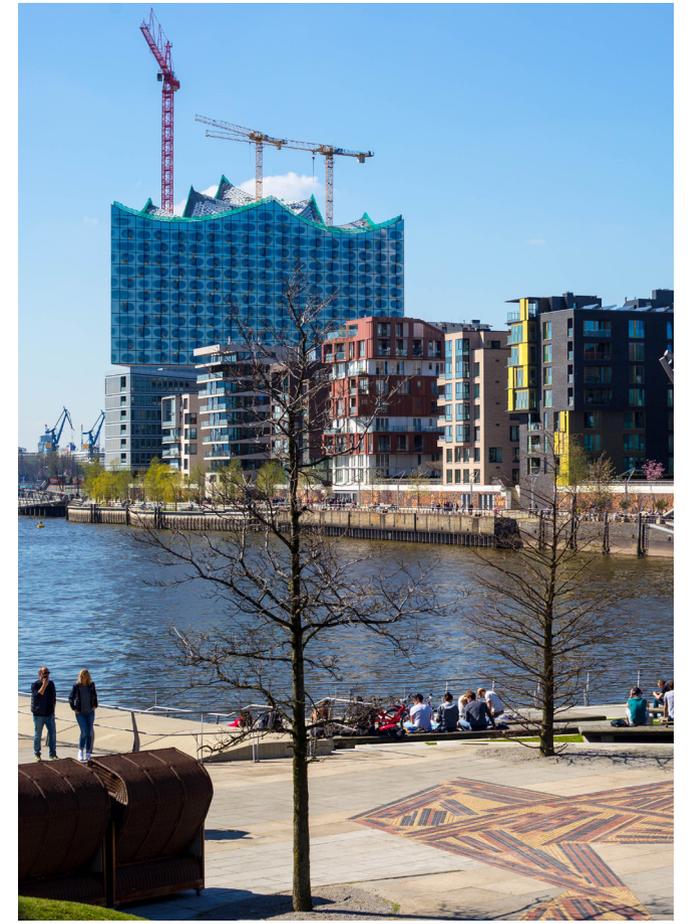
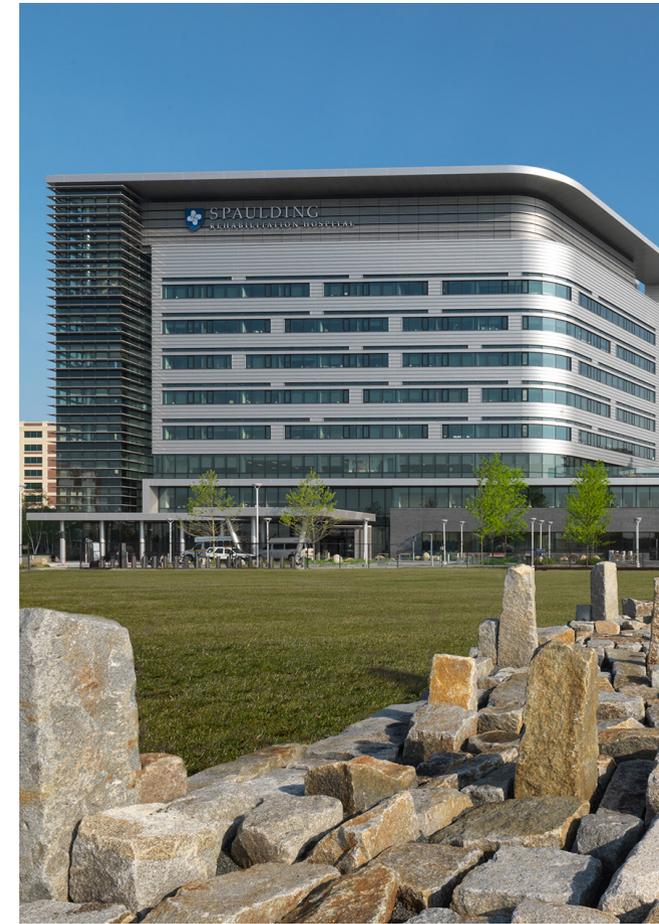
### Adapted Buildings

- › Use regulatory, financial, and other tools to promote new and existing buildings that are climate-ready.

Boston's approach to climate adaptation will protect our existing housing and job centers and catalyze future growth that is climate-ready. Our work will be grounded in practical, economic decision-making and creative engineering and design and supported by strong partnerships with our residents, businesses, institutions, and federal and state partners. Boston will employ urban climate-adaptation solutions that produce multiple benefits—such as protective systems that also function as parks and active public realm. This approach will ensure that new value is captured to help fund improvements as we simultaneously leverage public funding. We will

create layers of protection—from the district plan to community preparedness. We will take advantage of cycles of building and infrastructure rehabilitation and replacement to make investments, and we will design flexible, adaptable solutions that can evolve as climate conditions continue to change.

Just as Boston has been a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, we will become a global leader in protection and adaptation of waterfront cities, and, in doing so, create new jobs and transferable expertise and unlock opportunities for growth.



## Climate-ready building in Boston and abroad

"Prepare for the rising tide by providing coastal management practices along the waterfront."  
**Mission Hill resident via web survey**

"Focus on resiliency to climate change and preparation for storm surges."  
**Roxbury resident via online postcard**

### ↑ GE's New Headquarters in Fort Point

GE is moving its global headquarters from Connecticut to Boston's Fort Point neighborhood, where the company is building a 12-story, 300,000-square-foot building abutting Fort Point Channel that will house 800 jobs. To protect from flooding, GE is elevating its entire site to 4.5 feet above street level. At this elevation, the ground floors and surrounding areas will be just above the 100-year floodplain with the 36 inches of sea-level rise expected by the 2070s. By raising the entire development site, rather than just raising the building entrances, GE's construction has the potential to protect land around the headquarters and could contribute to a larger flood defense system that protects adjacent neighborhoods in the future.

### ↑ Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Charlestown

Completed in 2013, the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital sits on a former brownfield waterfront site in the Charlestown Navy Yard. Since it is located where the Inner Harbor meets Little Mystic Channel, the eight-story hospital's greatest climate risks are from wind and flooding from coastal storms. To mitigate these risks, Partners Healthcare built the hospital's first floor 30 inches above the 0.2 percent chance flood elevation and installed mechanical systems on the roof to ensure continued operation in case of a flood. A number of high-efficiency and redundant power and HVAC systems reduce the building's energy requirements and provide safeguards in case of an outage. The hospital is designed to operate for at least four days in "island mode," with onsite power generation, ample food stores, and other supplies.

### ↑ HafenCity, Hamburg, Germany

HafenCity is a former port area on the Elbe River in Hamburg, Germany, that is being redeveloped as a 388-acre mixed-use neighborhood with 14,000 residents and 45,000 jobs. Unlike other areas along Hamburg's coastline, the neighborhood is not protected by dikes. Instead, the entire area is raised 25 feet above the normal high tide mark on artificial compacted mounds. Waterfront promenades and parks step down from elevated buildings to the waterfront, retaining connectivity to the Elbe River and protecting the area from flooding. Existing buildings along the shore are waterproofed to 25 feet above the normal high-tide line and connect to roads that are also elevated 25 feet.



At community workshops in March 2016 residents discussed how the city can approach growth and enhancement.

