

# **BPDA Reform Legislative Overview**

February 2024



# We're approaching BPDA transformation through three integrated yet independent categories of reform:

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## Change how we Plan for Growth:

- **Zoning reform** to make development more predictable and tied to comprehensive planning
- **Design vision** to shape how future spaces are designed
- **Article 80 modernization** for stronger transparency and predictability around development
- **Public land for public good** in our real estate transactions

2

## Restructure Planning with City Government:

- **Create a Planning Department** within the City of Boston through City Council Ordinance, restoring planning as core function of city government
- **Majority of BPDA staff and finances move to City control on July 1, 2024**
- **Planning Advisory Council** to coordinate citywide planning and implementation

3

## Repurpose BPDA Tools/Powers vis State Legislation:

- **Home Rule Petition** - abolishes the BRA's focus on blight and decadence
- Replace with tools for **affordability, resilience, equity**
- The HRP passed City Council in March and is now at State House

# We are advancing two independent legislative reforms:



City

## Council Ordinance

- Creates **City controlled Planning Department** with same accountability and oversight as other City departments
- **Codifies purpose** of new department
- **Enables financial transfer** between BPDA and City of Boston
- **Ensures continuity of employment** conditions for existing staff

Note: These legislative reforms are **NOT linked** and can move forward regardless of one another



State

## Home Rule Petition

- **Ends Urban Renewal** while continuing enforcement of affordable housing and open space agreements established during urban renewal
- **Abolishes the BRA and EDIC** and transfer the functions of those entities into a new, singular entity
- Modernizes the focus of the agency away from “blight and urban decay” to **enact resilience, affordability, and equitable community development** city-wide
- Would **allow former BPDA employees to purchase City of Boston Pension program time**

# Why do we need to address Urban Renewal in Boston?

**Urban Renewal programs** from the 1950's-1970's were advanced to address disinvestment in urban centers, but ultimately used in a manner that **unjustly displaced thousands** from their homes.

Boston's Urban Renewal areas are **expiring in early 2025**. While there is not need to extend the harmful legacy, there are positive elements that could be lost if Urban Renewal expires without action:

1. Urban Renewal tools all the BPDA to enforce 832 land disposition agreements. These protect 11k units of affordable housing, 1.8M sq ft of open space, and more. If Urban Renewal expires without action these protections will be lost.
2. The BPDA also uses urban renewal tools to do community development activities that may be important in the future such as acquiring land for affordable housing, leasing space directly to small businesses, and entering into beneficial tax agreements.



# The Home Rule Petition covers two major topics:

1

## Officially Ends Urban Renewal

- The **BPDA will be prohibited from taking further actions related to blight, decadence, or substandard housing**, thereby ending this chapter in Boston's history
- BPDA **retains its ability to enforce restrictions that protect community assets**, including all existing Land Disposition Agreements without need for further extension
- The Act directs the agency to take real estate actions associated with key planning principles around **resiliency, affordability, and equity**

2

## Consolidate BRA & EDIC with a new mission

- **Consolidates the BRA/EDIC** into new singular entity with a mission focused on **affordability, equity and resilience**
- While the center of planning activities will move to the City, **the BPDA board will remain** the entity overseeing development and continue as the Planning Board for the City of Boston

# What is NOT changing?

- The **BPDA Board will continue** in its role as the Planning Board for the City of Boston. The board members themselves will continue in their roles and to make independent planning, regulatory, and real estate decisions.
- **Chief of Planning Arthur Jemison** will continue to oversee all planning and development functions, **and all planning and development staff** will continue to support the work of the agency as they transition to the new City of Boston Planning Department.
- The **Article 80 development review process will continue** to govern all large scale development in Boston. While we are halfway through a year plus long effort to improve the way the Article 80 process functions for communities and real estate developers alike, we are not abandoning article 80 as the set of rules by which communities can provide feedback on reviewing development proposals and ensuring appropriate design, impacts, mitigation, and benefits.



**“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