

# GCOD Zoning Text Amendment Summary

August 2025

## BACKGROUND

The Planning Department, in conjunction with the Boston Groundwater Trust (BGwT), is proposing minor updates to the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District (GCOD) zoning regulations. GCOD is regulated by Article 32 of the Boston Zoning Code, and seeks to prevent the deterioration of and promote the restoration of groundwater levels in different parts of Boston. GCOD is mapped in areas of the City that are on filled land, where many buildings are supported on wooden piles. When the groundwater goes below these wooden piles, they can deteriorate and cause structural and safety issues for the buildings they support.

Applicable projects within the GCOD must incorporate groundwater recharge systems on their properties and certify that there is no negative impact on groundwater levels from the proposed project. The Boston Groundwater Trust and Boston Water & Sewer Commission (BWSC) review applicable projects for compliance. Today, the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) must ultimately grant a conditional use permit for each of these projects.

Applicable projects include:

- 1) Dig Down: excavation at a certain depth into the ground
- 2) Paving: any new or replacement paving
- 3) Lot Coverage: increase in building lot coverage by 50+ square feet
- 4) Substantial Rehabilitation: rehabilitation of a structure costing more than 50% of the value of the existing structure

## PROPOSED CHANGES

The proposed zoning changes for GCOD will largely be made in Article 32, with minor administrative changes in Articles 2 and 3. Proposed changes include:

- 1) Consolidating and simplifying the existing zoning text to be more legible, and
- 2) Removing the ZBA conditional use permit requirement for Substantial Rehabilitation projects.
  - *Note: Substantial Rehabilitation projects would still need approval from the BGwT and BWSC. If there are other zoning violations for the project, it must still go to the ZBA.*



## Map of GCOD Boundary

