

PLANNING DEPARTMENT REPORT



The proposed **text amendment is drafted appropriately**, without causing structural issues to the Code.

- Moving existing “Residential Uses” language from Conditional Uses Section 46-9.3 to Allowed Uses Section 46-9.2.

Reduces regulatory barriers for housing production and aligns zoning with built context, including recent significant residential development and office-to-residential conversions.

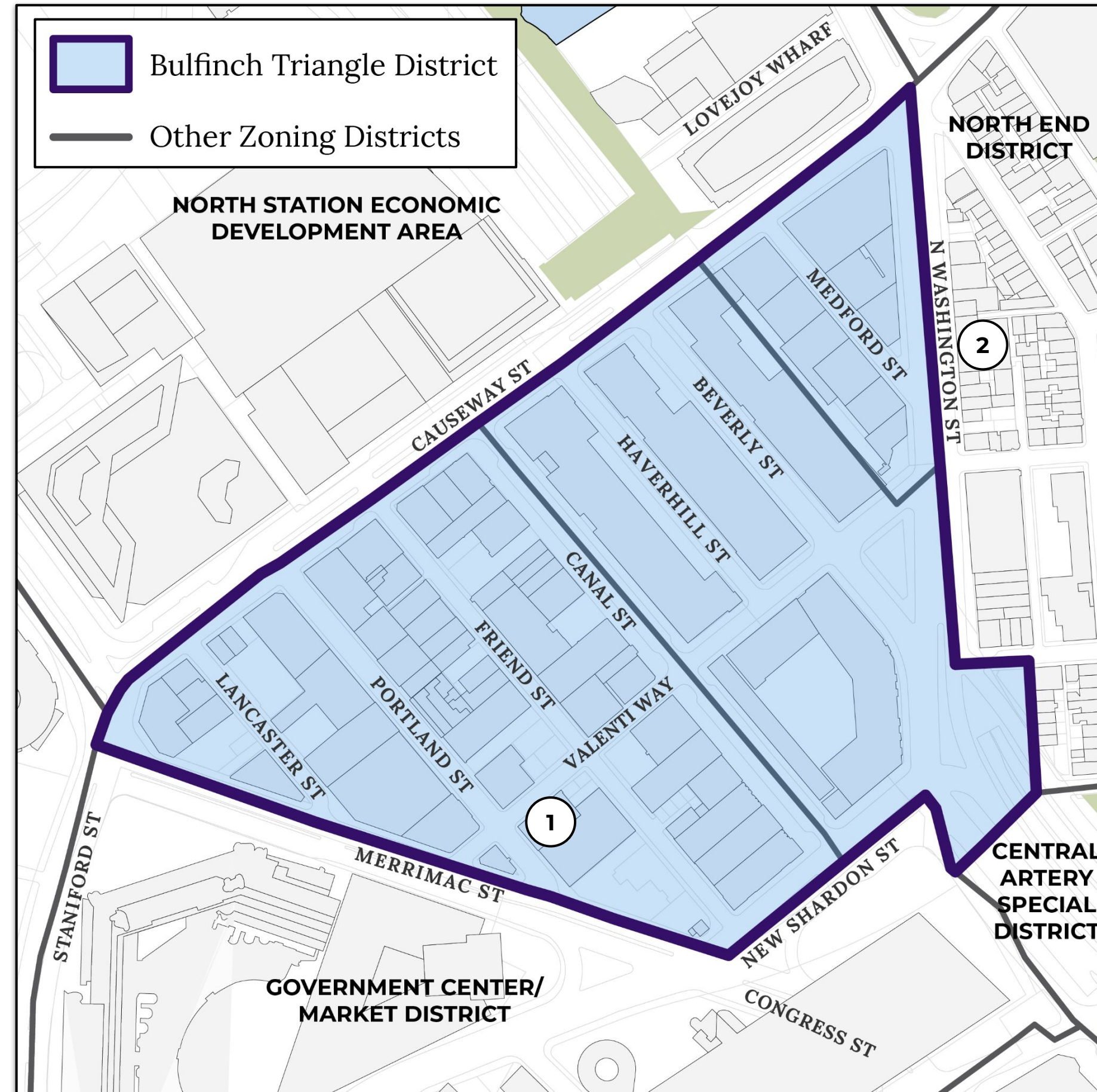
There are **no proposed changes to dimensional regulations**, and **Article 80 review still applies** for Small and Large Projects.

ACTIVE OFFICE-TO-RESIDENTIAL CONVERSIONS

① 129 Portland St



② 123 N Washington St

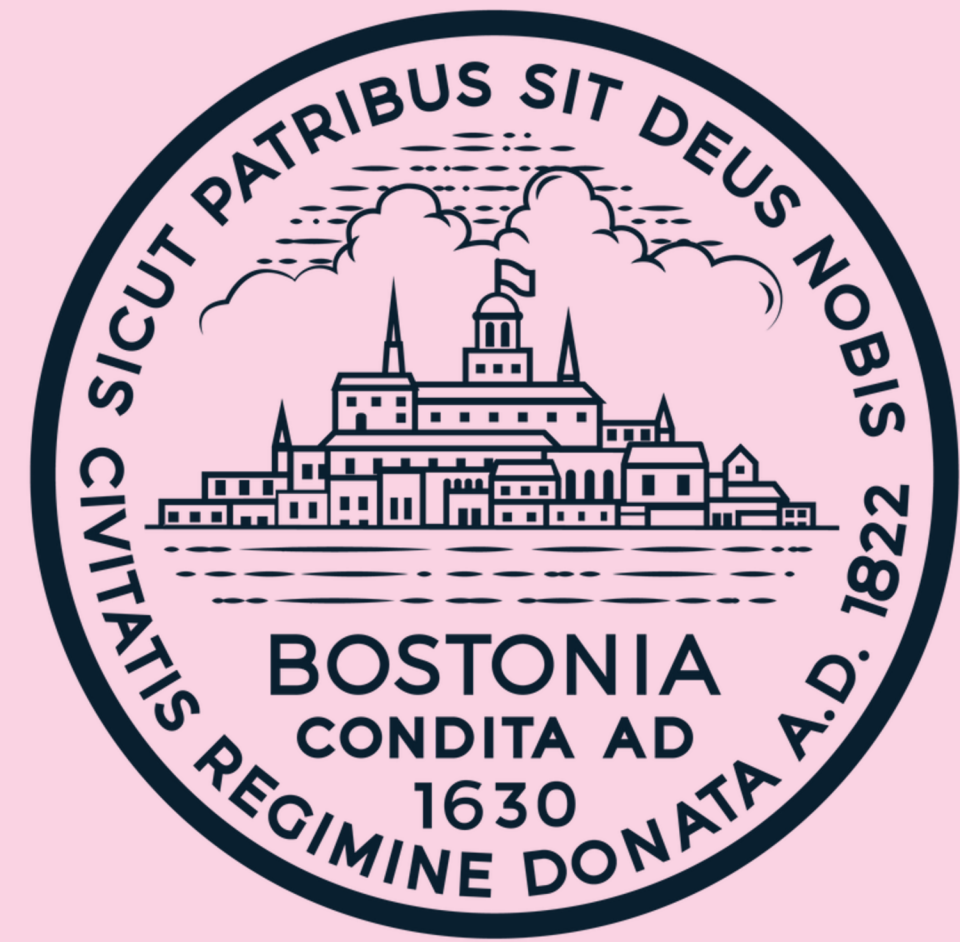




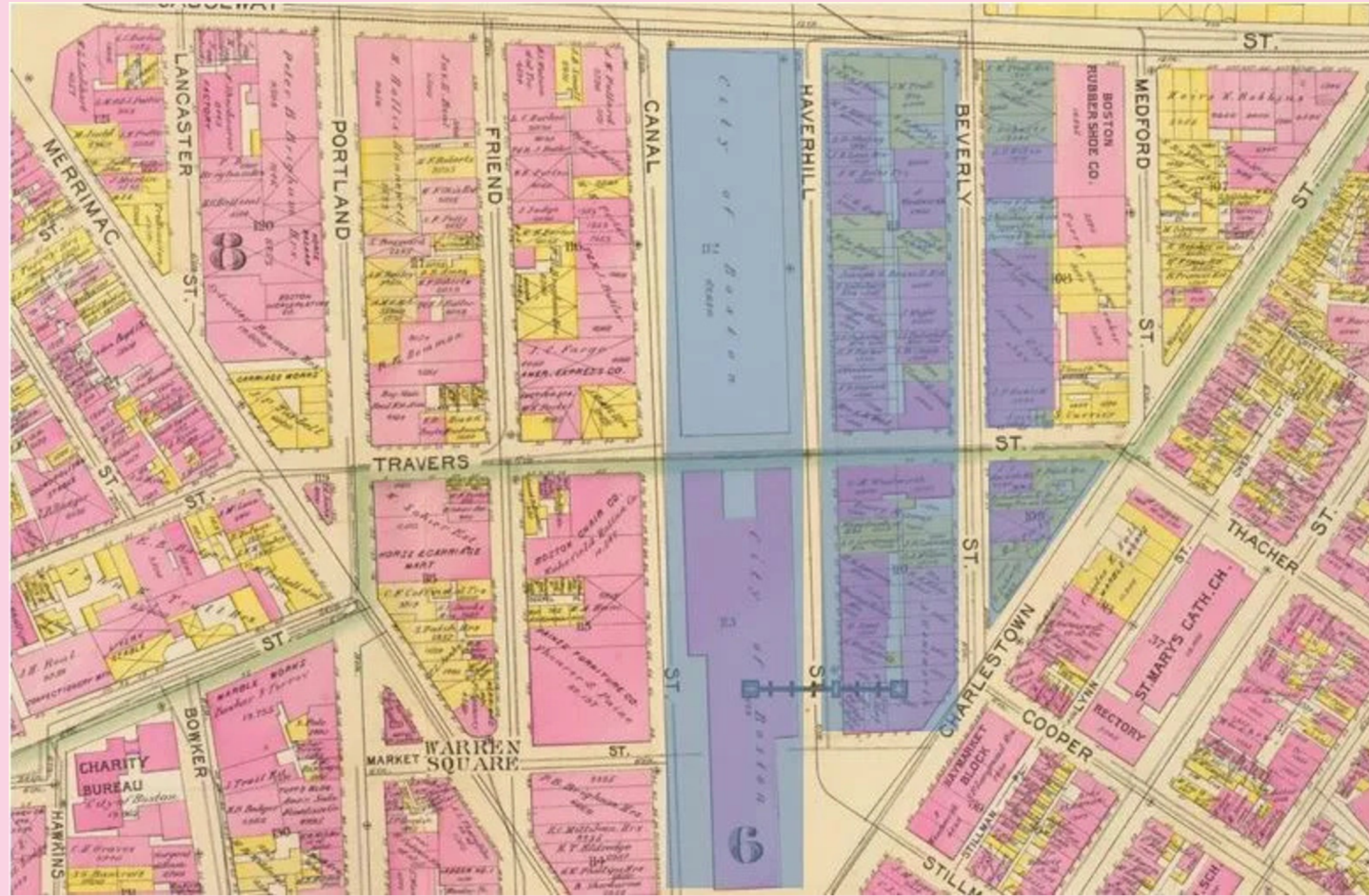
**Amendment to Boston Zoning Code
(Article 46, Section 9)**

**Presented to the Zoning Commission
by City Councilor Sharon Durkan, District 8**

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

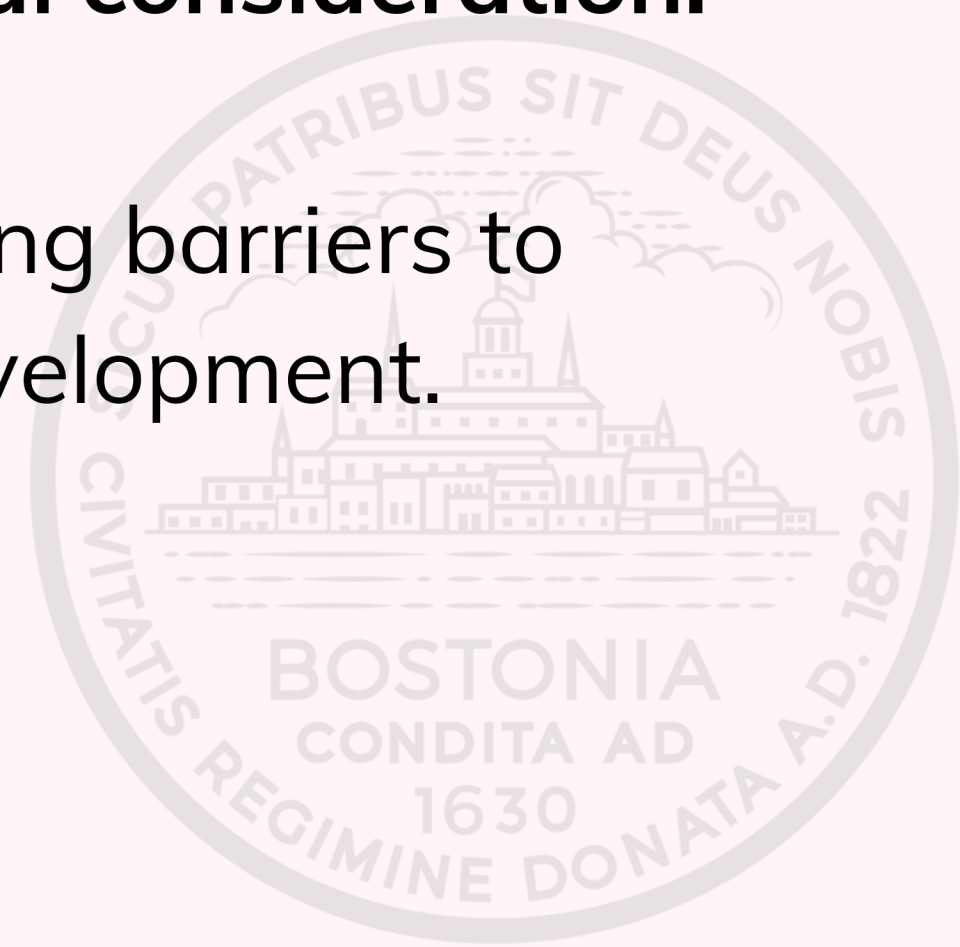


★ Introduction



The original street layout of the Bulfinch Triangle.

- Amending Boston Zoning Code (Article 46, Section 9) to make residential development an allowed use in the Bulfinch Triangle.
- **Approved by City Council (10-2 vote), now you today for final consideration.**
- Remove outdated zoning barriers to encourage housing development.

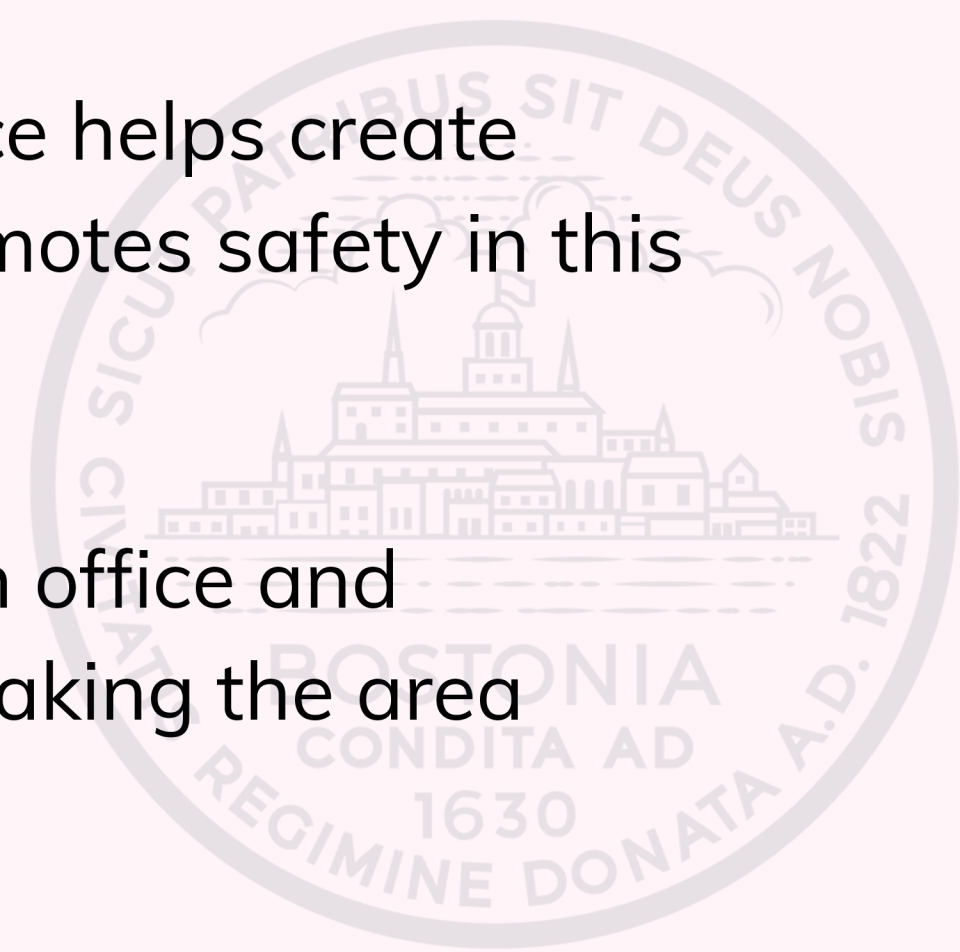


★ Neighborhood Voices, Preservation and Context

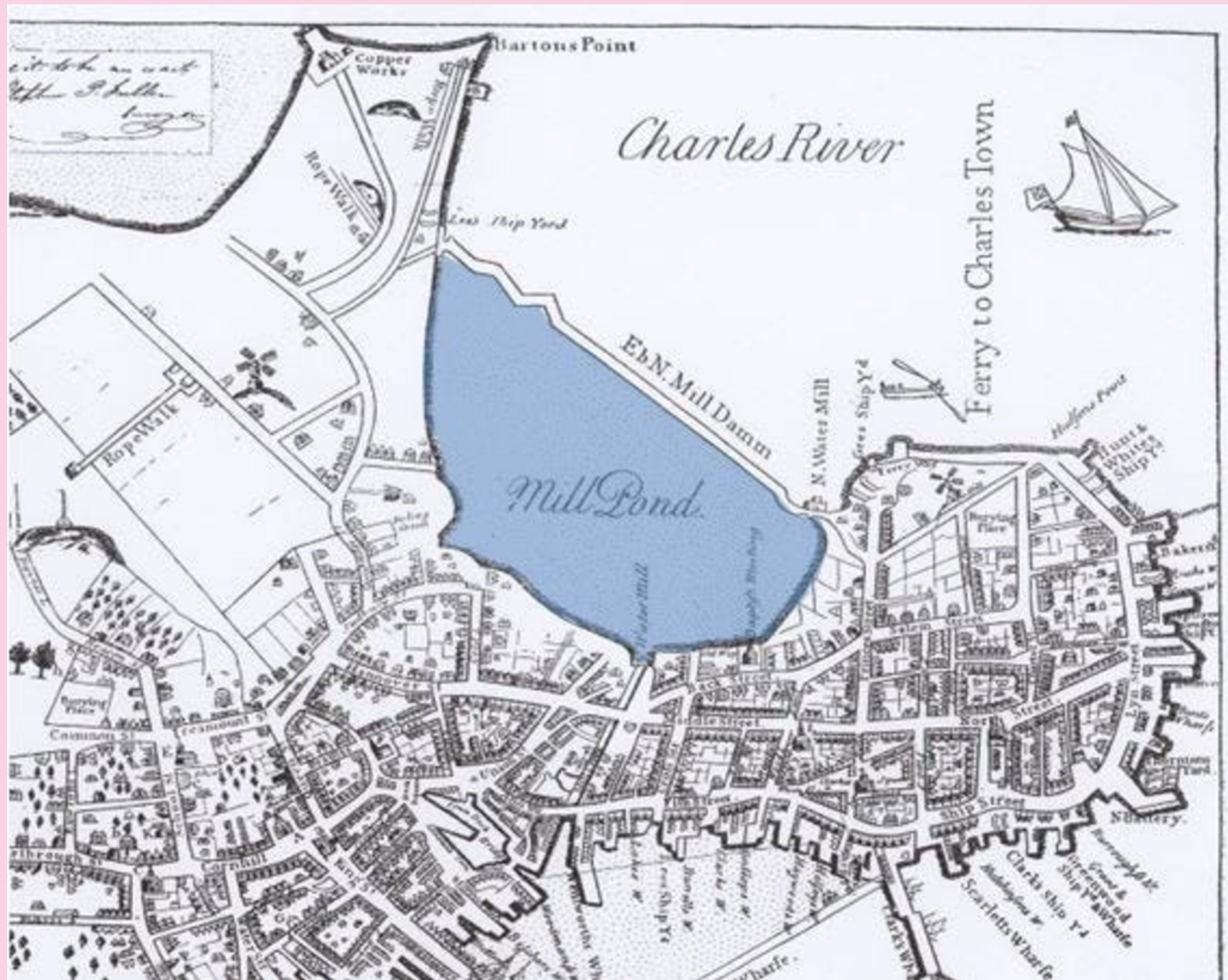


Walk with the West End Museum, and WECA leaders - October 2024.

- In October, I walked the area with local leaders, business owners, and the Landmark Commission to understand shared priorities.
- Shared goals between the City & community include a more diverse, mixed-use neighborhood that benefits both businesses and residents; including more housing, which supports local businesses and economic development.
- A strong residential presence helps create liveliness, vibrancy and promotes safety in this walkable neighborhood.
- Housing reduces reliance on office and commuter driven activity, making the area vibrant beyond 9 to 5.

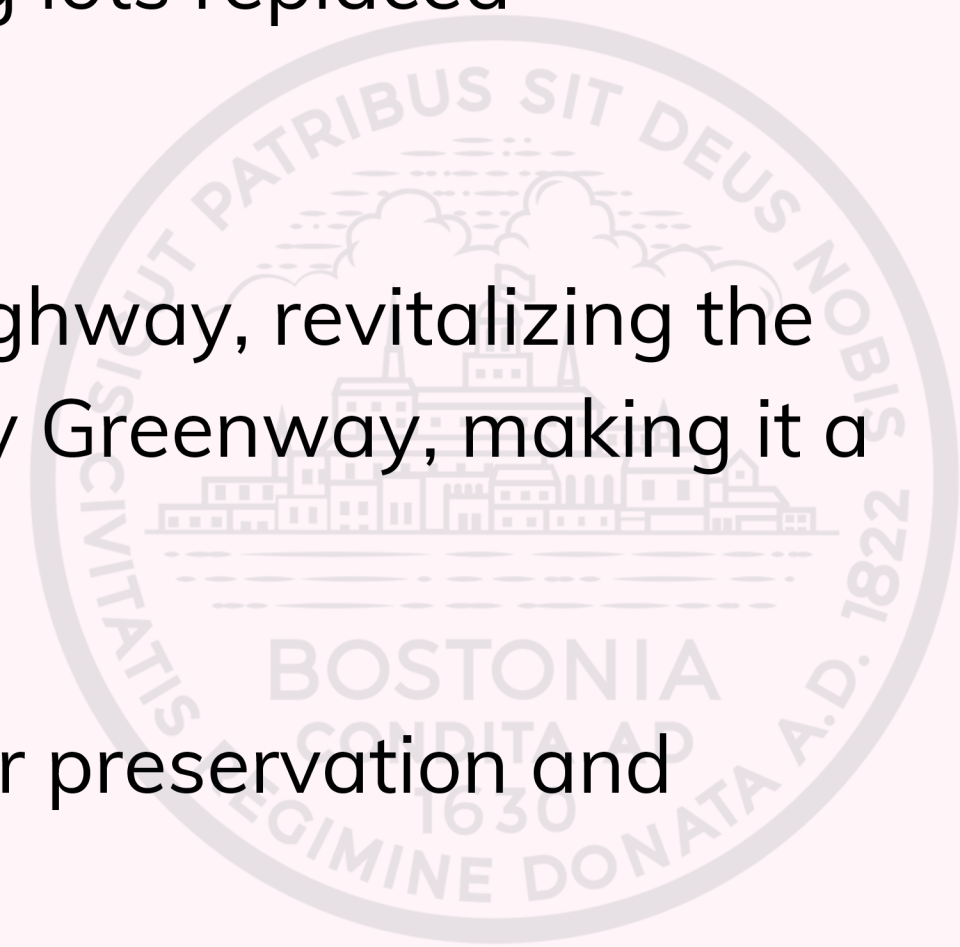


★ History and Context



The Tidal Basin from Which the Bulfinch Triangle was derived.

- Once a tidal basin (Mill Pond), the Bulfinch Triangle later filled using soil from Beacon Hill.
- Bulfinch grew with transportation in 19th Century—stables, blacksmiths, and local businesses on the west; warehouses, train and industrial uses on the east.
- In the 20th Century, the elevated highway cut through the area, and leveled residential buildings, stalling growth, and parking lots replaced community space.
- The Big Dig removed the highway, revitalizing the area with the Rose Kennedy Greenway, making it a more ideal place to live.
- Today, the area is poised for preservation and smart growth.



★ Barriers to Housing

BOSTON
BUSINESS JOURNAL

Commercial Real Estate

Editorial: Bulfinch Triangle is ripe for zoning changes

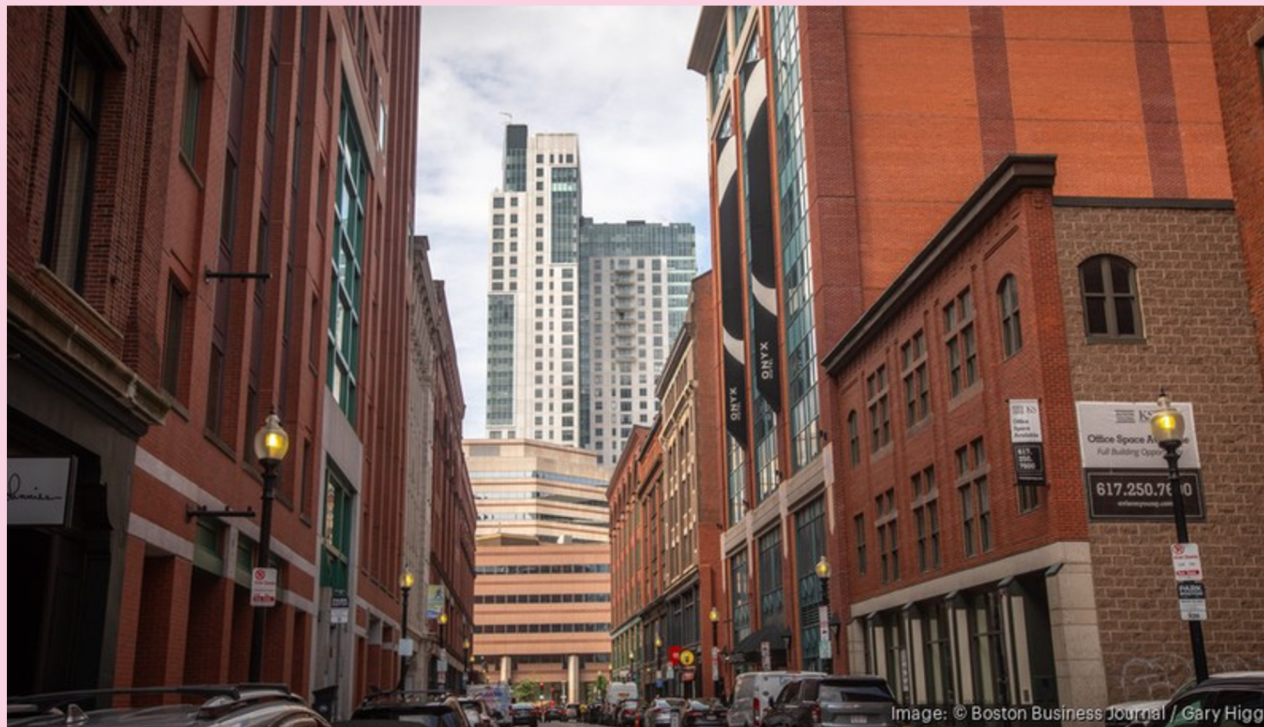
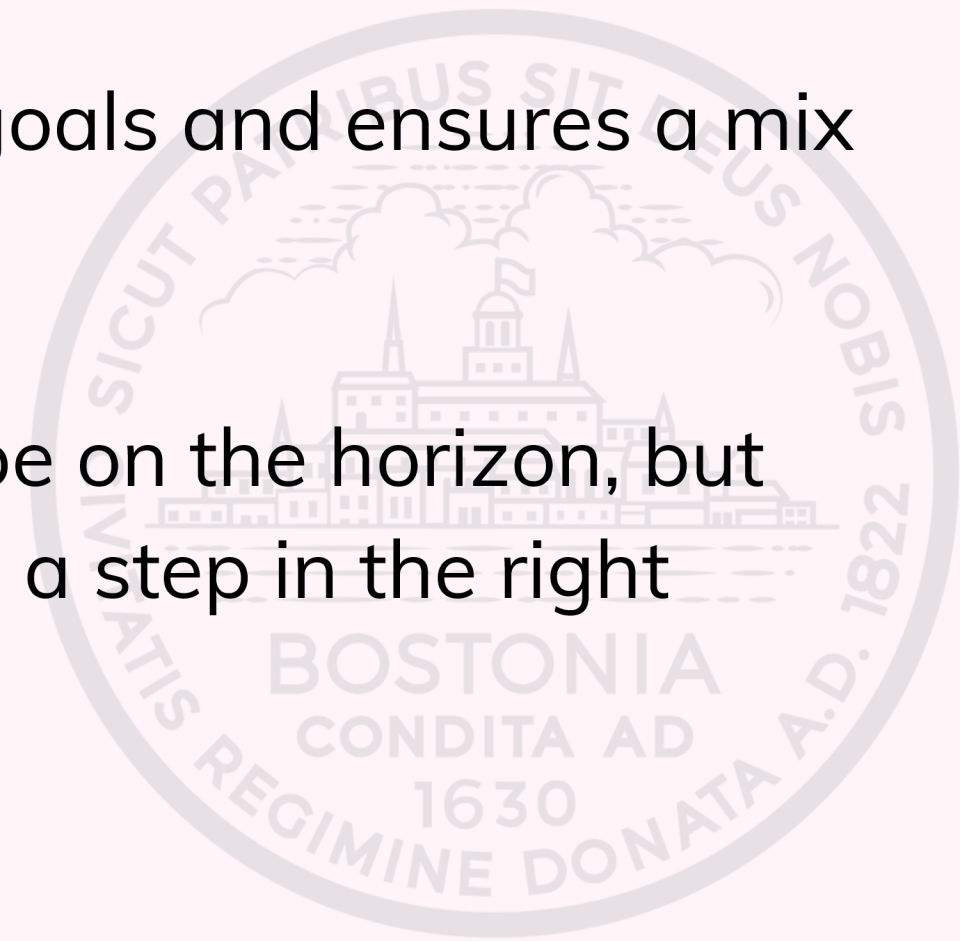


Image: © Boston Business Journal / Gary Higgins

BBJ, October 2023

- Residential use is classified as "conditional," requiring extra approvals and slowing development.
- This discourages investment and delays housing projects in an area that could support new residents.
- Amend zoning to make housing an "allowed use"—cutting red tape while keeping existing height and density protections.
- Supports the city's housing goals and ensures a mix of uses in the neighborhood.
- Other Zoning changes may be on the horizon, but this commonsense change is a step in the right direction.



★ Text Amendment

Filed on: January 3, 2025
Filed on: TBD
Text Amendment Application No. ____
Boston City Council

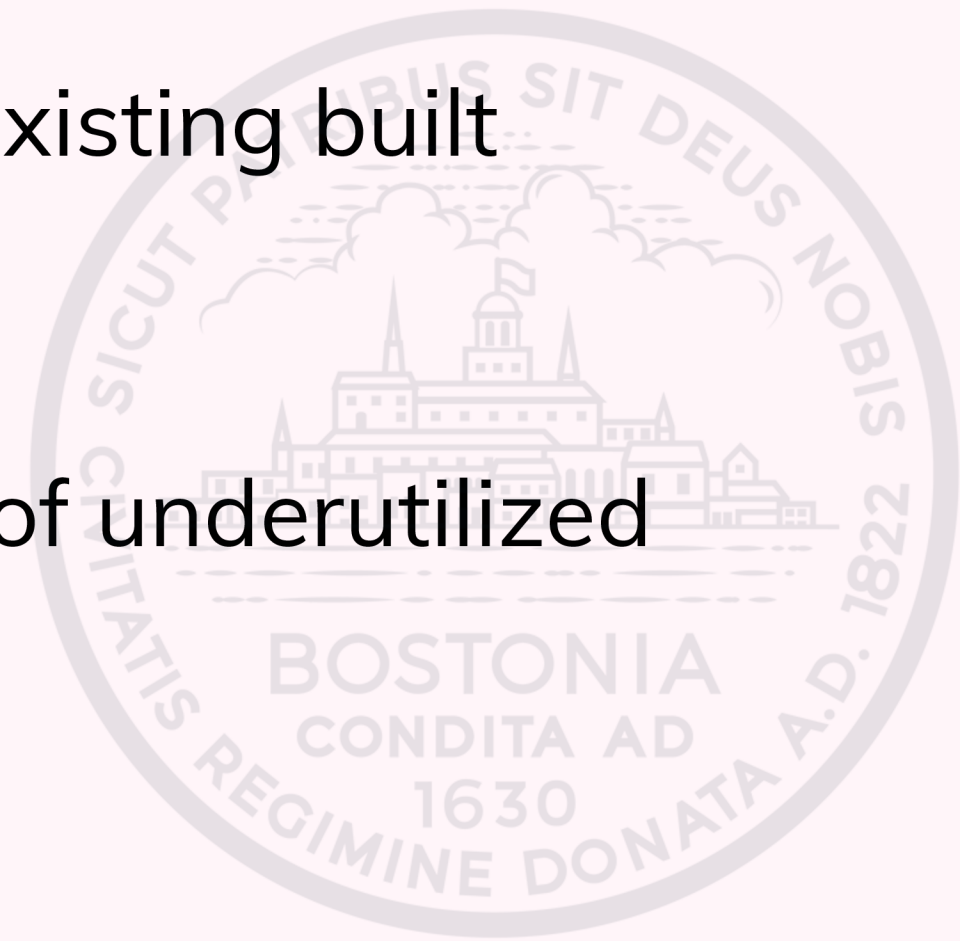
TO THE BOSTON PLANNING DEPARTMENT AND ZONING
COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF BOSTON:

Boston City Council through and by Boston City Councilor Sharon Durkan petition to amend the text of the Boston Zoning Code as follows:

1. In Article 46, Section 9-3. - Bulfinch Triangle District Use Regulations, Conditional Uses
 - a. Strike part (d), "Residential Uses. Multifamily dwelling; artist's live/work space; apartment house; group residence, limited; lodging or boarding house; temporary dwelling structure; group care residence, general; and any dwelling converted for more families, provided that any nonconformity of such structure as to floor area ratio is no greater after conversion than prior to conversion. Residential uses include any affordable dwelling units, including but not limited to rental units, condominiums, and limited equity share cooperatives."
2. In Article 46, Section 9-2. - Bulfinch Triangle District Use Regulations, Allowed Uses
 - a. Insert part (t), "Residential Uses. Multifamily dwelling; artist's live/work space; apartment house; group residence, limited; lodging or boarding house; temporary dwelling structure; group care residence, general; and any dwelling converted for more families, provided that any nonconformity of such structure as to floor area ratio is no greater after conversion than prior to conversion. Residential uses include any affordable dwelling units, including but not limited to rental units, condominiums, and limited equity share cooperatives."

Petitioner: Boston City Council
By: Councilor Sharon Durkan
Address: 1 City Hall Square, Suite 550, Boston, MA 02201
Telephone: 617-635-4225

- Amend Article 46, Section 9 of the Boston Zoning Code.
- Change 'Residential Use' from a 'Conditional Use' to an 'Allowed Use'.
- Eliminates red tape and accelerates housing development.
- Aligns zoning with the existing built environment.
- Encourages conversion of underutilized buildings into housing.



★ Housing Opportunities and Open Surface Parking Lots

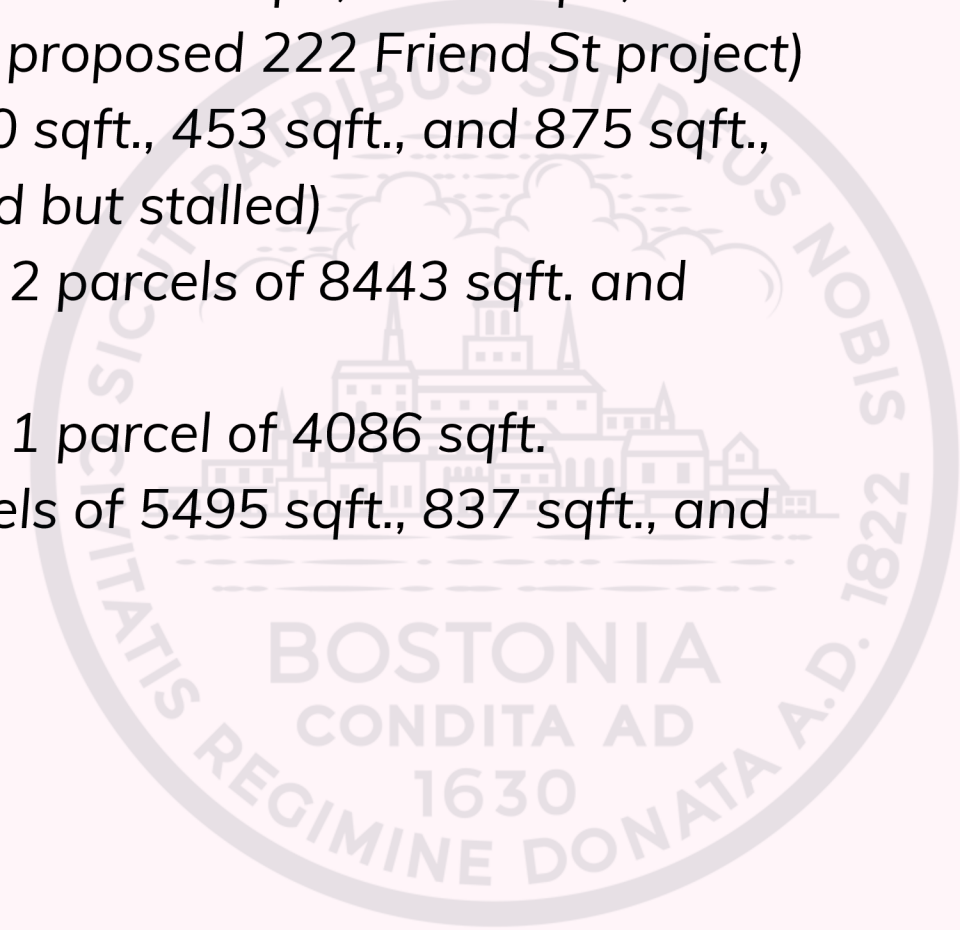


Open Surface Parking Lots in Bulfinch - Courtesy of the West End Museum.

11 surface parking lots composed of 24.25 parcels and covering 71,558 square feet in the Bulfinch Triangle.

- J&O Parking, 240 Friend/154 Canal, 2 parcels of 6090 sqft. and 2030 sqft., 8120 total
- 110 Canal Lot, 114 Canal, 1 parcel of 4043 sqft. (not actively operating)
- 90 Canal Lot, 200 Friend, 1/4 parcel of ~4500 sqft.
- Private Lots, 171 Friend, 4 parcels of 400 sqft. each., 1600 total plus adjoining alley.
- LAZ Lot, 37 Merrimac, 3 parcels (all with different owners) of 4988 sqft., 9150 sqft., and 4051 sqft., 18189 total (includes Cuppa Coffee building)
- Pennyweight Hotel Lot, 242 Friend, 1 parcel of 5478 sqft. (hotel expansion will replace)
- Stanhope Garage, 208 Friend, 4 parcels of 3829 sqft., 2289 sqft., 1620 sqft., and 1098 sqft., 8836 total (part of proposed 222 Friend St project)
- Private Lots, 23 Valenti, 3 parcels of 420 sqft., 453 sqft., and 875 sqft., 1748 total (residential building approved but stalled)
- Lancaster Street Parking, 31 Lancaster, 2 parcels of 8443 sqft. and 1020 sqft., 9463 total
- Lancaster Street Parking, 21 Lancaster, 1 parcel of 4086 sqft.
- Merrimac Parking, 25 Lancaster, 3 parcels of 5495 sqft., 837 sqft., and 1532 sqft, 7864 total.*

*Credit to West End Museum's Sebastian Belfanti.



★ Consensus at Hearing



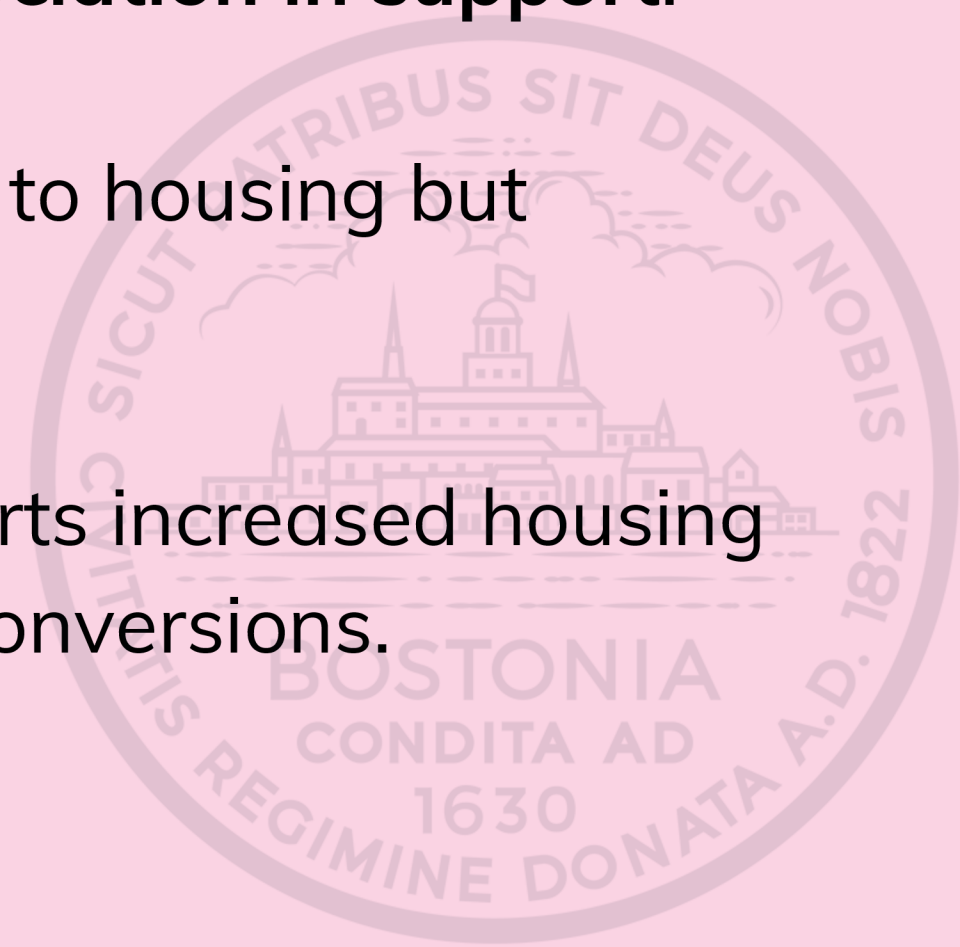
✓ **Support of City Council:** Approved 10-2 on 1/29/25. Hearing 1/23/25.

✓ **Neighborhood residents:** Want housing and mixed-use development. **West End Museum, and West End Civic Association** spoke broadly in support of change at hearing.

✓ **Local businesses:** Need a stronger residential base to thrive, **Downtown North Association** in support.

✓ **Developers:** Ready to convert to housing but deterred by red tape.

✓ **Planning Department:** Supports increased housing supply and office to residential conversions.



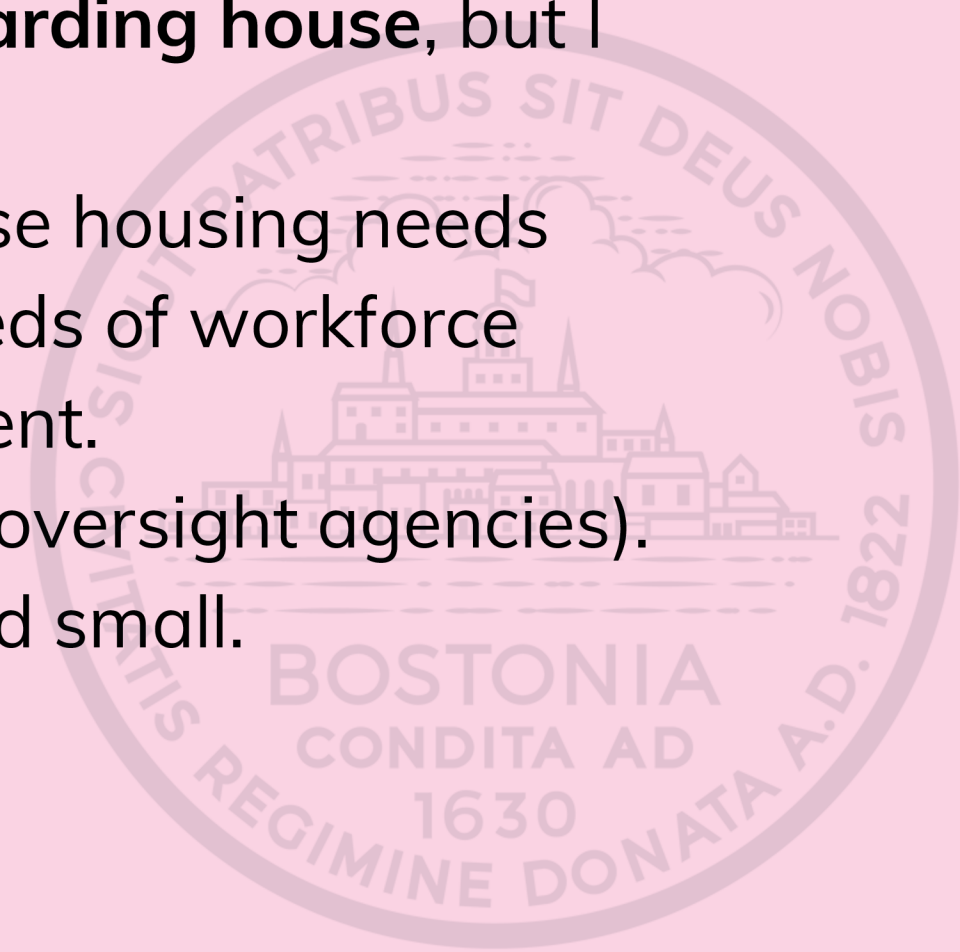


Recent Dialog Around Non-Traditional Uses

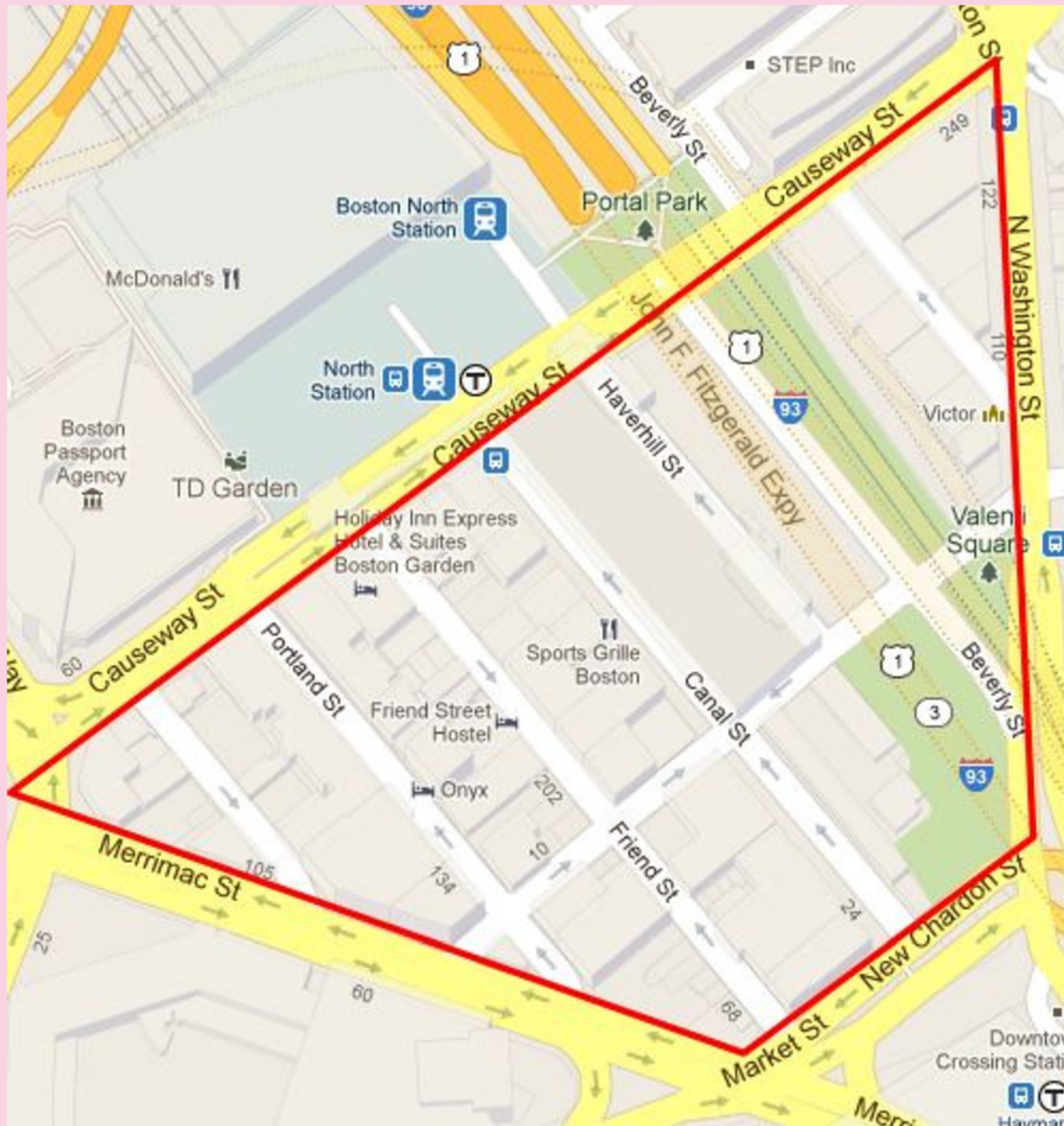
2. In Article 46, Section 9-2. - Bulfinch Triangle District Use Regulations, Allowed Uses

- a. Insert part (t), “Residential Uses. Multifamily dwelling; artist’s live/work space; apartment house; group residence, limited; **lodging or boarding house**; **temporary dwelling structure**; group care residence, general; and any dwelling converted for more families, provided that any nonconformity of such structure as to floor area ratio is no greater after conversion than prior to conversion. Residential uses include any affordable dwelling units, including but not limited to rental units, condominiums, and limited equity share cooperatives.”

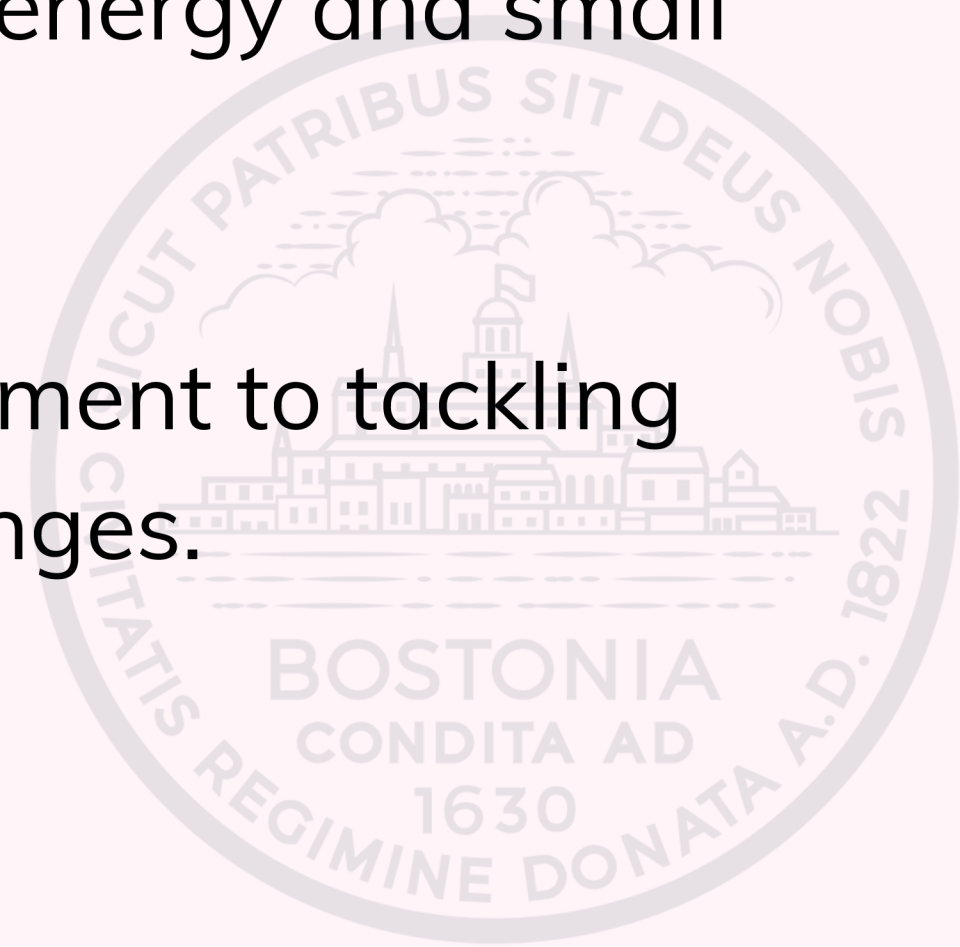
- Since this passed the City Council, some leaders have asked questions about the diverse allowed residential uses including, **temporary dwelling; and lodging or boarding house**, but I defend these diverse uses.
- Allowing for a variety of residential uses ensures flexibility in meeting diverse housing needs and typologies, which can use dated zoning definitions to meet modern needs of workforce housing, senior housing, social housing and other models to meet the moment.
- All new structures remain subject to regulatory review (ISD, Fire, and other oversight agencies). Community review remains a key part of development proposals—large and small.



★ In Conclusion



- Encourages new housing where people want to live near transportation!
- Preserves neighborhood character while allowing for smart growth.
- Strengthens the West End's revival by bringing new residents, energy and small business traffic.
- Demonstrates a commitment to tackling Boston's housing challenges.



Thank you!

