

TO: BOSTON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY AND
BRIAN P. GOLDEN, DIRECTOR

FROM: SARA MYERSON, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING
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SUBJECT: SOUTH BOSTON REZONING INITIATIVE - TEXT AND MAP
AMENDMENTS TO THE SOUTH BOSTON NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICT

SUMMARY: This Memorandum requests that the Boston Planning & Development Agency (the "BPDA") authorize the Director to petition the Boston Zoning Commission to adopt a text amendment to Article 68, South Boston Neighborhood District, of the Boston Zoning Code (the "Code") and a map amendment to Map 4E, South Boston Neighborhood District, which would change the existing zoning of certain areas from H-1-50, indicating apartment, to a Multi-Family Residential ("MFR") Subdistrict.

The South Boston Rezoning Initiative was initiated in 2014 at the request of the South Boston community, Mayor Walsh, as well as Boston City Councilors Linehan and Flaherty who jointly filed a Boston City Council Hearing Order regarding the rezoning of South Boston (Docket # 0674, Hearing date May 22, 2014). Since that time, an extensive process has been undertaken, including six (6) public meetings with the neighborhood's civic associations and four (4) BPDA sponsored public meetings. These forums provided an opportunity to discuss and address a variety of issues facing the South Boston community, including size and density of residential development, loss of open space, lack of residential parking, and the lack of predictable development rights of property owners.

A main desire from the South Boston community identified through this process is to achieve zoning that provides for predictable, appropriate development without the constant need for zoning variances. During this process, the community articulated a strong preference for zoning that respects the current built environment while also being progressive enough to allow for contextually appropriate development that better suits today's needs. There was an overwhelming sentiment expressed during the public process that zoning in its current form achieves neither of these objectives.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SOUTH BOSTON NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICT ZONING

The South Boston Neighborhood District zoning generally reflects the existing residential, commercial, and open space uses in South Boston. The proposed zoning provides regulations concerning use, height, density and parking ratios. The major elements of the proposed zoning changes are summarized below:

1. Proposed Residential Subdistricts. Currently South Boston consists primarily of residential subdistricts including H-1-50, an apartment designation that encompasses the majority of the neighborhood, 3F-2000 districts, as well as R.8 districts in the City Point section of the neighborhood. There are also remaining manufacturing and industrial designations spread throughout areas of the neighborhood that no longer house those types of uses. It is proposed that there will be two (2) residential subdistricts in South Boston: Multi-Family Residential ("MFR") and Multi-Family Residential /Local Services ("MFR/LS"). Both residential subdistricts will have the same dimensional regulations and will differ only in allowed uses. The "MFR/LS" subdistricts will allow for more commercial uses that support the local community.

The purposes of the residential subdistricts are to: maintain, enhance, and promote the character of the residential neighborhood in terms of density, housing type, and design; to provide for low- and medium-density single, two and three family and multifamily housing appropriate to the existing built environment; and to encourage appropriate development which enhances the residential subdistricts while preventing overdevelopment.

2. Proposed Height = Forty (40) feet. Under current zoning there are two allowable heights in residential South Boston. Fifty (50) feet is allowed in the H-1-50 district and thirty-five (35) feet is allowed in the Saint Vincent's Neighborhood Subdistrict. Through both internal professional analysis and community process, it was determined that fifty (50) feet was too large for the South Boston residential neighborhood. Given that the Saint Vincent's Neighborhood Subdistrict, with an allowable height of thirty-five (35) feet, has routinely seen height variances requested and granted above the allowable thirty-five (35) feet. The resulting recommendation for height in the South Boston Neighborhood District for the MFR & MFR/LS Subdistricts are forty (40) feet.
3. Proposed Density Floor Area Ratio ("FAR") = 2. Current zoning throughout most of residential South Boston allows for an FAR of one (1). Urban design analysis, however, shows that the current average FAR in residential South Boston is 1.95. Additional analysis found that this current density is not solely attributable to recent development. In fact, an examination of the more traditional neighborhood fabric reveals that it is not uncommon for historical residential housing stock within South

Boston to have an FAR of two (2) or above. As such, we recommend a revised FAR of two (2) as being a more appropriate reflection of the existing neighborhood fabric.

4. Proposed Parking Ratio = 1.5 parking spaces per new unit. Current zoning requires either a 0.9 parking ratio in H-1-50 or a 1.0 parking ratio in Saint Vincent's Neighborhood Subdistrict. Given the lack of residential parking in South Boston both of these ratios were deemed insufficient during the public meeting process. As such, we recommend a parking ratio of 1.5 spaces per unit. For one (1) bedroom and studio units the ratio shall be one (1). This ratio is applicable per new dwelling unit(s) only.
5. Proposed Minimum Lot Size = None. Not having a minimum lot size requirement was derived from an analysis of the present lot sizes and their degree of existing non-conformity.
6. Roof Structures. An open roof deck may be erected on the main roof of a Building with a flat roof or a roof with a slope of less than five (5) degrees, provided that (a) such deck is less than one (1) foot above the highest point of such roof; (b) the total height of the building, including such deck, does not exceed the maximum building height allowed; and (c) access is by roof hatch or bulkhead no more than thirty (30) inches in height above such deck.

RECOMMENDATION

BPDA staff recommends that the Director be authorized to petition the Boston Zoning Commission to adopt the recommendations of the South Boston Rezoning Initiative in the text and map amendments attached hereto regarding the South Boston Neighborhood District.

An appropriate vote follows:

VOTED: That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to petition the Boston Zoning Commission to adopt the recommendations of the South Boston Rezoning Initiative as proposed in the text amendment to Article 68 and map amendment to Map 4E, South Boston Neighborhood District, of the Boston Zoning Code (the "Code"), in substantial accord with the text and map amendments presented to the Boston Planning & Development Agency at its meeting on October 20, 2016.