



## STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Boston Zoning Commission

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**REPORT PREPARATION DATE:** 6/25/2026

**PROJECT:** Petition to Amend Open Space Zoning Designation at Parcel 1701423000 (Amendment to Map 5D Dorchester Neighborhood District)

**PROJECT SUBMISSION DATE:** 12/2/2025

**TYPE:** Map Amendment

**APPLICANT:** José Gomes of Dorchester Second Church

### **Background Information:**

This petition (received December 2, 2025) was initiated by José Gomes of Dorchester Second Church, who collaborated with community groups and architects to develop concept plans, dated May 5, 2024, for the front portion of the Codman Square Burial Ground site as displayed in the map. The community is hoping to redevelop the inactive portion of the 114,704 square foot burial grounds into a community space for recreation, relaxation, gathering, and public education with walking paths along the existing cemetery to honor the local history. The petition is in response to a request from the Boston Department of Inspectional Services to file for a designation change of the existing open space to a subdistrict (Parkland or Recreational) that is more appropriate for the proposed uses. While the existing cemetery uses will be preserved, the front of the lot will have uses that fall out of alignment with the standards of Cemetery subdistricts.

### **Analysis of the Petition:**

#### **Summary**

On December 2, 2025, the petitioner filed for a zoning map amendment for Parcel ID 1701423000 (Codman Square Burial Ground). The entire site is currently zoned as Open Space - Cemetery (OS-CM), and the map amendment would map the front portion of the site as Open Space - Parkland (OS-P) or Open Space Recreation (OS-RC).



## **Open Space Subdistrict Designations**

The current Open Space designation (OS-CM) for the site is representative of its historical use. However, according to the applicant and owner of the Codman Square Burial Ground, this cemetery has not accepted burials since the 1960s. There is community appetite and financial resources available for the redevelopment of the Codman Burial Ground into a community-oriented public space with park, urban plaza, recreation, and stadium uses.

### *Open Space Subdistricts (Article 33)*

Open Space Zoning Districts in Boston are citywide districts that encourage the preservation of open space for multiple appropriate uses, enhance quality of life for residents, and to encourage the most appropriate uses based on topography, water access, forest cover, and other natural features. Designating open space districts prevents the loss of long-term open spaces to commercial development by maintaining natural buffers of light and air around the city, which have visual and health benefits.

According to Article 33, there are “ten open space subdistricts, taken together, [which] present a comprehensive means for protecting and conserving open spaces through land use regulations. The open space (OS) designation and an open space subdistrict designation can be used in conjunction with each other.” The relevant Open Space Subdistrict designations for this petition are Cemetery, Parkland, and Recreation uses.

### *Cemetery Open Space Subdistricts (Section 33-15)*

Currently the parcel in question is within the Open Space Cemetery Subdistrict. The OS-CM Subdistrict is one of the most restrictive subdistricts allowing only internment as a land use. A Cemetery is a facility used for the internment of human remains.

### *Parkland Open Space Subdistricts (Section 33-9)*

The parcel in question is being petitioned for possible inclusion in the Open Space Parkland Subdistrict. The OS-P Subdistricts typically contain picnic areas, sitting areas, walkways, and other forms of passive recreation. Also, no building structures that exceed 600 square feet are allowed in Parkland subdistricts.

### *Recreation Open Space Subdistricts (Section 33-10)*

The parcel in question is being petitioned for possible inclusion in the Open Space Recreation Subdistrict. OS-RC Subdistricts are for active and/or passive recreation. These subdistricts can contain uses such as, children’s play areas, physical education areas, skating rinks, swimming pools, and walkways, or a combination of allowed uses.



**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends approval of this petition.

The current OS-CM designation is not appropriate for the current or proposed uses along the front lot line of the Codman Square Burial Ground. The OS-P designation may limit certain active uses or structures that fall out of alignment with the passive nature of parklands. The OS-RC designation is most fitting for the desired use of the space and protection of open space in Codman.

The proposed amendment does not contradict any ongoing small area plans or citywide planning goals. Due to the proposed zoning amendment's appropriate nature, the petition for a map amendment is recommended for approval, re-designating the active recreation area located in the front of the lot to Open Space - Recreation. The OS-RC Subdistrict designation will conserve and protect the history and open space qualities of the Codman Square Burial Ground while also allowing flexibility for a mix of passive and active recreation uses at the site.

Reviewed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathleen Onuf".

Deputy Director of Zoning

Planning Department