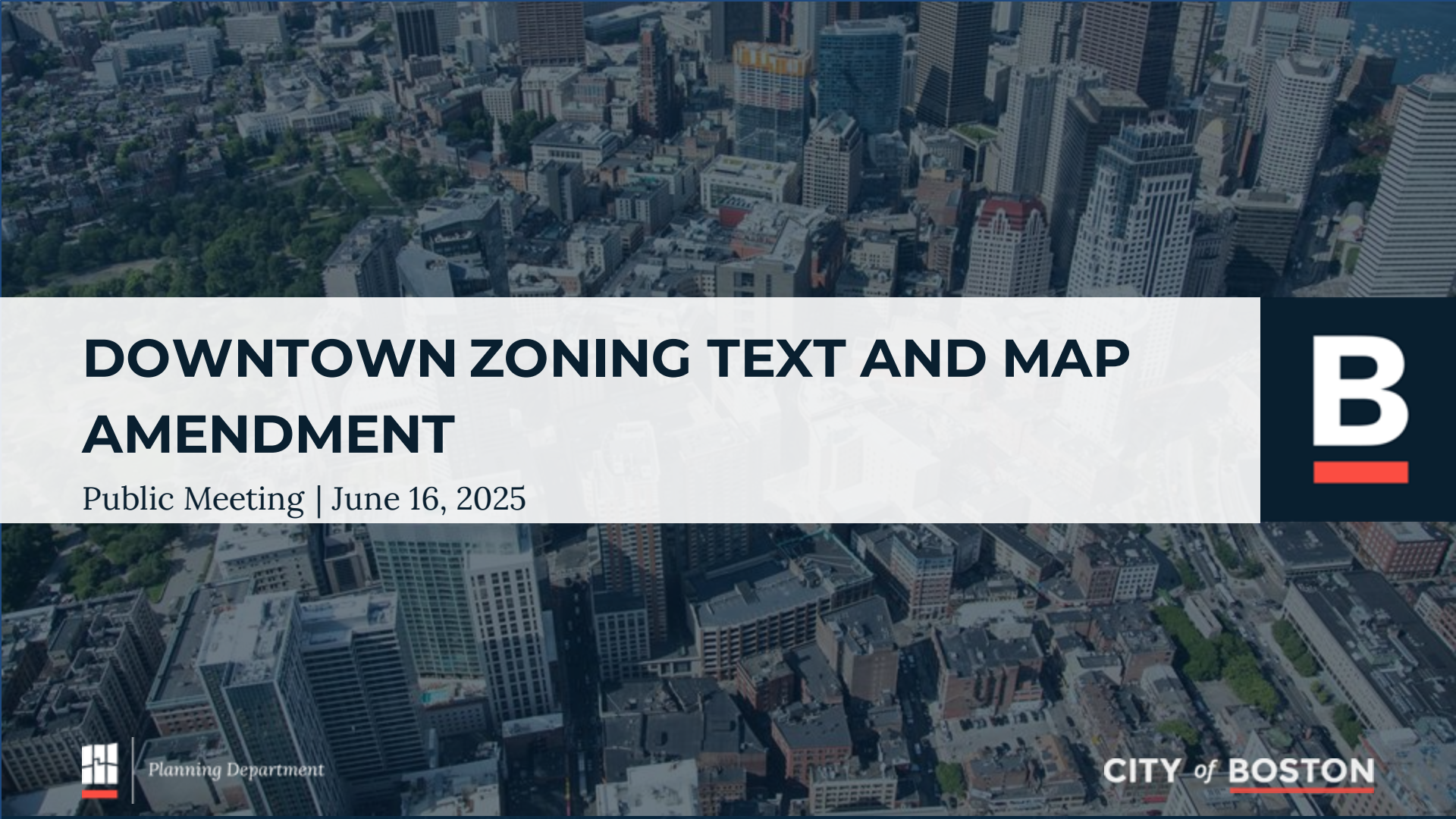


An aerial photograph of downtown Boston, showing a dense cluster of skyscrapers and buildings. The image is split horizontally, with the top half showing a wider view including Central Park and the bottom half showing a closer view of the city center. A semi-transparent white banner is overlaid across the middle.

DOWNTOWN ZONING TEXT AND MAP AMENDMENT

Public Meeting | June 16, 2025



Planning Department

CITY of BOSTON

AGENDA

1. The process so far
2. Changes to the draft zoning
3. Next steps
4. Public comment



PROCESS SO FAR



Downtown zoning was shaped by over 5 years of engagement:

PLAN: DOWNTOWN PROCESS

- 2018 - *Approved Dec. 2023*

DOWNTOWN ZONING PROCESS

- January 2024 - Present
- 5 public meetings
- 3 zoning drafts
- 8 months of public comment periods
- Downtown Historic Character Study and Draft Design Guidelines
- 894 written comments (*Jan. '25 draft*)
- 23 office hours (*Jan '25 draft*)
- 12 stakeholder meetings (*Jan '25 draft*) with community groups, preservation advocates, residents, small businesses, and property owners.

"I am a resident on 21st floor of Millenium Tower and I paid extra for the view... I absolutely cannot accept the change in downtown zoning plan for further development of buildings up to 500' on Washington street." - *Downtown resident on Jan '25 draft*

"This sustainable approach to urban development will help Downtown Boston recover and thrive, supporting small businesses like mine while creating a more dynamic, 24/7 neighborhood." - *Small business owner Jan '25 draft*

"The historic reality [is] that urban cores thrive only when people are permitted to live and do business in them en masse. The infrastructure and the plans are in place; we need only the will." - *A Revolutionary Spaces historian Jan '25 draft*

"I am kindly asking, with urgency, that the comment deadline be extended beyond February 5th to allow community members more time to digest the latest plan and thoughtfully collect their feedback for comment letters." - *36 form letters Jan '25 draft*

Planning Department responses to all comments on the Jan. '25 draft can be found on the PLAN Downtown website

DOWNTOWN ZONING UPDATES

Changes made in response to feedback on the January 8, 2025 draft focus on the following key themes:

1



Strengthening Historic Preservation & Adaptive-Reuse

“Allowing 500-foot towers along Washington St and into Back Bay threatens its character, particularly the Ladder Blocks, which attracts countless tourists and visitors.” - 339 form letters

2



Unlocking housing growth and reimagining offices of the future

“Only a handful of locations [Downtown], have the potential to host truly dynamic redevelopments for our district and Boston overall—projects that could deliver hundreds of desperately-needed housing units....” - Downtown Business Alliance

3



Reinforcing the City's Commitment to State Shadow Regulations

“This would create a vibrant urban environment, boost the local economy, and offer more options for dining, shopping, and leisure.” - Ricardo, Downtown resident

DOWNTOWN ZONING: FINAL DRAFT MAP

The updated zoning map enables the growth Downtown needs to prosper, while preserving the scale and character of its most cohesive historic areas.

ZONING DISTRICTS:

SKY-LOW-DT

Prioritizes preservation of existing structures and scale with greater height and form regulations.

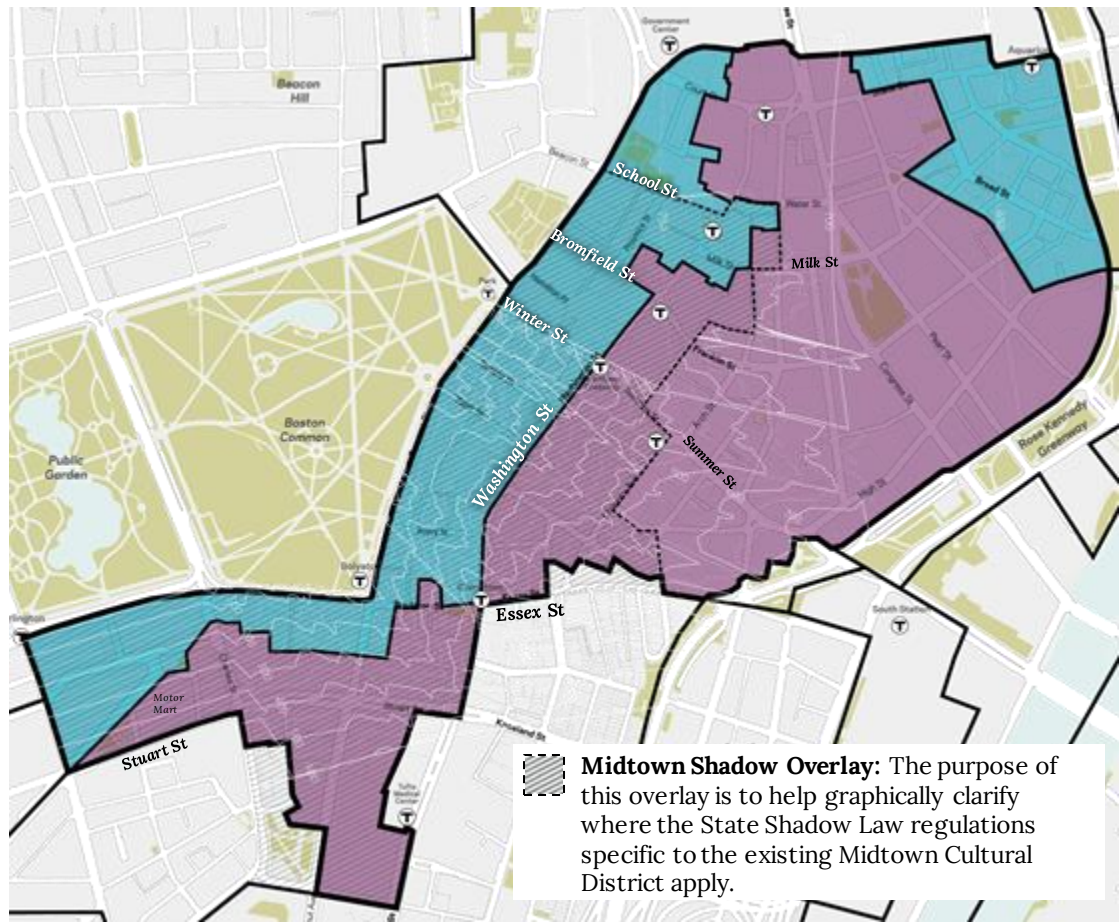
- 155' or Shadow Law, whichever is lesser
- Limited eligibility for Planned Development Area (PDAs) for 1-acre sites in the SKY-LOW-DT district must include a Landmark, be predominantly residential, and invest in and preserve Landmark(s) and historic buildings.

SKY

Maximizes mixed-use development opportunities near major transportation assets.

- Shadow Law Limit/Critical Airspace limit, whichever is lesser

NOTE: State Shadow Regulations and Critical Airspace height limits always supercede zoning



Midtown Shadow Overlay: The purpose of this overlay is to help graphically clarify where the State Shadow Law regulations specific to the existing Midtown Cultural District apply.

EXPANDING PROTECTIONS FOR HISTORIC AREAS

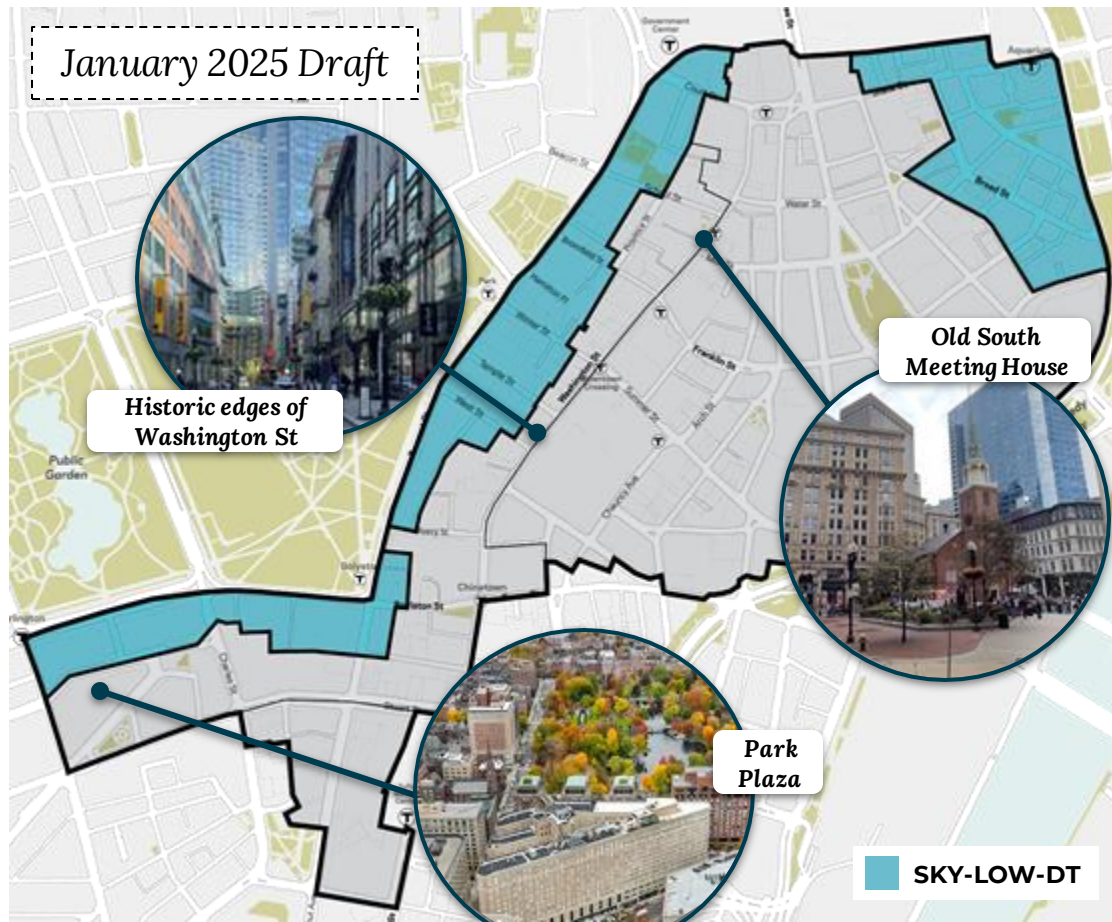


In response to community feedback, the new draft expands the SKY-LOW-DT district (155' max. building height) to include key historic areas along Washington St, the Ladder Blocks, around the Old South Meeting House, and Park Plaza.

Allowing 500-foot towers along Washington St and into Back Bay threatens its character, particularly the Ladder Blocks, which attracts countless tourists and visitors. - 339 form letters

Restore a zoning height restriction of 155' along the Washington Street corridor and specifically in the stretch between Milk and State Streets where there is a dense cluster of Revolutionary-era buildings. - 32 form letters

SKY-LOW-DT

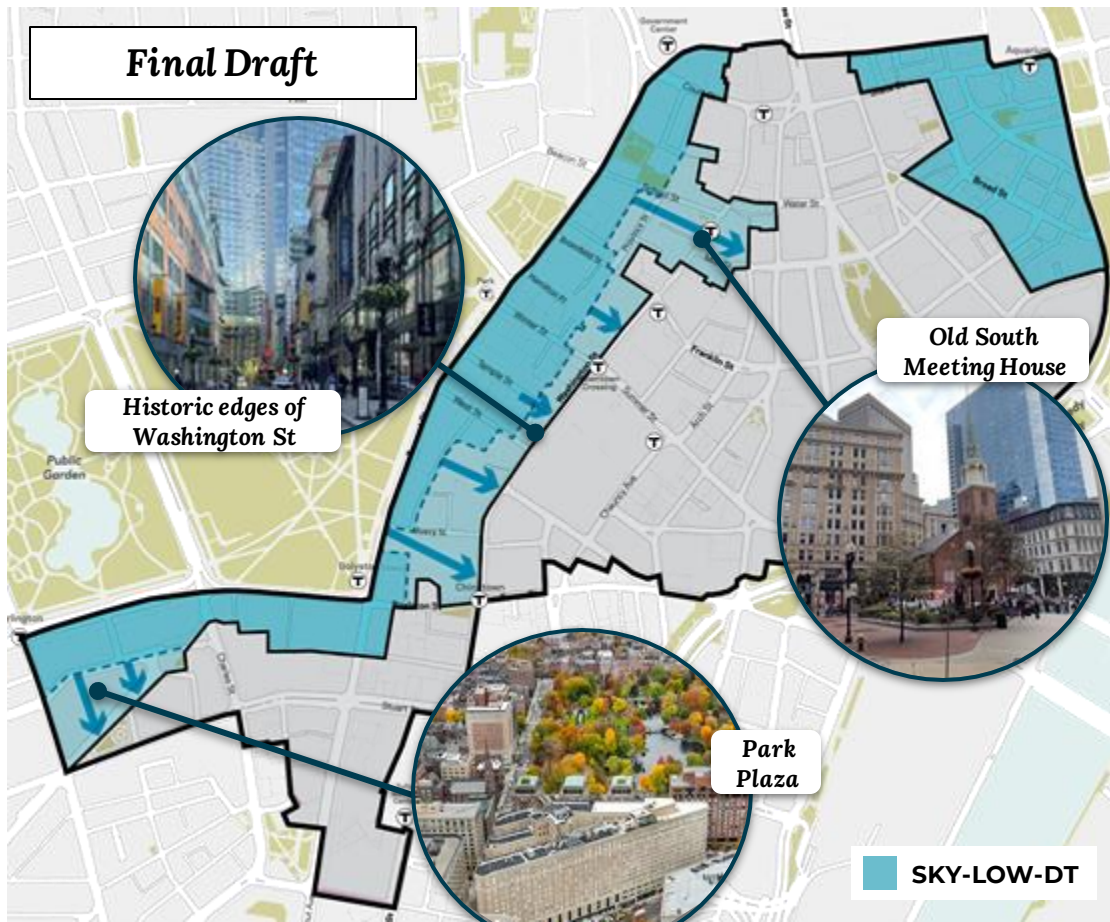


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SKY-LOW-DT



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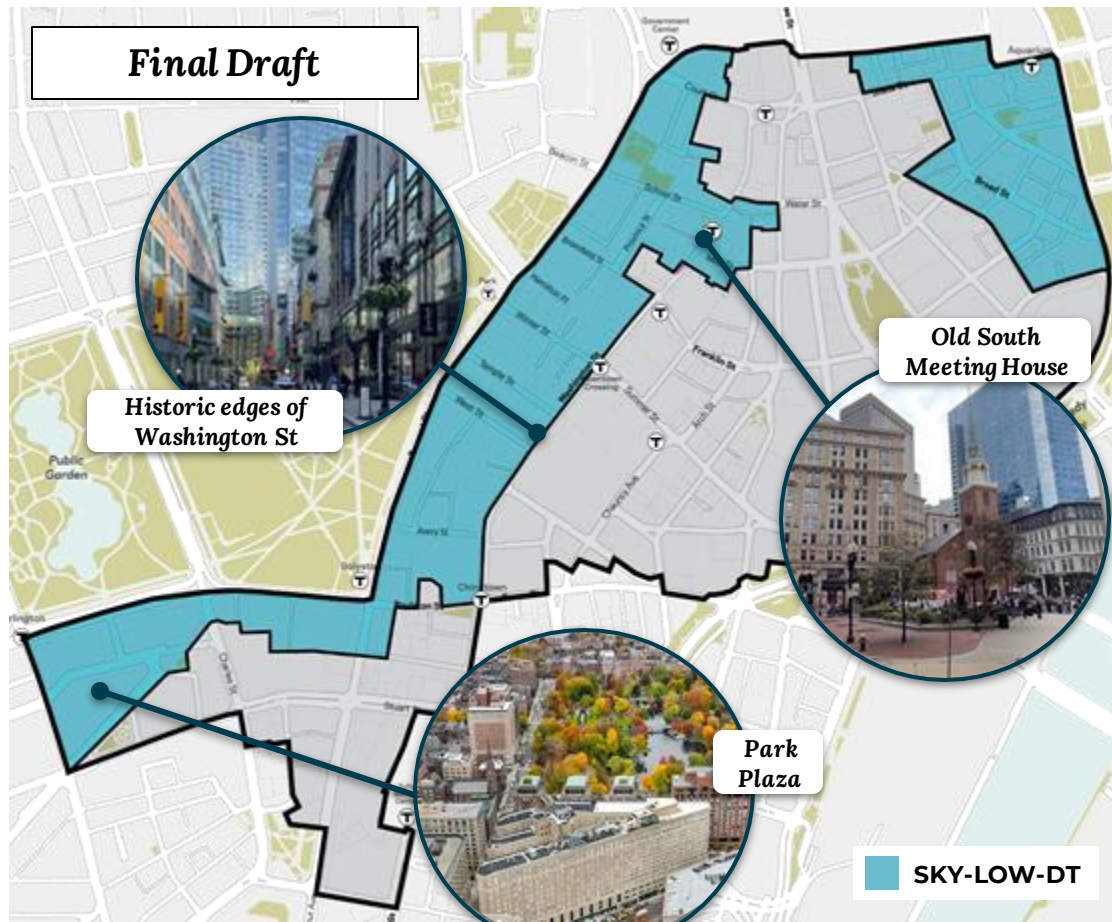
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ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS AND INCENTIVES

- Eliminating existing zoning hurdles for building conversion.
- Creating incentives for adaptive reuse over demolition by aligning dimensional regulations with existing buildings.
- Introducing new Downtown design guidelines focused on sensitive treatments for preservation, adaptation, conversion, and new development.

SKY-LOW-DT



INCENTIVIZING FOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING, AND PRESERVATION



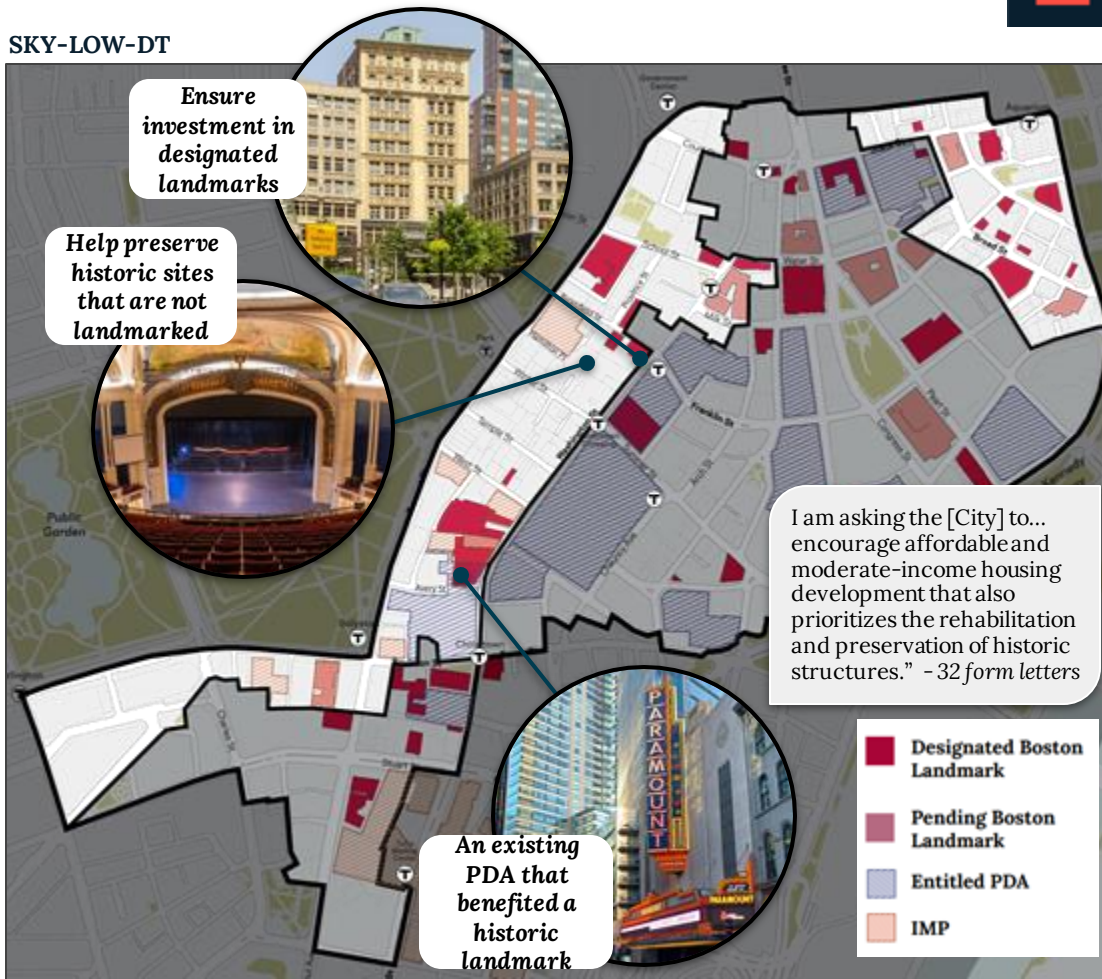
To support housing and development that strategically preserves historic buildings and Landmarks, the zoning introduces a carefully limited option for Planned Development Areas (PDAs).

The PDA process ensures that development, preservation, and dimensional controls are tailored to the specific needs and conditions of sites that contain a designated Landmark.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR PDAS:

- Within SKY-LOW-DT
- Includes at least 1-acre site
- Includes a designated Landmark
- At least 60% GFA residential
- Must invest in and preserve Landmark(s) and historic buildings with work on a Landmark subject to review and approval by BLC
- Must receive a recommendation from BLC

SKY-LOW-DT



ENABLING DEVELOPMENT IN CRITICAL AREAS DOWNTOWN



The zoning enables increased density in the heart of Boston's transit network, around Downtown's busiest stations, unlocking development in the areas best positioned to support transformative new housing and mix of uses.

Residential development is required to be affordable under Inclusionary Zoning:

- 17 percent income-restricted at an average of 60% of Area Median Income, with an additional 3% of units reserved for people with housing vouchers.

All large scale development must undergo thorough review through the Article 80 process:

- Requires projects to assess and mitigate impacts on traffic, environment (wind and shadow), and historic or cultural resources
- Enforces Downtown's new design guidelines



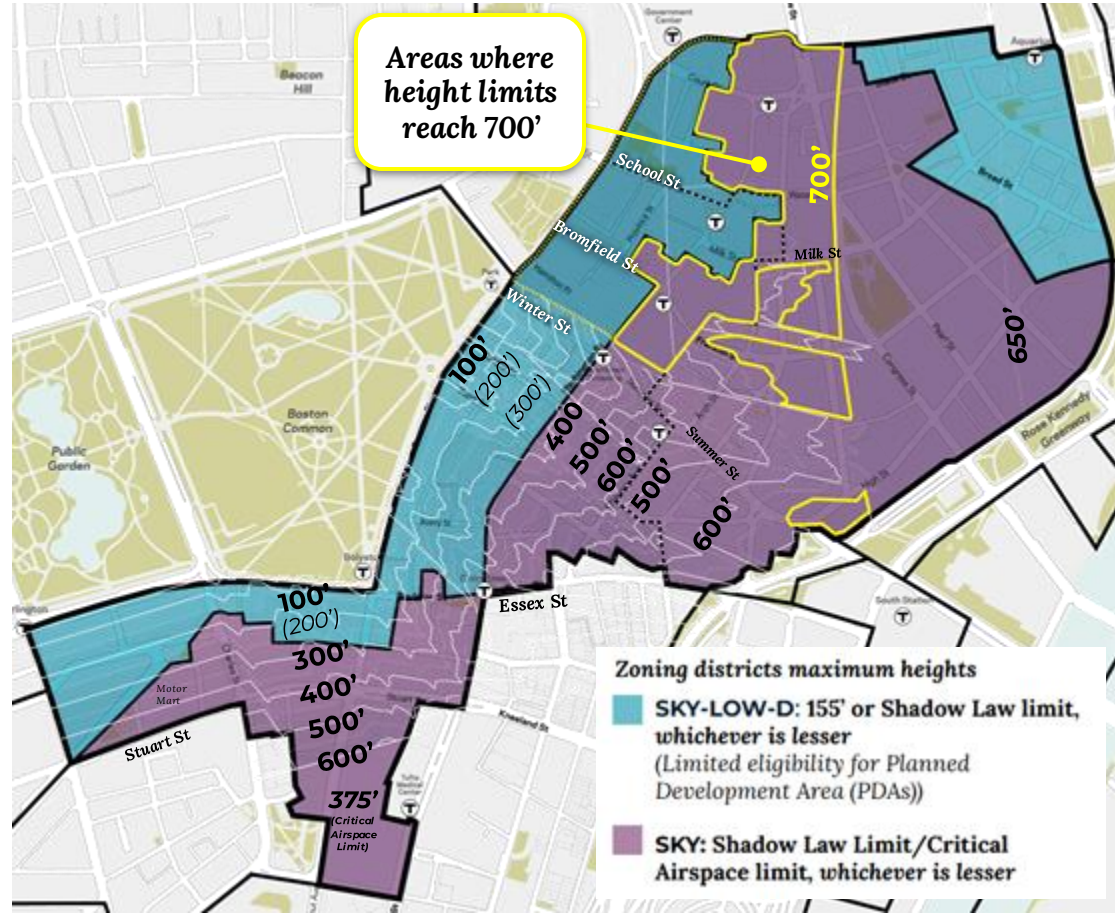
REINFORCING STATE LAW AND CRITICAL AIRSPACE

The new zoning reinforces State Shadow Regulations and Critical Airspace height limits by directly incorporating references to these restrictions into the zoning code.

State Shadow Regulations can only be altered at the state level, making them stronger than and superseding local zoning.

We are seeking assurance from the City...that the aftereffects of the new zoning amendments will yield no new harm to the Common and/or Garden beyond what is permissible in accordance with Boston Common Shadow Law [and] Public Garden Shadow Law. - Friends of the Public Garden

Approximate Limits of State Shadow Regulations & Critical Airspace (whichever is lesser):



DOWNTOWN ZONING

The growth and preservation of Downtown requires a range of strategies and tools working together. The final zoning draft maximizes multiple approaches to support growth at every scale and build a stronger, more vibrant Downtown for generations to come.



Promote businesses like coffee houses and bakeries to drive foot traffic and activity.

New zoning would have prevented 7 ZBAs cases within the past year



Maximize the potential for adaptive reuse and preserve historic character.

4 office-to-residential zoning projects will need variances from preexisting open space zoning violations



Enable new development to bring more people Downtown and affordable housing at a scale not feasible in other parts of the City.



Use strategic zoning tools to encourage housing while investing in and preserving historic sites.

TIMELINE AND ZONING ADOPTION



JUNE 16 - Final Draft Closeout Meeting

- **JULY - BPDA Board Meeting**

(No public testimony, but any additional comments received will be given to board members)

- **AUGUST - Boston Zoning Commission**

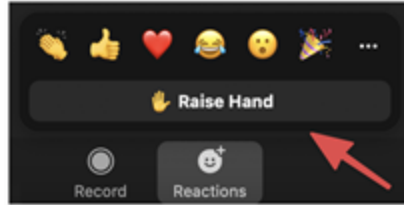
(Public testimony opportunity at the zoning commission)

- **SEPTEMBER**

Zoning signed by the Mayor and put into effect immediately

PLAN: DOWNTOWN WEBSITE:

- A copy and recording of today's presentation *(by end of day June 17)*
- Planning Department responses to public written feedback on Jan. 8 '25 draft
- Zoning Changes and Map Summary
- Draft Downtown Zoning Text Amendment
- Draft Downtown Zoning Map



Raise hand to get in line to ask a question or provide comment



Unmute when called on

Zoom controls are available at the bottom of your screen. Use the **raise hand function and wait to be called upon to unmute before providing comment.** (If joining by phone dial *9 to raise your hand and *6 to join by phone)

Everyone will have 2 minutes to speak



DOWNTOWN ZONING PUBLIC MEETING

JUNE 16, 2025

Public Comments



Planning Department

CITY of BOSTON