

Petitions Draft Zoning Amendment Summary

September 2025

BACKGROUND

The Planning Department is proposing updates to the existing process for residents and property owners to propose amendments to the Boston Zoning Code. Three distinct groups can propose changes to zoning: 1) the Planning Department and the BPDA Board, 2) the Boston City Council, and 3) any resident or property owner in Boston. Zoning amendments may only be adopted after one of these groups petitions the Boston Zoning Commission to make the change.

Currently, the petition process for residents and property owners is opaque and outdated. The required fee of \$275 was last updated in 1990, and there are no set requirements for any public process or outreach to nearby affected properties. Because there is no set process for these constituent zoning petitions, the process has been unique to each request in recent years.

City-led rezoning initiatives include extensive public engagement and notification to affected property owners consistent with the City's Language Access Policy. The process for constituents to propose changes to the Zoning Code does not include these essential engagement and notification components. The proposed updates to the constituent zoning petition process will ensure consistency with City-led zoning changes, making the process more predictable and fair.

PROPOSED UPDATES

The proposed updates to the existing process will be encoded in Article 5 of the Zoning Code and include:

- Requiring a \$400 application fee to be submitted with a zoning petition
- Requiring a public notice fee that covers the cost of mailing notifications to any affected property owners and advertising public meetings in local newspapers



- Requiring a public meeting about the zoning petition
- Committing the Planning Department to:
 - Mail affected property owners
 - Organize a public meeting where the Petitioner can present their proposed zoning changes, including translating materials and providing interpretation
 - Provide technical assistance for drafting zoning, including creating official zoning maps and correcting clerical errors
 - Writing draft and final recommendations to the Zoning Commission on the proposed zoning petition

Additionally, the proposed text amendment formally states the Boston City Council's ability to petition the Zoning Commission.

