

A New Approach to Boston's Future:

Mayor Wu's Vision for Planning and Development



INTRODUCTION

THE NEED FOR CHANGE

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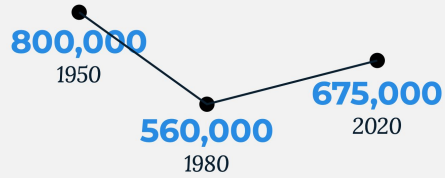
**WE ARE AT A PIVOTAL
MOMENT IN BOSTON'S
HISTORY.**

BOSTON IS AT A CROSSROADS.

An aerial photograph of the Boston skyline, featuring numerous skyscrapers and buildings. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

**BOSTON IS HOME TO A THRIVING
ECONOMY, A GROWING POPULATION, A
VIBRANT HISTORY AND CULTURE.**

BOSTON POPULATION



Life science, healthcare, and greentech have contributed greatly to the City's economic health, growing over 20% in the past 5 years.

37%

OF RESIDENTS SPEAK A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH AT HOME



Boston ranks 7th nationally in best place to live for quality of life



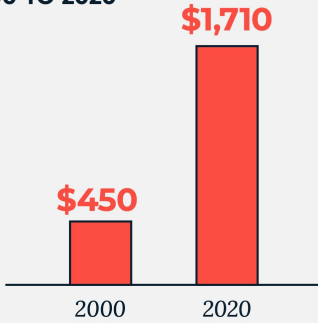
Small businesses grew from 12,000 in 2007 to over 13,000 in 2021.



There are over 30 colleges and universities in Boston, educating over 150,000 students.

**AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE
FACING EXTREME
CHALLENGES.**

NOMINAL MEDIAN RENTS INCREASED ALMOST FOURFOLD FROM 2000 TO 2020



Up to 18% of Boston's land will be exposed to flooding by 2070 in a 1% storm

BOSTON HAS THE 6TH-HIGHEST INCOME INEQUALITY OF CITIES NATIONALLY



BLACK AND HISPANIC RENTERS IN METRO BOSTON ARE

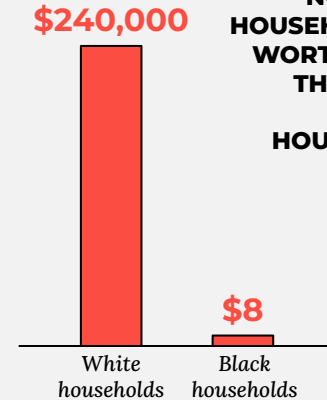
28%

MORE LIKELY THAN WHITE RENTERS TO BE SEVERELY COST BURDENED

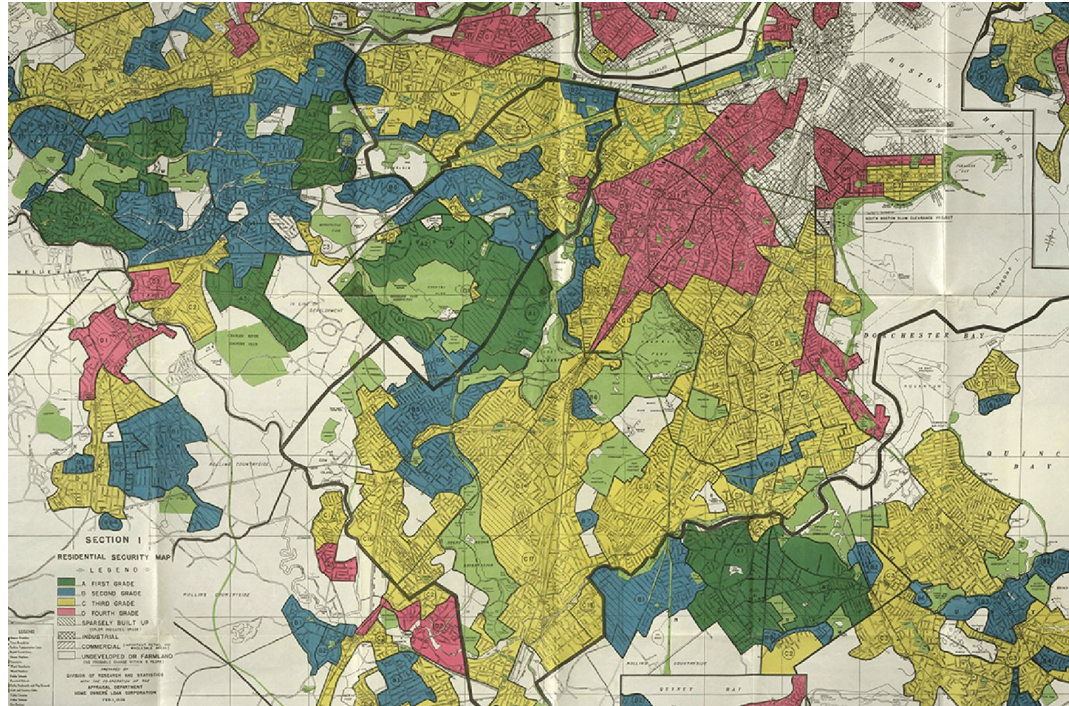


There were 22 days over 90 degrees in 2015. By 2030, we could see up to 40 days over 90 degrees.

NONWHITE HOUSEHOLD NET WORTH IS LESS THAN 5% OF WHITE HOUSEHOLDS



**OUR ABILITY TO MEET
TODAY'S NEEDS ARE
HINDERED BY OLD SYSTEMS
AND STRUCTURES.**



Beginning in the 1930's, **Redlining**, a racist policy that effectively barred people of color from living in certain neighborhoods, segregated Boston, creating divisions and inequities that remain prevalent today.



In the 1950's, with the rise of cars and disinvestment in urban centers, Boston leaders championed **urban renewal programs** to redevelop struggling areas across the City, but these tools were ultimately used in a manner that unjustly displaced thousands from their homes.

The most egregious example of displacement was the complete demolition of the West End which began in 1958.

In 1957, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) was created to reposition Boston for new investment and growth. However, with heavy-handed actions focused on blight and divismentment, the BRA failed to build trust with communities across the city.

*Despite the efforts of many well intentioned staff members over the years, this **trust has never been fully restored.***



Today, the **separation of the BPDA from the City prevents holistic collaboration**, with planning happening in many departments without centralized oversight.

In addition, **Boston's zoning code is failing** to provide predictability and transparency for future development - requiring most development proposals to be negotiated independently without a link to cohesive plan.

As a result, development does not feel connected to planning for many Bostonians.



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**THE NEED FOR CHANGE COULD
NOT BE MORE URGENT.**



**IF WE DO NOT
ACT, WE WILL
FAIL THE NEXT
GENERATION OF
BOSTONIANS.**





OUR CITY WILL FLOOD



**CLIMATE CHANGE WILL
DAMAGE OUR
COMMUNITIES WITH
EXTREME HEAT,
WEATHER AND OTHER
HAZARDS**



**OUR REGION'S ECONOMY
IS AT RISK OF DECLINE**



**OUR ECONOMIC GROWTH
WILL ONLY BENEFIT THE
FEW AND NOT THE MANY**



**FEW WILL BE ABLE TO AFFORD TO
LIVE OR START THEIR BUSINESS IN
BOSTON**



**OUR FRIENDS, FAMILIES, AND
SMALL BUSINESSES WILL BE
DISPLACED**



**OUR NEIGHBORHOODS WILL
CONTINUE TO GROW INEQUITABLY
AND INCONSISTENTLY**

**THE GOOD NEWS
IS THAT WE CAN
ADDRESS THESE
CHALLENGES IF
WE RISE TO THE
MOMENT.**



Boston has reinvented itself many times throughout its history by embracing innovation and progress.



THINK BOLDLY

We need to break Boston out of the historical box in the way we plan and build – **removing old restrictions and harness the inventive spirit** that embraces bold action on our challenges.



UPLIFT & AMPLIFY

We must uplift and amplify the **voices** that have been **historically marginalized**, find new strategies for engagement and coalition building.



REPURPOSE HISTORICAL TOOLS

We can repurpose historical policy tools with a clear purpose and for public benefit rooted in **transparency, predictability and accountability**.



GO CITYWIDE

We need to embrace **comprehensive, citywide and inclusive City planning**, to solve problems at a citywide scale, make investments tied to good planning, and build a zoning code that can actually be enforced to deliver predictable blueprint for the future of our city



EMBRACE GROWTH

With a **new approach to development** that embraces growth and urgency – we can harness every opportunity to protect our communities against climate change, create affordable places to live and work, and repair and transcend historic harms from inequitable policies of the past.

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“In this moment of need, we have an opportunity and an obligation to change how we plan for Boston’s future. We’re charting a new course for growth, with people as our compass.”

- Mayor Michelle Wu

January 25, 2023
State of the City Speech

1 A new Boston Planning Advisory Council to guide the planning and implementation of the city's built environment.

2 Accelerating planning and zoning activities to prioritize appropriate growth that is focused on resilience, affordability and equity.

3 Improving the Article 80 development review process to make it more predictable for communities and developers alike

4 A new City Planning and Design Department, beginning the process to align the BPDA with the City

5 A Home Rule Petition to end Urban Renewal and modernize the BPDA's mission and charter.

1

A new Boston Planning Advisory Council to guide the planning and implementation of the city's built environment.

- The Council will for the first time coordinate a **comprehensive citywide vision** for the future of Boston centered on resiliency, affordability, mobility and equity - and create **accountability for delivering** on this vision.
- The Council will break down silos between departments, and **elevate planning functions** by creating a central authority for initiating, reviewing, approving and implementing citywide planning.
- The Council will be **chaired by the Chief of Planning** and bring together the cabinet chiefs responsible for housing, streets, energy & environment, arts & culture, equity & inclusion, operations and finance.
- The Council will also take responsibility for **improving engagement in planning efforts**, building stronger relationships with community, and ensuring plans reflect the view of voices that have not historically been present in the planning process.
- It will convene all departments involved in the implementation of plans and **tie planning to the City's capital budgeting process**.

2

Accelerating planning and zoning activities to prioritize appropriate growth.

- **Finish existing planning efforts** and take them to zoning - resulting in a more predictable process, with more building as-of-right and fewer ZBA cases
- Change **zoning citywide to provide predictable increases in density** - including new transit-oriented, intergenerational housing through the **city's squares and corridors** as well as gentle-density in residential areas through tools like **Accessory Dwelling Units**
- **Prioritize mobility enhancements** in our neighborhoods through planning that rapidly leads to zoning
- Create a dedicated **zoning reform implementation team** focused on proactively evaluating and modernizing the zoning code, aligning it with market realities, rapidly codifying planning into the zoning code
- Establish a **citywide design vision for guiding development** and planning that is rooted in creating places of belonging and identity across our neighborhoods
- We will create the **nation's first Coastal Resilience Delivery Team**, which will be charged with acting immediately to protect Boston from climate change
- Boldly embrace the inclusive **growth of Boston to 800,000 people**

3

Improving the Article 80 development review process to make it more predictable for communities and developers alike

- Create a **stakeholder advisory group** to guide the review of the article 80 process
- Launch a **scorecard** that evaluates how development contributes to the City's goals on resilience, affordability and equity
- Review ways to fast track projects that advance our collective resilience, affordability and equity goals for approval and give them access to permitting tools to start construction quickly.
- Establish greater **transparency and predictability** in the mitigation and community benefits created by development, the milestones along the development process, and the timeline for review.
- Work with communities and stakeholders, to **reform community engagement related to development** and make it more inclusive, equitable, and impactful.

4

A new City Planning and Design Department, beginning the process to align the BPDA with the City

- The FY24 budget will include, for the first time since 1960, **a City Planning and Design Department under the City of Boston.**
- Led by the Chief of Planning, the first employees of this department will be the staff of the Boston Planning Advisory Council.
- The creation of this Department represents the first step in restoring a **robust central planning function within the City of Boston** where planning is separated from development and integrated across all City functions.
- In addition, while the majority of existing planning and development staff will remain under the direct supervision of the Chief of Planning to ensure continuing of operations and expand these important functions, some of the existing compliance functions of the BPDA will be transferred to other city agencies to provide **greater oversight of holding developers accountable for fulfilling their development promises.**

5

A Home Rule Petition to end Urban Renewal and modernize the BPDA's mission and charter.

- The home rule petition **ends Urban Renewal** - while retaining our ability to enforce restrictions that protect community assets - and **replacing it with tools centered on resilience, affordability and equity** to allow the City to take swift action on these issues
- The legislation **modernizes the charter of the BPDA**, consolidating the BRA/EDIC into a single organization with a new mission for affordability, equity and resilience.
- We are considering additional legislation that would give the new BPDA with **new tools to invest public dollars into public-private partnerships** to create new libraries, affordable housing, job training and other civic uses that address Boston's most urgent needs
- While the center of planning activities will move to the City over time, **the BPDA board will remain the entity overseeing development**, but is envisioned to eventually be staffed and managed much more like other boards and commissions across the city and the Commonwealth

This vision will be realized through legislation, executive orders, and staff level action, so that we are both setting bold long term goals and acting with urgency now.

Home Rule Petition: Filing a home rule petition to change state law to enshrine this new direction - ending 60 years of urban renewal and beginning a focus on affordability, equity and resilience in perpetuity. The legislation makes the following changes:

- Ends Urban Renewal and replaces it with resilience, affordability, and equity.
- Officially abolishes the BRA/EDIC in favor of a new agency with a new mission

Executive Order: Creating the Boston Planning Advisory Council

Executive Order: Establishing the new direction for planning and development immediately, while the state legislation is reviewed and considered for approval.

City Action: Committing to resourcing the new agency and empowering staff to deliver on these goals.

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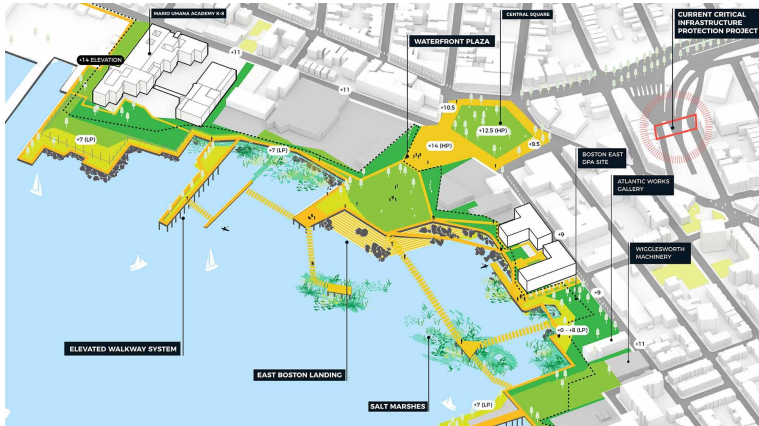
We can only succeed if the **people of Boston believe in the vision for growth and have a seat at the table.** We acknowledge that getting there will take **building trust and accountability** through changing how we do business.



THIS IS WHY WE WILL BE:

- **Uplifting progressive planning** through the Planning Advisory Council and creating a zoning code that prioritizes equitable and well planned growth
- **Ending Urban Renewal** and starting a new era for development rooted in resilience, affordability and equity
- Creating a Planning and Design Department and **bringing BPDA staff, finances and other resources into more close alignment** with the City
- Building a predictable development process through a **comprehensive reform of article 80** development regulations.
- Investing in more **inclusive, equitable, and impactful community engagement.**

Ultimately, the **trust** of Bostonians **will be earned** through our actions and our ability to deliver not just meaningful plans but **meaningful real-world improvements to our communities**.



THIS IS WHY WE WILL BE:

- **Delivering nation-leading resilience** measures to protect and enrich our city's assets and address impacts of climate change via city investments and public-private partnerships
- Implementing **citywide rezoning** that promotes intergenerational, accessible and affordable new housing
- Using BPDA public real estate tools to uplift **public land for public good** to create affordable housing, great jobs, climate resilience, open space and arts and cultural uses
- Addressing **disparities in the real estate market** and increasing MWBE participation in planning, construction, and development
- Inclusively **growing the City to 800,000 people** over time

And while much will be new and different, the **daily work of planning and development must continue** and important structures for executing our work **remain in place to hold stability through the changes ahead**



- The **BPDA board will remain** the decision making body for development approvals in Boston as well as public-private partnerships in public real estate
- The **Article 80 process**, while it will be improved, will remain the regulatory tool by which development proposals are evaluated
- The **talented staff of the BPDA and other planning and development teams** must be retained throughout this transition and expanded to meet the needs ahead

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**TODAY STARTS A NEW ERA OF
INCLUSIVE DESIGN, PLANNING, AND
DEVELOPMENT IN OUR CITY....
...AND WE NEED YOUR HELP**

- We want all Bostonians to rally around this mission and join us to create a Boston for everyone, that will feel like home to all people of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels.
- In the weeks and months ahead, we will engage with community leaders and elected officials to refine the details of this vision and begin to work toward implementation.
- Jobs are posted on our website. We need the best and brightest Bostonians to join our team and chart a new future for our City.

**TOGETHER WE CAN BUILD A MORE
RESILIENT, AFFORDABLE, and
EQUITABLE BOSTON.**

