



Planning Department

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sherry Dong
Chairwoman, City of Boston Board of Appeal

FROM: Joanne Marques
Regulatory Planning & Zoning

DATE: September 10, 2025

RE: Planning Department Recommendations

Please find attached, for your information, Planning Department recommendations for the September 18, 2025 Board of Appeal's Hearing.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.



Case	BOA1733263
ZBA Submitted Date	2025-06-12
ZBA Hearing Date	2025-09-18
Address	8 Auburn ST Charlestown 02129
Parcel ID	0201124000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	Charlestown Neighborhood RH-2000
Zoning Article	62
Project Description	Erect a new roof deck with a stairway hatch entrance. The existing stairway headhouse will be modified to have a code compliant ceiling height.
Relief Type	Conditional Use
Violations	Roof Structure Restrictions

Planning Context:

The proposed project seeks to construct a new roof deck with a stairway hatch entrance at 8 Auburn Street in Charlestown. While there is currently no roof deck, an existing stair headhouse will be modified to have code-compliant ceiling heights of 7 feet. As this area is zoned as RH-2000, the existing structure is a three-story rowhouse, part of a continuous block of rowhouses lining Auburn Street. Similar roof decks can be seen on neighboring properties such as 3, 13, and 20 Auburn Street.

This project would align with the goals of PLAN: Charlestown (September 2023) as it would allow property owners to enhance their spaces to suit their needs while adhering to design guidelines that ensure its safety and location to minimize visibility from the public right-of-way.

Zoning Analysis:

The refusal letter states one citation: roof structure restrictions. A conditional use permit should be granted as the proposed roof deck meets the regulations set forth by Section 62-25 and PLAN: Charlestown. Section 62-25 notes that an open roof deck may be erected on the main roof of a building with a flat roof or a roof with a slope of less than 5 degrees. It also noted that the roof deck must meet the following requirements: a) such deck is less than 1 foot above the highest point of such roof, b) the total height of the building including such deck does not exceed the maximum building height allowed by Article 62, c) access is by roof hatch or bulkhead no more than 30 inches in height above such deck, and d) an appurtenant hand rail,



balustrade, hatch, or bulkhead is set back horizontally, 1 foot for each foot of height of such appurtenant structure from a roof edge that faces a street more than 20 feet wide. Because the proposed roof deck will be placed on the top flat roof of the rowhouse, it also meets these requirements as it will not sit at the highest point of the roof, still falls below the maximum height of 35 feet, has the proper access, and is set back from Auburn Street. While access will also be through the stairway hatch entrance, the existing stairway headhouse will be modified to be code-compliant with a height of 7 feet. Section 62-25 also notes that a stairway head house is allowed as long as it gets approval from the Board of Appeal.

Additionally, because this project is adding a roof deck and the height is changing, it will require Planning Department Review, as it is located within the Charlestown Neighborhood Design Overlay District.

The plans reviewed are titled 8 Auburn Street ZBA initial submission [combined]4-29-25 and are dated September 27, 2024. They were prepared by Timothy Sheehan Architect.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1733263, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL WITH PROVISIO/S: that plans be submitted to the Planning Department for design review with attention to the visibility of the stairway headhouse.

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1748995
ZBA Submitted Date	2025-07-16
ZBA Hearing Date	2025-09-18
Address	16 Chestnut ST Charlestown 02129
Parcel ID	0203466000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	Charlestown Neighborhood 3F-2000
Zoning Article	62
Project Description	The proposal calls for a complete renovation of an existing single-family dwelling. The project will fully modernize the structure while maintaining its use as a single-family home.
Relief Type	Variance
Violations	FAR Excessive Roof Structure Restrictions Rear Yard Insufficient

Planning Context:

The project site is located in the Charlestown neighborhood, within the 3F-2000 subdistrict. This is traditionally a residential district characterized by one, two, and three-family dwellings on compact lots. The property also lies within the Charlestown Neighborhood Design Overlay District and the Charlestown Restricted Roof Overlay District, which aim to preserve the character and scale of existing development.

The site is located on Chestnut Street, a narrow residential side street in the heart of Charlestown. It is surrounded primarily by attached and semi-attached rowhouses of two to three stories in height. Many of which have little to no rear yard depth. The immediate block reflects the dense historic pattern of Charlestown housing, where small lots and limited open space are common.

Zoning Analysis:

The proposal to renovate the existing single-family dwelling has been reviewed in detail against the dimensional requirements of Article 62, Section 7 (Table C) for 3F-zoned properties in the Charlestown Neighborhood District. The review has identified the following zoning issues:

Floor Area Ratio: Per Article 62, Table C, the maximum FAR allowed is 2.0. On a lot of 1,348 square feet, the max gross floor area permitted is 2,696 square feet. The existing structure is



3,400 square feet and the proposed renovation reduces this slightly to 3,268 square feet, but it remains above the permitted maximum. While the FAR exceedance is consistent with the neighborhood character and built form, this is a continuation of an existing nonconformity.

Rear Yard Requirements: A minimum rear yard depth of 15 feet is required in the 3F-2000 subdistrict. The lot provides no rear yard and the proposed plans maintain this existing condition and non-conformity. This condition is common among rowhouse lots of similar depth in Charlestown, where zero-lot-line rear walls are often observed due to constrained block dimensions and historic patterns of development.

Roof Requirements: Per Article 62, alterations that change the roof profile or add occupiable structures above the roof require conditional relief. The project retains the existing roof form and replaces the roofing material. However, the addition of a new balcony at the top floor constitutes an exterior alteration subject to review.

The plans, entitled Chestnut Street Residences, prepared by Studio 47A, dated May 24, 2025, propose a complete gut renovation of the existing single-family dwelling. The project exceeds allowable FAR, provides no required rear yard, and includes roof alterations subject to Article 62. While dimensional relief is required, the proposal retains a single-family use consistent with the subdistrict and reflects the dense historic character of Charlestown's housing stock. Zoning relief is warranted, and the project further reflects the need to modernize dimensional regulations to better reflect the existing built fabric in Charlestown.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1748995, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL WITH PROVISIO/S: that plans be submitted to the Planning Department for design review with attention to the balcony and roofline.

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1708871
ZBA Submitted Date	2025-04-14
ZBA Hearing Date	2025-09-18
Address	23 to 29 School ST Boston 02108
Parcel ID	0302864000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	Boston Proper B-10
Zoning Article	8
Project Description	Change of use to add microblading use to an existing beauty spa.
Relief Type	Conditional Use
Violations	Use: Conditional

Planning Context:

The project is located on School Street in a largely commercial area within the PLAN: Downtown Plan Area. The proposal will add a microblading and micro shading use to an existing spa.

Zoning Analysis:

The Zoning Code Refusal defines the proposed use as a Body Art Establishment which requires a conditional use permit pursuant to Article 8 Table B. The Zoning Code lists “Beauty Shop” as an allowed use and “Body Art Establishment” as a conditional use in the subject district.

PLAN: Downtown seeks to “refine inconsistent and prohibitive use definitions and tables in the zoning code to lower barriers for existing and new retail and services.” The difference between a “Beauty Shop” and a “Body Art Establishment” is minor. Requiring additional review for an additional “body art” service provided by an existing use is prohibitive and is the type of zoning reform that PLAN: Downtown seeks to accomplish. If the draft Downtown Zoning Amendment currently out for comment was adopted, the proposed use would be allowed.

Plans reviewed: "8 City Hall Avenue Boston, MA" prepared by "Creative Home Plan LLC" dated

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1708871, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.



Planning Department

CITY of BOSTON

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1759808
ZBA Submitted Date	2025-08-06
ZBA Hearing Date	2025-09-18
Address	120 to 126 Emerson ST South Boston 02127
Parcel ID	0603159000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	South Boston Neighborhood MFR
Zoning Article	68
Project Description	The proponent seeks to add a Gong Cha bubble tea to the existing empty commercial space. Take out will be available. In addition to tea there will also be some food available including waffles and ice cream.
Relief Type	Conditional Use
Violations	Conditional Use

Planning Context:

120 Emerson Street is located in the South Boston neighborhood. The surrounding area is primarily a mixed-use, multi-family area with businesses along the first floor and two- to three-story residences above. The surrounding context is conducive to the proposal for a bubble tea shop given the prevalence of active ground floor businesses.

The proponent seeks to add a Gong Cha bubble tea to the existing empty commercial space. Take out will be available. In addition to tea there will also be some food available including waffles and ice cream.

Zoning Analysis:

Small take out restaurants are conditional uses in south Boston's multi-family residential subdistricts. However, given the surrounding context, this proposal is appropriate given that, as outlined in Article 6 Section 3 of the code, it is an appropriate location, it will not adversely affect the neighborhood, there will be no serious hazard to vehicles or pedestrians, and no nuisance will be created.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1759808, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.



Planning Department

CITY of BOSTON

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1759568
ZBA Submitted Date	2025-08-06
ZBA Hearing Date	2025-09-18
Address	1621 to 1631 Blue Hill AV Mattapan 02126
Parcel ID	1801138001
Zoning District & Subdistrict	Greater Mattapan Neighborhood CC
Zoning Article	26
Project Description	Remove proviso to add take out
Relief Type	Conditional Use
Violations	Other Protectional conditions

Planning Context:

The proposed project site is a corner parcel abutting numerous commercial uses on the busy Blue Hill Ave corridor in Mattapan Square. The surrounding area including the site was rezoned in May 2024 to implement PLAN: Mattapan to new S4 zoning. The site is occupied by a two story building containing commercial uses. No alterations are proposed.

Zoning Analysis:

Proponents are seeking to remove a proviso limiting takeout to the original grantee, in order to allow a new operator to provide a restaurant with takeout. The proponents filed under the former zoning in the CC subdistrict where take out use was a conditional use. However the current S4 zoning to this site allows for a restaurant with takeout as an allowed use.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1759568, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.

Reviewed,

Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1696233
ZBA Submitted Date	2025-03-04
ZBA Hearing Date	2025-09-18
Address	417 to 423C W Broadway South Boston 02127
Parcel ID	0601948000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	South Boston Neighborhood MFR/LS
Zoning Article	68
Project Description	The proposed project is an internal renovation to redevelop the existing first floor beauty salon and commercial space, adding an additional work area for a service that is classified as a body art establishment use.
Relief Type	Variance
Violations	Forbidden Use

Planning Context:

The South Boston Neighborhood is home to a vibrant and diverse selection of active commercial uses including restaurants, retail shops, barber shops and beauty salons, typically with housing on the upper levels. The proposed project is a completely internal renovation that will have no effect on the physical urban landscape of South Boston.

The plan, Imagine Boston 2030 outlines contextually sensitive development, encouraging small business growth, and providing ground floor amenities as strategies for enhancing Boston's neighborhoods. Internal alteration projects that expand use possibilities and preserve historic facades align with the city's neighborhood enhancement strategies.

This project adds vibrancy to the neighborhood by filling a currently vacant salon space and converting it to an active use. Attached uses and urban form will be unaffected by this proposal. The project fits the surrounding context of the neighborhood by renovating an existing ground-level business without compromising the physical character or available housing in the area.

Zoning Analysis:

This project is located within the Multi-Family Residential/Local Services (MFR/LS) subdistrict. According to Article 68-6, the MFR/LS subdistrict was established to encourage the



development of housing, ground floor commercial uses, and design that maintains neighborhood character. This aligns with the current reality of the area.

Article 68, Table A states body art establishments are forbidden in the MFR/LS zones. However, ground floor commercial uses, including the pre-existing use on this site, are typical for this area of the neighborhood. Further, the proposed use will not ostensibly adversely affect the neighborhood, will not present a hazard to vehicles or pedestrians, will not create a nuisance, has the appropriate facilities to operate the use, and is in an appropriate location. Given the existing use of a service establishment and the active commercial nature of this area, body art is an appropriate use here. This also presents a case for zoning reform, where some land uses with similar impacts have different land use allowances.

Plans reviewed are titled "Renovations at: 423 W Broadway", prepared by Prieto Design Group LLC, and dated 1/01/2024.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1696233, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1744521
ZBA Submitted Date	2025-07-03
ZBA Hearing Date	2025-09-18
Address	8 Granfield AV Roslindale 02131
Parcel ID	1903339000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	Roslindale Neighborhood 3F-4000
Zoning Article	67
Project Description	The project involves the renovation and modification of the existing attic to create a new two-bedroom dwelling unit, and the extension of the existing stairway, which currently terminates at the second floor.
Relief Type	Variance
Violations	Lot Area Insufficient

Planning Context:

The proposal seeks to add a third dwelling unit within the attic of an existing two-family residence. The work includes extending the interior stairway to the attic level and introducing shed dormers to provide adequate headroom. The proposed dormers and exterior modifications are intended to match the existing architectural style, with select roof gables, overhangs, and details retained or recreated to preserve the building's character.

In terms of neighborhood character, the proposed project is consistent with surrounding residential patterns. The property is in a three-family zoning subdistrict, and the immediate area contains a mix of two- and three-unit dwellings on lots that are generally close to 3,500 square feet. This reflects a housing fabric that is generally consistent with underlying three-family zoning requirements, except for the minimum lot area requirement of 4,000 square feet. The site's proximity to Washington Street, a major corridor supporting both residential and commercial uses, reinforces the suitability of the proposed third unit.

Zoning Analysis:

The only zoning relief required is for insufficient lot area. In the 3F-4000 subdistrict, the minimum lot area is 8,000 SF for three dwelling units, while the property measures 4,340 SF. No other dimensional or use violations are triggered.



Although the addition of the third unit does not meet the requirement, the proposal is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood of Roslindale, which contains a mix of two and three family homes. The proposed project is located on an approximately 4,340 square foot parcel, which is one of the few lots on its block that meets the minimum lot size of 4,000 square feet. The unusual parcelization in this location actually makes the proposed project closer in alignment with zoning requirements than the typical existing dwellings found in the surrounding area. The property is also located near Washington Street, a transit corridor with recent upgrades including a bus lane between Roslindale Square and Forest Hills Station that has significantly improved bus travel times. This level of transit access supports the proposed level of housing density.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1744521, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning



Case	BOA1708710
ZBA Submitted Date	2025-04-13
ZBA Hearing Date	2025-09-18
Address	109 Clement AV West Roxbury 02132
Parcel ID	2001640000
Zoning District & Subdistrict	West Roxbury Neighborhood 1F-6000
Zoning Article	56
Project Description	Confirm use as a single family. Construct a two-and-a-half-story rear addition, providing additional living space.
Relief Type	Variance
Violations	FAR Excessive Height Excessive (stories) Side Yard Insufficient

Planning Context:

The lot is an abnormally skinny (40'x140') residential parcel abutting the MBTA Commuter Rail, one block from the Highland Station in West Roxbury. Proponent seeks to confirm use as a single-family and construct a rear addition, with an additional side bumpout to provide access from the side. The addition is architecturally consistent with the existing structure and provides additional usable living space for the applicant.

The Neighborhood Housing Initiative, launched in November 2024, seeks to enable a by-right path for small-scale additions and renovations to residential properties, with a first phase in West Roxbury. This project is an example of such a renovation.

Zoning Analysis:

This proposal presents three dimensional violations relative to West Roxbury zoning. Per Article 56, Table D, the maximum FAR in a 1F-6000 subdistrict is 0.4, and this project would yield 0.7, which would be a violation. The existing building already has an FAR of 0.46, making this a worsening of a pre-existing nonconformity. The maximum number of stories of a structure is 2.5 stories. As this proposed pitched-roof addition includes an additional second dormer on the third story near the rear of the building, zoning considers this a third story, which would be a new violation. Finally, the minimum side yard on both sides of the property is 10'. The current structure provides side yards of 4.2' and approximately 5', both of which are preexisting



nonconformities. With the proposed side bumpout, one side yard is now proposed at 4.7', and the rear addition extends the violation on the other side at 6.1'.

In all cases, these violations are extensions of the existing building. Multiple structures along the street regularly exceed FAR of 0.6, and indeed a quarter of lots in West Roxbury's 1F subdistricts have FAR exceeding 0.6. The additional dormer provides architectural continuity from the front of the building, and the absolute height is not increased. Third story dormers are a common presence along Clement Ave, making the aggregate height contextual. The 40' width of the parcel is typical for Clement Ave, which creates a common condition where side yards are often 2' or less. Relief is appropriate.

Future zoning reform should consider, at a minimum, adjusting dimensional requirements to reflect existing conditions.

Recommendation:

In reference to BOA1708710, The Planning Department recommends APPROVAL.

Reviewed,

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Deputy Director of Zoning