



City of Boston, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor
MICHELLE WU

January 13, 2025

TO THE CITY COUNCIL

Dear Councilors:

I hereby transmit for your consideration and approval: *An Order Temporarily Extending Urban Renewal Until March 31, 2027.*

Two years ago we requested and your Honorable Body passed an extension to Urban Renewal “for the shorter of either (a) two (2) additional years (i.e., to March 31, 2027), or (b) until such time that the Home Rule petition passes.” This extension was vital, so as not to put at risk the important land use protections covered in the LDAs that Urban Renewal protects. Although passed by the House of Representatives in the last state legislative session, the home rule petition was not passed by the State Senate, and the deadline of March 31, 2025 is imminent. Therefore, we must return to the Council with a request to extend Urban Renewal and the protections embedded within it, as the City will once again pursue the necessary state legislative approvals in this next legislative session on Beacon Hill. This is necessary to ensure we have a legal mechanism to uphold the City’s protection of income restricted housing, senior-preference housing, open space, and community institutions without a lapse in protections while seeking state action.

We will refile a new home-rule petition before the Council at a later date to continue seeking state authorization to end Urban Renewal while retaining important protections, with full recognition of the City’s history. The use of urban renewal left scars on Boston’s communities, particularly the West End and Roxbury/South End, applied to eradicate what was then described as “blight and urban decay.” Today, the City uses our planning and development authority to deliver on much needed resiliency, affordability, and equity to address Boston’s housing crisis, improve the health and safety of Boston’s residents and businesses, and continue to make Boston a great place to live and work for all its residents. By passing this order, the Council will help protect more than 8,700 income-restricted units across the city.

AN ORDER TEMPORARILY EXTENDING URBAN RENEWAL PLANS IN THE CITY OF BOSTON UNTIL MARCH 31, 2027 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, 2027), or (b) until such time that the Home Rule petition passes and becomes effective.

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 ("DHCD"). In March 2022, the BPDA (now Planning Department), Council and DHCD sunset two (2) 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 Planning Department 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 proposal herein, to advance resiliency, affordability, and equity.

Sincerely,



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, 2027 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 two (2) years in January 2023, and before that were extended in 2022; and
- WHEREAS: The twelve Urban Renewal Plans scheduled to expire on March 31, 2025 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, 2025 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, 2025, or until passage by the state legislature and implementation 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, 2027, or until the passage by the state legislature and implementation of the proposed home rule petition entitled An Act to Improve and Modernize Planning and Community Development in the City of Boston:

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

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