



ARTICLE 80 APR 2025

MODERNIZATION

Early Actions Supplement

For Improving Boston's Development Review Process

CITY of BOSTON



Planning Department



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since March 2023, we have collaborated with community members, development stakeholders, and City of Boston staff to reform Boston’s development review process and Article 80 of the Boston Zoning Code.

In the first phase of this project, we listened to community members, development stakeholders, and City staff about their experiences and ideas for how to improve the current development review process outlined in Article 80. In the second phase, we used this input to develop recommendations aimed at making the process more timely, predictable, consistent and transparent. These recommendations were consolidated into a Draft Action Plan, published in September 2024. The Draft Action Plan organized the recommendations into three categories: Effective Engagement, Consistent Standards, and Coordinated Review. Each of these categories proposed a series of specific actions for the Planning Department to implement. The Department collected public feedback on the Draft Action Plan during a 90-day comment period, and used that feedback to create the implementation strategy outlined in this document.

Several recommendations from the Action Plan generated broad support. These changes are being prioritized for

near-term implementation and referred to as “Early Actions.” For example, all stakeholder groups supported internal Planning Department procedural improvements to produce more consistent and transparent feedback on development proposals. Stakeholders also supported improved collaboration with other City departments, Boards, and Commissions (including the Boston Civic Design Commission). Many comments emphasized the opportunity to better integrate Planning priorities and goals into decision-making, as well as expanding the methods we use to engage the community in development review.

Stakeholder feedback also identified recommendations that are headed in the right direction, but require additional study, analysis, and community engagement before moving forward to implementation. These “Long-Term Actions” will continue to be refined over the next year. For example, open questions about the role, scope, and composition of the proposed Community Advisory Teams will be considered in collaboration with community members and stakeholder groups. Similarly, the Planning Department will continue to study the potential for making mitigation and community benefits more predictable.

EARLY ACTIONS

Our **Early Actions**, recommendations with broad support that we will begin implementing, include:



Improving the way we work as the Planning Department by introducing **operational enhancements** that community members and developers will see immediately



Adding **new engagement methods** that allow the community to participate early on and provide feedback in a variety of different ways



Drafting **targeted zoning changes** to Article 28 (BCDC) and Article 80 (Development Review) to clean up outdated language



Prioritizing **citywide coordination** to ensure a more cohesive and effective development review process

Why Reform?

The purpose of implementing Early Actions is to implement changes with broad stakeholder support that will have an immediate, positive impact on the development review process. Over the next year, the Planning Department will test the Early Actions as part of an operational pilot. This will allow staff to test new procedures, track and monitor data, and evaluate effectiveness. The results will be documented in a progress report, which will also identify opportunities for further refinement.

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

Our **Long-Term Actions**, which require additional work, include:



Community Advisory Teams (CATs)



A predictable, standardized mitigation framework



Article 80 thresholds and timelines

EARLY ACTIONS

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS

Establish protocols for smoother review process

Streamline the pre-file process

Over time, the pre-file process for a project has moved away from its original intent to serve as advanced notification of a proposed project to City staff, and evolved into an evaluation of the project itself. Today's open-ended process is often inconsistent from project to project, adding an unpredictable amount of time to the overall review period. Through operational improvements, the prefile process will become more structured, ensuring predictable outcomes and consistent timing for all projects undergoing development review. Moving forward, pre-file meetings will strictly serve as an early opportunity for clarification, allowing Planning staff to share expectations and requirements of the review process. These meetings will no longer include iterative evaluations or project refinements which, in today's process, often take place without input from the community. Instead, projects will be directed to submit their first filing and begin the public review process after completing basic due diligence with Planning Department staff, thereby

ensuring that the community has visibility into the project earlier than they do today.

Update tables of content for each filing type

Inconsistent filing formats make it challenging for proponents to prepare documents and for Planning staff and the public to review them efficiently. To address this, the Planning Department will create and publish standardized filing templates that clearly outline required content and organization for each filing type. These templates will streamline both the preparation and review processes, ensuring clarity and uniformity across all submissions.

Planning staff will begin the review of each filing submission by conducting a "completeness check" to confirm that all required components are included, providing project proponents with a quick response from Planning staff if any information is missing before reviewing the entire submission. This will improve efficiency, reduce delays, and create a more predictable review process.

Incorporate distinct milestones for each review stage

The review process for filing documents, such as Small Project Review Applications and Project Notification Forms, has become prolonged and inconsistent due to continuous back-and-forth exchanges between proponents and Planning staff. This unclear process leads to

unpredictable outcomes that vary from project to project.

Going forward, the Planning Department will create defined, internal milestones for the component steps of each review stage. These improvements will lead to more predictable timelines and improve the quality, consistency, and clarity of feedback delivered by Planning staff.

We will enable these changes through the use of new internal tools, such as a development review worksheet that is shared by staff across departments to evaluate each filing component consistently and templated feedback documents to standardize communication and prioritize feedback.

Define enabling infrastructure, mitigation, and community benefits

The Planning Department reviews projects for their potential impacts on the city overall and the specific site on which they will be built. During this review step, Planning staff work with all stakeholders to recommend mitigation measures to offset these impacts. Some projects also contribute additional benefits to the neighborhood where a project is proposed. Today, these distinct contributions are often described in overlapping and confusing ways.

To bring greater standardization and predictability to the review process, the Planning Department will release new guidance that distinguishes between enabling infrastructure, mitigation, and community benefits. These standardized categories will be applied to all new project reviews, giving all stakeholders a consistent framework. Under the new definitions, project teams can clearly

distinguish between which aspects of their proposal are necessary to enable the project itself, how the proposed project will mitigate any negative impacts, and how it enhances its surroundings or contributes to the community over and above the first two categories.

The Planning Department will also ask project proponents to submit more detailed information on their proposed mitigation and community benefits, including specifications of in-kind contributions.

EVALUATE NEW TIMELINES

Systematically track and assess City's capacity to consistently meet deadlines

To better assess staff capacity, the Planning Department will begin tracking each component element of the review process in much greater detail. Each distinct review discipline and review step will be measured. The Planning Department will use this detailed information to identify bottlenecks in staff capacity and create more efficient management practices.

Using Salesforce and other tools, Department leadership will gain real-time oversight of review components, including:

- **Completeness checks** - the staff response to an initial proposal to confirm proponents have submitted

everything required

- **Review documentation** - the internal process of evaluating how the project is consistent with recent planning and zoning, and its impacts across disciplines (like sustainability, transportation, etc.)
- **Feedback prioritization** - internal process for City staff to resolve any conflicting feedback, prioritize what changes we would like to see, and deliver that feedback to proponents clearly

Improved tracking will allow Planning Department leadership to intervene before critical deadlines are missed, preventing delays that could impact overall project timelines and costs.

The data generated and evaluated through these upgraded internal systems will inform future recommendations on new timeline commitments.

DELIVER EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

Use standardized templates for clear, consistent reviews

To improve the quality and consistency of feedback, the Planning Department will implement standardized templates that ensure coordinated, consolidated, and timely responses across all reviewers. A key tool in this effort is a new internal tool called the “Development Review

Worksheet.” This tool is a single internal document that identifies all items for review and collects input across all reviewers, including those from other City departments. This worksheet will:

- Prompt reviewers to evaluate specific project features and determine whether they meet expectations or require changes
- Distinguish between required modifications and optional enhancements beyond the baseline criteria
- Tailor to different phases of review, with relevant prompts for concept and schematic evaluation stages
- Identify instances where multiple reviewers assess the same feature, ensuring that the Planning Department “speaks with one voice”

The feedback collected in the worksheet will be consolidated and prioritized before Planning staff share it with the project proponent.

In addition to new tools, the Planning Department will clarify staff roles and responsibilities. Assigned reviewers will focus on project evaluation within a clearly defined scope, reducing duplication. Department leadership will be responsible for consolidating and prioritizing feedback.

These changes will reshape the culture of development review, and enable the Planning Department to deliver unified and prioritized feedback.

ENCOURAGE EARLY DEVELOPER-LED OUTREACH

Build trust and understanding between community and project proponent

Through extensive engagement efforts—such as public meetings, focus groups with community stakeholders and city-wide public surveys—we heard how important it is for community members to learn about and provide feedback on projects earlier in the process. To address this priority, the Planning Department will begin introducing new tools for developer-led early engagement in the coming months.

Under this new approach, project proponents will lead early outreach using templates and standards provided by the Planning Department. The goal is two fold:

- Project proponents will gain valuable insight from community members regarding neighborhood history, planning context, and lived experiences to help inform project proposals.
- Community members will learn about citywide planning priorities and how they relate to the project.

Every project will include a public survey administered by the Planning

Department. Additionally, developers of large projects will be given resources to host engagement opportunities such as a site walk, workshop, or informational pop up.

Create guidelines and engagement templates

The Planning Department will develop a set of comprehensive guidelines and templates that will help proponents plan for and deliver new engagement opportunities. This toolkit will highlight best practices and key considerations along with suggested topics and questions to facilitate conversations with community members.

Encourage submission of an Engagement Plan

Engagement done by developers early in the review process often goes undocumented. This is a missed opportunity to learn about community needs when stakeholders review the project in its early stages.

Project proponents will be asked to optionally include an engagement plan with their first filing submitted to the Planning Department. The engagement plan will outline the project proponent's early outreach activities and will be reviewed by the Planning Department.

Collect engagement results

Along with the engagement plan, the information collected during the early engagement will be submitted to the Planning Department. The documentation method will ensure that feedback about community needs

and priorities are communicated in a consistent manner.

Implement earlier engagement

Proposed projects that qualify for Small Project Review will focus on broadening awareness through placing signage on the site and launching an early engagement survey. Projects that qualify for Large Project Review will also incorporate an opportunity for in-person engagement between the proponent and the community.

Examples of in-person engagement opportunities include:

- **Site walks:** Identify existing conditions, share lived experience, and communicate planning priorities.
- **Project introduction workshops:** Identify community priorities and explore ideas on specific aspects of large sites.
- **Pop up project kiosks:** Provide project information and collect broad community feedback in familiar gathering spaces.
- **Early engagement surveys:** Capture diverse perspectives on existing conditions that can inform the project's concept design

Community members have emphasized the importance of accountability in the engagement process. Therefore, the Planning Department will:

- Attend engagement events to ensure meaningful outreach
- Host and administer all public surveys
- Review the final engagement report

submitted by developers as part of the review process

During implementation, the Planning Department will evaluate the effectiveness of these engagement methods and make ongoing improvements to the community participation experience.

EXPAND ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Offer community members more options to get involved, in ways that works best for them

Community members have shared that engagement opportunities need to be more frequent, varied, and aligned with the different stages of review. The Planning Department will implement new engagement methods that allow community members to share feedback in the way that works best for them and allows a more diverse mix of community members to take part in sharing their feedback.

Implement new engagement methods

To support broader participation, we are introducing additional engagement opportunities:

- **Surveys:** Designed to provide impactful feedback that aligns with every stage of the review process, new surveys will ensure that community input is relevant at each decision point. The Planning Department will create new survey templates and administer them concurrently with comment period timelines.
- **Workshops:** Adapt existing public meetings by making them topic-specific and more conversational. Workshops will break down project information, making it more accessible, and will build on survey results to increase transparency. The Planning Department will provide facilitation guides for public workshops.
- **Site Signage:** Update signage requirements to include clear, accessible project information displayed on-site. Signs will include a project summary, a QR code, website link, and project manager contact information to support broad awareness.

Continue existing methods

- **Public Comment Letters:** Community members can continue submitting comment letters to the Planning Department. These letters will remain publicly accessible on the project page
- **Impact Advisory Group (IAG) meetings:** IAG meetings will continue in their current format. For more information on the future of advisory groups, see page 14 of this document to learn about CATs.

The Planning Department will lead and evaluate these engagement efforts,

aiming to:

- Improve the timing of feedback, so input is collected at the most helpful times
- Increase the relevance and specificity of feedback to better inform decision-making
- Hear from a broader range of perspectives, ensuring that staff hear from community members with diverse lived experiences

By refining these engagement approaches, we aim to strengthen public participation while maintaining a predictable review process.

MAKE DECISIONS TRANSPARENTLY

Community members understand how their feedback helps shape a development project

To create a transparent and accountable development review process, the Planning Department will:

- Clearly articulate City priorities and demonstrate how decision-making aligns with them
- Gather actionable community feedback at key stages of review
- Standardize methods of documenting engagement efforts to eliminate inconsistencies

- Regularly refer back to community feedback in subsequent engagement points to close feedback loops
- Align the timing of engagement with decision-making so that community input remains relevant throughout the process

The new structure and model for engagement encourages a more transparent process for all stakeholders.

Share information and close feedback loops

With a predictable, sequential overall review process, engagement methods will help connect conversations and close feedback loops as the project goes through each step. Public surveys, for example, will include summaries of past feedback and related decisions to ensure transparency. Agendas for public workshops will also be guided by the survey results, therefore building continuity in conversations about the project at different points of engagement.

Make community feedback more timely

Surveys will directly align with each stage of the review process, ensuring feedback is targeted, structured and actionable. For example, early engagement surveys will provide project proponents with information that can influence the early concept of the project.

Create consistent documentation to more clearly demonstrate understanding of community feedback

New systems that collect feedback in

a more structured and comprehensive manner will help the department understand trends in community feedback across projects. This will enable more transparent decisions during the review process. Standardizing the way information is documented is key for impact. For example, minutes from public workshops will be documented in a standardized template. Project proponents will also use a templated report to show results from early in-person engagement and describe key changes made to project scope, if any.

REFORM BCDC PROCEDURES

Improve the experience of BCDC while retaining its strengths

The Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC), an advisory body to the Urban Design Division of the Planning Department composed of design professionals, predates Article 80 and remains essential for reviewing projects of special significance. These reform efforts aim to clarify the purpose of the Commission to the public, align the Commissioners' expertise with the projects under their review, improve efficiency and effectiveness of BCDC meetings, and align processes with Article 80 review procedures. Recommended reforms include:

Create submission templates

The Planning Department will create

clear guidance and submission templates for each step of BCDC review. Projects will not be reviewed by BCDC until all submission requirements are met. This will ensure a consistent experience for Commissioners and allow more efficient reviews.

Streamline public feedback and testimony

Public feedback will be consolidated into a shared repository of written comments submitted to the Planning Department and BCDC and posted publicly to the BCDC website. Live public testimony will be limited to when it is most impactful: initial project introductions. This change will be formalized in the Commission's by-laws, which govern how meetings are conducted.

Affirm the Commission's advisory role

BCDC recommendations will be directed to the Chief of Planning and the Deputy Chief of Urban Design, who directly oversee design review, instead of the Mayor and Boston Planning and Development Authority (BPDA) Board. This requires a zoning amendment to Article 28.

Ensure consistent reviewers across all meetings

To improve continuity, a project will be reviewed by the same set of Commissioners throughout its entire review. A 'subcommittee cohort,' that remains together for the review of multiple projects, will issue a "Report from Subcommittee" for the full commission's consideration. This will be formalized in the commission's by-laws,

which will govern how meetings are conducted.

Initiate earlier review

BCDC review will begin at the 'concept development' phase and align with Planning Department staff review. Proponents must submit documentation of the project's "concept" (today referred to as a Project Notification Form) and have one public meeting and one staff review meeting before presenting to the Commission.

Establish meeting limits

In conjunction with project proponents, Planning Department staff will create a roadmap for each project and establish a maximum number of BCDC meetings for any given project, ensuring predictable and timely recommendations. Successfully implementing meeting limits relies on a complementary change to the Commission's recommendation procedures: adding the ability to recommend 'needed modifications'. These changes will be formalized in the Commission's by-laws, which will govern how meetings are conducted.

Increase the review threshold

There are two 'triggers' that subject a project to the commission's review: a compulsory trigger, based on the project's size, and a discretionary trigger, used to designate a 'Project of Special Significance.' The Planning Department will increase the compulsory trigger from 100,000 to 200,000 gross square feet, and make minor adjustments to the description of 'Project of Special Significance.' This requires a zoning amendment to Article 28. A higher review

threshold allows the BCDC to focus their expertise on the projects that are most significant to the urban fabric of the City. Capacity estimates predict that this will reduce the projects subject to BCDC review by 30 percent, freeing up capacity for more timely reviews.

IMPROVE INTERDEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION

Build a unified, cohesive sequence for project review and approval

In July 2023, the Planning Department created the role of Development Review Ombudsman to streamline the post-BPDA Board approval review process. The Ombudsman has identified key focus areas to improve coordination, primarily stemming from communication and coordination gaps.

Define roles

The Planning Department will partner with other City Cabinets to confirm the scope of review for all relevant Commissions and City staff. This effort will build on ongoing interdepartmental collaboration taking place in areas like the Office to Rental Conversion Program and the Mayor's Executive Order to speed affordable housing.

Confirm staff review procedures

Planning staff will identify all required

reviews for a given project at the beginning of the review process. Cross-cabinet review staff will then be directly embedded in the Planning Department's review procedures. This change will create closer coordination across the City and ensure that feedback shared with the project proponent presents a unified set of priorities.

Coordinate Boards and Commissions

The City team will also consider earlier involvement from other Boards and Commissions, potentially through a "conceptual opinion" or "advisory review" early on in the process. Testing these changes will allow City staff to study and consider changes in the overall sequence of review steps.

This revised structure will enable the City to "speak with one voice," while also offering predictability of time and cost to proponents.

CLEAN UP ZONING CODE

Prepare for future reform by correcting outdated language and introducing amendments in areas with high stakeholder support

Many recommendations in this document can be implemented operationally, without changes to any zoning text. However, several Early Actions do require

zoning text changes. To prepare these proposed zoning changes, the Planning Department reviewed Articles 28 and 80, identified outdated language, and is proposing to make minor amendments that bring the language in alignment with existing practices. All proposed zoning changes will be drafted in ‘greenline’ format and open for public comment before submission to the Boston Zoning Commission. Key updates include:

Modernize public notice and distribution

Updates to Article 80, Section A will align notice and document distribution with current digital access norms. This will codify the way the Planning Department already works. The Planning Department will continue to announce document availability and comment periods via its website and email lists, with digital copies posted online and physical copies available upon request.

Update ‘pre-file’ process

The zoning code provides minimal guidance on pre-review planning meetings (“pre-file”), though the process has expanded in scope. Limited zoning text updates will reinforce its intended purpose, with operational changes detailed on page 4.

Clarify linkage eligibility

As the Planning Department updates zoning throughout the City, this edit ensures Linkage continues to function for projects that are constructing, expanding, or establishing new uses.

Modernize BCDC

Zoning edits are required to implement several recommendations to modernize BCDC: updating recommendation procedures, introducing BCDC review earlier, and raising the threshold of review. For more detail see page 10.

Update interior alterations in Institutional Master Plans

This zoning change increases the threshold for including certain interior alterations in an IMP from 50,000 to 100,000 square feet. The interior alteration must not establish or expand a High Impact Subuse (which includes things like dormitories, student housing, and athletic facilities.).

Improve clarity and usability

Outdated references, “grandfathering” clauses and duplicative language make Article 80 difficult to navigate. The Planning Department has identified clerical edits to improve its usability for proponents, review staff, and the public.

These updates lay the groundwork for broader zoning reforms while improving clarity and efficiency in the short-term.

LONG-TERM ACTIONS

COMMUNITY ADVISORY TEAMS

Community Advisory Teams (CATs) are a proposed new advisory body designed to work directly with the Planning Department to provide community-based expertise. Since releasing the Draft Action Plan, we have heard strong

support for a more structured and representative advisory body. However several aspects of CATs require further study and community engagement before implementation. For CATs to be effective, scalable, and impactful, their structure must be clearly defined.

In 2025, the Planning Department will collaborate with all stakeholders to address key questions about CATs:

OPERATIONS & GOVERNANCE	What is the governance structure for the CAT? How do we ensure accountability?
STRUCTURE & MODEL	What is the scope of engagement and geographic area coverage?
ROLE & RESPONSIBILITY	What is the role of each CAT member? What are their key responsibilities and how does a CAT positively impact development?
COMPOSITION	Who is part of the CAT and why? How does the recruitment process work?
CAPACITY BUILDING	What training do CAT members receive on Boston planning priorities? How might community organizations help define the training curriculum?

STEP 1: DEFINE THE APPROACH

- *Operations & Governance*
- *Structure & Model*
- *Role & Power*
- *Composition*

The Planning Department will collaborate internally and externally to start answering key questions about CATs. The Planning Department will develop systems for an inclusive and transparent recruitment process, ensuring geographic representation. This includes designing fair application and evaluation procedures. Collaborating with community stakeholders will help us define the role and governance of CATs, such as drafting a code of conduct. Key outcomes include:

- Defining the role and scope of CATs through broad stakeholder outreach, using diverse research and engagement methods
- Creating public materials to clearly describe the recommendations
- Establishing operational structures that ensure the equitability and scalability of the model

STEP 2: DESIGN SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS

- *Operations & Governance*
- *Capacity Building*

The Planning Department will design a dedicated training curriculum for CAT

participants, prepare internal operations and tools, and create public materials. The goal of this step is to clarify the purpose, structure, and participation opportunities for CATs.

The Planning Department will collaborate with community organizations to develop orientation and training materials. This ensures CAT onboarding reflects local expertise outside of the Planning Department's perspective. Key outcomes include:

- Developing public materials explaining the CAT's structure and role
- Establishing core systems and processes for recruitment, training, and communication
- Engaging the community to co-develop a training curriculum for future CAT members

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN FOR CATS

Ideate and Co-create

Answering a lot of the questions about a new community advisory group requires a range of perspectives from the start. It is important to incorporate diverse perspectives to help shape future opportunities for public participation. Thoughtful engagement touchpoints will help community members build on ideas using their own lived experiences and expertise. Through guided questionnaires, quick surveys, and creative, facilitated workshops, we hope to define various aspects of the CATs before we begin designing specific solutions.

Test concept & design

As we move into specific decisions about CATs, the engagement with stakeholders will become more focused. This engagement will focus on understanding the feasibility, impact, and value of different concepts while scoping the various operational changes needed for a CAT to run successfully. Engagement at this stage will include internal and external working groups that will design and solve for various aspects of CATs.

Educate public

Once we have built our concept and are getting ready to begin implementation, staff will use a range of different materials and tools to share the new process with the community. These forms of engagement will be more focused on spreading awareness, sharing information and encouraging participation once the CAT is launched.

PREDICTABLE MITIGATION FRAMEWORK

The Action Plan included several recommendations to create a more predictable mitigation and community benefits process. Many potential changes require detailed study and engagement before they can be implemented.

Throughout 2025, the Planning Department will work with various internal and external stakeholders to explore key questions:

UPDATE COST ESTIMATES	<p>How much does it cost to build common mitigation items?</p> <p>How do project proponents, construction firms, and public agencies (like the Boston Public Works Department or MassDOT) estimate these costs?</p> <p>How do other cities track and evaluate the costs of mitigation?</p> <p>How do we collect data to maintain accurate estimates for new work?</p>
FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY	<p>How do interest rates affect what amount of mitigation is financially feasible to build?</p> <p>What other macroeconomic or project-specific factors have an effect on financial feasibility?</p>
POLICY RECOMMENDATION	<p>What legal requirements need to be met?</p> <p>What incentives should be added to facilitate specific goals? (e.g. for affordable housing)</p> <p>How can we better communicate and enforce mitigation and benefit commitments?</p>

STEP 1: RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

To support the creation of a new predictable mitigation policy, the Planning Department will analyze historical project data using updated definitions of enabling infrastructure and mitigation.

Scope of analysis:

- Review past projects approved by the BPDA Board to estimate mitigation costs by category: transportation infrastructure, public realm improvements, and open space
- Compare historical data to cost guidelines from peer government agencies and peer cities
- Assess past mitigation packages for financial feasibility to ensure long-term viability
- Prepare studies to link project impacts to mitigation costs

STEP 2: POLICY DESIGN

The Planning Department will collaborate with other city departments, development stakeholders, and community members to develop a new approach to predictable mitigation. The new approach will identify eligibility criteria, potential incentive structures, and compliance requirements. The Planning Department will also create public documentation and user-friendly materials to share the details of any proposed changes.

OTHER LONG-TERM ACTIONS

While the Planning Department tests new processes through early actions, we will also prepare long-term actions to codify best practices and create a modern, predictable review process. Long-term actions are more complex and uncertain than early actions, therefore requiring more time for engagement and analysis.

A key focus of this work will be defining predictable timelines for project review and feedback. By analyzing these timelines, we aim to develop policies that formally integrate them into the zoning code, ensuring consistency for future projects.

Many early actions can help the Planning Department to test and evaluate potential long term changes to review procedures. Insights gained from the pilot process will inform updates to new filing documents and submission requirements, thresholds for project review, timelines for feedback delivery, and refinement of review stages.

This approach to evaluating early actions and refining zoning policies will allow the Planning Department to establish well-tested, studied, and effective policies to improve Boston's development review process in 2026.



FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- More opportunities to learn about proposed projects through signage, site walkthroughs, and topic-specific workshops.
- Ability to share your insights via online surveys.
- Stay informed by signing up for text message updates and survey notifications.
- Understand how your feedback is used in project proposals through public workshops and online dashboards displaying survey results.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

FOR DEVELOPERS

- Reformed BCDC review process with enforced meeting limits, a higher review threshold, and consistent reviewers.
- Clearer expectations with consistent submission requirements and prioritized written feedback, incorporating all review disciplines.
- A more structured and transparent process, including reformed public testimony, clarified staff roles, and improved feedback integration across City agencies.
- New review sequences tailored to project needs.



FOR STAFF

- Improved workflow with clear distinctions between City and proponent responsibilities.
- Enhanced tracking of review components, internal deadlines, and completeness checks.
- Standardized checklist for project evaluation, ensuring consistency across disciplines.
- Ability to provide consolidated, prioritized feedback to proponents in a single, clear document.
- Tactical updates such as modernized public notices and clearer definitions of key infrastructure and community benefits.

