

The Honorable Mayor Thomas M. Menino
Address at the Boston Municipal Research Bureau's Annual Meeting
March 25, 2013

Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, John. And thank you to Sam Tyler and the Municipal Research Bureau. You advocate for many good ideas and you rightfully push back against bad ones, like re-politicizing the Boston School Committee. This proposal would only put the special interests ahead of our kids' interests. Thank you for speaking up.

This is the 20th time I've reported on Boston and its financial affairs to the Bureau. Most years I've shared good news and bold plans. Other years, I've come here as we battled national recessions. As I speak with you today, I have never been more confident about Boston. Look around and you see that Boston's many successes are only half the story. It's the pace of our progress that sets us apart.

We sense this momentum perhaps most of all in our economy.

We broke ground on \$1.6 billion of development last year, which sounds like a lot until you realize that we expect to triple that number this year.

Our universities and hospitals have \$1.2 billion of construction underway, which is impressive, until you note that Harvard, Northeastern, Boston University, and Suffolk all have active plans to grow more. Meds and eds are job creators here in Boston and around the country. That's why we will continue to fight against the Sequester. Once the Federal Government cuts funding for new discoveries, China will jump at the chance to take our place. We cannot give ground in Boston's leading industry! Join us in speaking out against these foolish cuts.

Earlier this month we issued a report saying that 200 new companies had brought 4,000 new jobs to the Innovation District. But the pace of progress is such that new arrivals like CareCloud and NetSuite have already made that report outdated.

The fact is, we have more jobs than ever before in Boston. We have more development underway than ever. We have more young workers per capita than any other city. The *Globe* captured our economy well a few weeks ago with the cover story that read, "Boston is humming."

But, we're not done yet. I'm pleased to announce today that the latest 'W' coming to Fenway is Wegmans. It will open in the Landmark Center and continue the progress in that neighborhood.

I'm also happy that in Downtown Crossing we are no longer talking delay – we are talking dates. Construction at the old Filenes site begins late spring!

With the new owners of the Bronstein Center, we plan to make the Marine Industrial Park an even better home to innovative companies.

With a new e-permitting program that comes on-line next month, we will streamline permits. We have already cut average wait times in half over the last six months.

So, our economy is moving fast, and we are making sure our students keep pace with it. If you look at all we have done in the last three years – from education reform to in-district charters to teacher evaluation – you see the progress. But if you look at just three days this month, you see the pace of that progress picking up.

On March 13th, the School Committee passed a historic change to our student assignment process that will give more students quality schools, close to home.

That very same day, the State approved our second in-district charter for UP Academy; this one at the Marshall School in Dorchester. We expect UP will deliver the same “best in state results” there as they did at the Gavin in South Boston.

Two days later, BPS announced enrollment is projected to hit an eight year high.

And later that same day, I announced that the City would purchase Mitt Romney's old headquarters and re-purpose it into a downtown school. When you have young families who want to live in your downtown and want to send their kids to your public schools it says a lot about your city and it says a lot about your schools.

This was a lot of progress in one week. But we aren't done by any means. Our test scores are up. Our graduation rates are the highest they have ever been. Our students are out-performing their peers in other big cities. Our schools are better than ever, but they aren't as good as they will be.

Today, I am glad to announce the two co-chairs of our new Quality Advisory Panel: Meg Campbell and Dean Hardin Coleman. The Panel will build on the success of the External Advisory Committee. And it will work – together with my commitment of \$30 million – to increase quality in all of our schools.

In addition, I am asking you to support my reform legislation at the State House. I am fighting to gain the power to extend freedoms in hiring and learning time to many more schools across the district. Stand with me on this issue. We shouldn't wait for a school to fail before we give it the tools to succeed!

We're improving the way we assign kids to school, and we're driving student achievement through new reforms. And something else is evolving quickly, too: technology is changing the way kids learn.

Boston has a record of success here – from being the first city in America to wire its schools for the Internet to programs like Technology Goes Home.

Now, some of our students are engaged in robotics and game development.

Today, I'm thrilled to announce our latest initiative, Boston e-lit – a new push in digital and electronic learning. Its first task is to achieve our new goal: Bringing 10,000 more mobile devices to the Boston Public Schools over the next two years. As the world goes mobile, our students must develop these digital skills to get ready for college and a career.

Our e-lit effort won't be limited to our schools. In May, we will begin an e-reader lending program at the Boston Public library. Residents will be able to borrow an iPad preloaded with bestselling books and apps to connect them with job searching, social media, and language-learning tools. We'll also add on-demand book printing.

Together, we will make available the latest digital tools to all of Boston's residents.

As other cities have slowed down investments in education and in other areas, we have been able to speed up ours. Our smart financial management enables our swift progress.

Just this month, Standard and Poor's re-affirmed our City's AA+ bond rating and Moody's confirmed our Aaa. Days later we sold \$145 million in bonds at 2.3 percent. The market shares our confidence in Boston.

We also retired old debt, saving taxpayers \$2 million.

We've been able to borrow affordably to re-invest in our neighborhoods. This year, we have invested over \$200 million -- a record for Boston. We've put it to use at the Ferdinand building in Dudley, at the Flaherty Pool in Roslindale, and for re-paving more roads than at any time in a decade.

But again, the most important thing building here, is our progress.

Next, we will invest more than \$11 million to complete the overhaul of Millennium Park in West Roxbury. Children will play on rebuilt fields and courts, and families will take advantage of a new athletic track, multi-use fields, two tennis courts, and new lighting. We will complete a project that turned a one-time landfill into a neighborhood jewel.

And for the first time, I will set aside \$1 million in our budget for our youth to allocate through "Participatory Budgeting." Our young people will learn how the budget works and decide where to invest these funds.

We can literally see the fast speed at which our housing market is growing.

New units are sprouting up across our city, bringing new residents and more vitality to our neighborhoods.

In fact, Boston's housing supply has grown faster than at any time in the last 50 years. From 2000 to 2010, we created 20,000 housing units in Boston, injecting \$6 billion of investment into the economy. 6,400 of those are set aside as affordable, including nearly 600 for the homeless.

And we have also seen more than 10,000 new dorm beds go up, creating housing for students and freeing up apartments for families.

But, today's market is different. We need a thoughtful new plan to meet the challenges and opportunities of the day. That's why I'm proud to announce the start of our Housing Boston 2020 Plan. Its first order of business will be to lay the groundwork for the creation of 30,000 new units by 2020 -- our fastest pace yet. We will work with experts inside and outside of government to prepare our city for the housing needs of all of our people, not just some of our people.

We see progress in so many places. We see fresher ideas building on already fresh ones.

We set about this year to make Boston a better city for working women. Three weeks ago, I met with women from across our city to put together our Advisory Council. Two weeks ago, I hosted a meeting with women business owners to talk about their unique needs. Last week, we had our first session to help Boston's young women negotiate for better pay, right in my own office! And today I am pleased to announce we are joined by the chair of our new Women's Workforce Council: Cathy Minehan. All of us together will make sure Boston becomes the first big city in the country to achieve pay equity for women.

We also have an ambitious green agenda. Last year we paved the way with neighborhood efforts to weatherize homes and a unique program to solarize roofs. In January, I announced new efforts to prepare for climate change. In February, we detailed new findings about the threats from sea level rise and new measures in the city to address it. And we have before the city council this week a new ordinance that will do for our buildings what consumer-friendly ratings have done for cars: Give commercial tenants better choices and drive down energy use in Boston.

And this year, we're building a better summer jobs program for the young people in our city. Last year, we recruited 38 new companies as part of our effort that put 10,000 kids to work. I thank all of you who contributed to that success. This year, I want to see another 40 new firms hire young people for the first time. It costs just \$2,000 to hire a student. The City invests over \$4 million. Together with our longstanding partners, we can make 2013 another record-breaking year for Boston's summer jobs program.

I have always said that the status quo is moving backward. Just moving forward isn't enough. We have to move ahead aggressively and relentlessly. This is the mindset of other leading cities across the world. This is what today's competitive landscape demands, and we demand it of ourselves. Every day. In every corner of our city. In every sector of our economy. In every school in our city. In every budget we build. In everything we do. We pile progress on top of progress. And that job is never done.

Thank you and now let's get back to work.