

Offered by Councilors Kenzie Bok and Matt O'Malley, Flynn, Breadon, Mejia, Arroyo, Essaibi-George, Flaherty, Campbell, Wu, Edwards and Janey



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING ZONING RELIEF FOR 100% AFFORDABLE AND DEEPLY AFFORDABLE PROJECTS

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- WHEREAS:** The City of Boston is in a housing crisis, with 49.6% of Boston area renters 'rent-burdened' by putting more than 30% of their income toward housing costs, more than 50,000 families on the waiting list for a Boston Housing Authority public housing unit, and a growing population of Black, Brown, immigrant, and low income renters at risk of eviction once the Massachusetts moratorium on evictions concludes; *and*
- WHEREAS:** Decent and affordable housing is a social determinant of health, with well-documented direct and indirect effects on respiratory health, sleep quality, educational attainment, ability to access and maintain a suitable job, stress levels and feelings of isolation, mood, and many other aspects of wellbeing; *and*
- WHEREAS:** The COVID-19 pandemic has reemphasized the public health need to ensure that all of Boston's residents have access to decent and affordable housing, including deeply affordable housing for residents that are homeless or unstably housed; *and*
- WHEREAS:** Often the individuals most in need of housing are underrepresented in community planning and development processes, as documented in a 2018 study by Einstein, Palmer, and Glick, frequently leading across Massachusetts to the delay or altogether rejection of much-needed affordable projects; *and*
- WHEREAS:** Such projects are also frequently delayed after approval by lawsuits, a problem which the Housing Choice bill currently under consideration by a State House conference committee seeks to reduce through requiring such lawsuits to post a significant bond, although this requirement is not yet law; *and*
- WHEREAS:** A recent example of this problem is the legal suit against a joint project proposed by the Pine Street Inn and The Community Builders with strong community support, a lawsuit which may delay or imperil a much-needed affordable housing development to make real the promise of a Housing-First and supportive housing approach for many unhoused Bostonians; *and*

WHEREAS: There are many potential options for reasonable zoning relief to avoid such delays for 100% affordable housing and deeply affordable developments, including a zoning overlay such as that under consideration by the City of Cambridge and other municipalities or the S.M.A.R.T. Housing Program implemented by the City of Austin, Texas; *NOW THEREFORE BE IT*

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to discuss options for zoning relief for 100% affordable and deeply affordable projects, and that members of the Administration including Chief Sheila Dillon, Administrator Kate Bennett, and other representatives from the Department of Neighborhood Development, the Boston Housing Authority, and the Boston Planning & Development Agency, along with housing advocates, developers of affordable housing, and the public, be invited to testify.

Filed on: August 14, 2020