

# 2025 DRAFT DOWNTOWN ZONING AND MAP AMENDMENT SUMMARY

## Background

This zoning amendment draft for approval is based on the recommendations of the multiyear planning initiative PLAN: Downtown (approved and adopted by the BPDA Board on December 14, 2023) and public comments received on the draft Downtown zoning text amendment released on April 9, 2024

The draft amendment creates new zoning districts for Downtown, called **Skyline Districts**. The amendment focuses on modernizing land uses to encourage new and diverse businesses to thrive, prioritizing adaptive reuse and preservation of historic buildings and facades, and enabling more density where appropriate to unlock new opportunities for housing, mixed-use growth, and businesses Downtown.

## Summary of Draft Map Amendment

- **The draft maps do not include changes proposed by the ongoing Chinatown Rezoning Process.** Please visit the [Chinatown Rezoning Process](#) website to see the latest draft zoning amendment and zoning map for Chinatown, released in November 2024.
- **Map 1A Downtown: Maps new SKY-R district** primarily along the western side of Washington Street to prioritize larger-scale residential development alongside historic preservation in an area that is a key gateway to major transit services and borders lower-scale historic areas along Tremont Street and the Boston Common. The SKY-R District limits scale and prioritizes the adaptive reuse of historic buildings and facades while allowing additional height only for predominantly residential development.
- **Map 1A Downtown: Removes Greenway Overlay District** from Skyline Districts to ensure the districts have consistent and modernized uses. The PLAN: Downtown amendment adds the Greenway Overlay District design guidelines to the PLAN: Downtown Design Guidelines.
- **Map 1C/1G/1N: Moves portions of the existing Midtown Cultural District Bay Village Protections District** that closely resemble the Bay Village Neighborhood structurally into the Bay Village Neighborhood Shopping Subdistrict.

- **Map 1C/1G/1N: Adjusts the boundary of the Adult Entertainment District** to align with parcel boundaries and **removes the District from the Chinatown Neighborhood District** because there are no adult entertainment establishments there today.

## Summary of Changes to the April 9, 2024 Draft Based on Public Comments

### Key changes from April 9, 2024 draft:

- **Article 80.B: Adjustment of Article 80 thresholds to ensure a conditional use is no longer required to ensure linkage.** Previously, ensuring the function of linkage payments for Development Impact Uses (including Office-Large) required zoning relief, or a conditional use to function. The redrafted language would ensure linkage by requiring all Development Impact Uses over the linkage threshold to undergo Article 80 review.
- **Article 8: Changes Office-Large from a Conditional Use to an Allowed Use.** Based on the changes to ensure the functionality of linkage for Office-Large uses and the importance of Office-Large Uses to downtown, these uses would be allowed in two of the Skyline Districts. Large Hotels and Research Labs would stay Conditional Uses in all the Skyline Districts to allow evaluation of site-specific impacts, particularly related to loading and pick-up/drop-off activity that may impact this pedestrian-first environment.
- **Article 31 - New SKY-R District:** Based on public comments advocating for the prioritization of housing growth and the preservation of historic facades and character along Washington St, the SKY-R district is regulated to advance historic preservation, prioritize adaptive reuse, and incentivize larger-scale residential development. This district allows taller heights only for predominantly residential projects.
- **Article 31 - Improved dimensional regulations to further regulate form,** including Stepbacks (min) along all Frontages and Average Building Floor for the SKY-R District and Building Floor Plate (max) for the SKY and SKY-R Districts help maintain scale and ensure tall buildings respond to and minimize impacts on the surrounding context.
- **Article 31 - Allowing the extension of Nonconforming Buildings** to encourage additions and adaptive reuses by ensuring that existing nonconforming structures can be enlarged or altered as long as the dimensional non-conformity (such as building lot coverage) is not increased.

These rules would allow additions “on top” of buildings like the one at 40 Water St. Congress Square.

Other Changes:

- *Article 31 Dimensional Standards: adding a reference to FAA and Massport critical airspace height limitations.*
- *Article 31 minor reformatting and clarification changes.*
- *Article 2 minor clarification changes to Outdoor Amenity Space and Stepback definitions.*