



City of Boston, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor
MICHELLE WU

January 30, 2023

TO THE CITY COUNCIL

Dear Councilors:

I hereby transmit two pieces of legislation for your consideration and approval: *Act to Improve and Modernize Planning and Community Development in the City of Boston*; and *Order Temporarily Extending Urban Renewal Until March 31, 2025 or Passage of a Proposed Relevant Home Rule Petition*.

As we chart the future of the Boston Planning and Development Agency, we must update our state laws to reflect today's needs. This home rule petition will formally end the decades-old urban renewal mission of eradicating so-called "blight and urban decay," and rededicate our resources toward Boston's urgent needs: resiliency, affordability, and equity. Establishing these tenets as the guiding principles for planning decisions—while jettisoning the outdated notion of improvement through Urban Renewal—will enhance the safety, health, and quality of life of our residents and the opportunities for companies doing business in the city. We are also seeking an interim extension of the current urban renewal zones to allow for passage of the home rule petition at the state house and ensure that current affordable housing, open spaces and other land uses for civic benefit do not lapse.

AN ACT TO IMPROVE AND MODERNIZE PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE CITY OF BOSTON

Major provisions of the Act include:

Creation of the Boston Planning and Development Agency. This Act formally abolishes the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) of Boston. This Act transfers the powers and duties of those entities to an agency newly created by this Act, and adopts as its formal name the Boston Planning & Development Agency ("the agency"). This action modernizes the agency while setting up the



further actions below. Consolidating the agency will also assist with current and future efforts to administratively align and integrate the agency with the City of Boston.

End of Urban Renewal. This Act terminates and sunsets Urban Renewal powers by, in part, eliminating the legal authority for the agency to adopt any new Urban Renewal plans or to make new findings or takings pertaining to blighted, decadent, or substandard conditions in the city. It also entitles the agency, notwithstanding the termination of any urban renewal plan, to enforce any conditions and restrictions in existing plans that protect important community benefits such as affordable housing, open space, and community uses.

Scope of the New Boston Planning & Development Agency. The Act directs the agency to prepare and implement plans that address three key planning principles: 1) resiliency, including climate change mitigation and adaptation; 2) affordability, including the creation and retention of affordable housing and support for local businesses; and 3) equity, in the form of community development plans that ensure the equitable distribution of benefits derived from development in the city, and redress historical inequitable policies that may have led to inequities in the city's growth. The Act requires that all plans be approved by the mayor, subject to the requirements of the Act. The Act also authorizes the agency to act as a public economic development agency, to fund worthy projects, to make confirmatory eminent domain takings, and to manage related property matters so long as they are in accordance with these new overarching principles.

AN ORDER TEMPORARILY EXTENDING URBAN RENEWAL PLANS IN THE CITY OF BOSTON UNTIL MARCH 31, 2025 OR PASSAGE OF A PROPOSED RELEVANT HOME RULE PETITION

With this proposed Order, I am requesting a two-year extension of the remaining Urban Renewal plans in alignment with the timeline for legislative consideration of the Home Rule Petition. I am requesting that the extension be granted for the shorter of either (a) two (2) additional years (i.e., to March 31, 2025), or (b) until such time that the Home Rule petition passes.

In April 2016, the City Council granted approval of a six (6) year extension of Boston's fourteen (14) Urban Renewal plans, which was subsequently approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development. In March 2022, the BPDA, Council and DHCD sunset two (2) additional Urban Renewal plans.

An expiration of the twelve active Urban Renewal plans before the home rule petition is adopted with protections for transferring existing land use protections would risk dissolution of the affordable housing, open space, and other community-oriented land use restrictions currently enforced under the plans. In seeking this temporary extension, the BPDA shall focus its Urban Renewal-related efforts solely on (a) enforcing existing land use restrictions that protect

community values (e.g., income restrictions, elderly preferences, open space, and other community uses) and (b) advancing the resiliency, affordability, and equity goals of the city.

I urge your Honorable Body to act favorably on the two proposals, the Act and the Order, to improve and modernize planning and community development in the City of Boston while working to advance resiliency, affordability, and equity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Wu', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michelle Wu
Mayor of Boston

CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL

AN ORDER TEMPORARILY EXTENDING URBAN RENEWAL PLANS IN THE CITY OF BOSTON UNTIL MARCH 31, 2025 OR PASSAGE OF A PROPOSED RELEVANT HOME RULE PETITION.

WHEREAS: Urban Renewal was a federally established and state authorized set of planning tools and funding for municipalities to address blighted areas by acquiring property, relocating residents and businesses, and in some cases clearing away old buildings to make room for new development and uses; and

WHEREAS: In practice, low-income communities were targeted for demolition, often then replaced with development of new residential and commercial uses benefiting wealthier residents; and

WHEREAS: Early uses of Urban Renewal powers by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) caused harmful and unnecessary destruction of homes resulting in unjust social equity outcomes within the City of Boston, most notably in the West End where thousands of immigrant, low-income, and working-class residents were evicted; and

WHEREAS: The City of Boston is working tirelessly to promote the sound and responsible growth of its neighborhoods and to provide places for Boston's residents to live, work, and recreate; and

WHEREAS: The result of this activity has been the creation and preservation of homes and businesses, as well as parks, schools, libraries and other public facilities, playing a role in building Boston's reputation as one of the world's most vibrant and livable cities; and

WHEREAS: The BRA currently maintains twelve (12) active Urban Renewal Plans originally approved by the BRA, the Boston City Council, the Mayor of Boston and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which were most recently extended for one (1) year in April 2022, and before that were extended in 2016; and

WHEREAS: The twelve Urban Renewal Plans scheduled to expire on March 31, 2023 utilize specific Urban Renewal tools and protections that maintain Land Disposition Agreements (LDAs) that protect existing affordable housing, open space, institutional and community uses, and senior housing; and

WHEREAS: The Mayor has submitted to the City Council a Home Rule Petition entitled “An Act to Improve and Modernize Planning and Community Development in the City of Boston,” which, when passed by the Commonwealth’s legislature, will functionally terminate and sunset the Urban Renewal powers of the BRA and will extend the protections and enforcement rights (but not the BRA’s other urban renewal powers) under the existing Urban Renewal Plans;

WHEREAS: Upon passage of the Home Rule Petition and its subsequent implementation, the extension of the Urban Renewal Plans shall be voided;

WHEREAS: By their provisions and previous extensions granted, the plans, the protections established and the powers conferred therein will terminate on March 31, 2023 unless so extended; and

WHEREAS: The BRA seeks a two (2) year extension for the twelve (12) active Urban Renewal Plans that are set to expire on March 31, 2023, or until passage by the state legislature of the proposed home rule petition terminating Urban Renewal Plans and transferring land use protections; *NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT*

ORDERED: That the City Council does hereby approve the extension of the term of the Urban Renewal Plans listed below, to the earlier of March 31, 2025, or until the effective date upon passage by the state legislature of the proposed home rule petition entitled An Act to Improve and Modernize Planning and Community Development in the City of Boston:

1. Central Business District South Station Urban Renewal Plan,
2. Fenway Urban Renewal Plan,
3. Campus High School Urban Renewal Plan,
4. South Cove Urban Renewal Plan,
5. Charlestown Urban Renewal Plan,
6. Downtown Waterfront-Faneuil Hall Urban Renewal Plan,
7. Government Center Urban Renewal Plan,
8. South End Urban Renewal Plan,
9. Washington Park Urban Renewal Plan,
10. Park Plaza Urban Renewal Plan,
11. Brunswick-King Urban Renewal Plan, and
12. Kittredge Square Urban Renewal Plan.

**I HEREBY CERTIFY
THE FORGOING, IF PASSED IN
THE ABOVE FORM, WILL BE IN
ACCORDANCE WITH LAW.**

BY



**ADAM CEDERBAUM
CORPORATION COUNSEL**