



# Housing

Working Group  
Transition Team Report

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Photos: Kit Pyne



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“What can Boston city government do—whether by itself or in partnership with private business, institutional entities, community based groups or others—to expand the city’s supply of affordable housing?”

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout his mayoral campaign, candidate Martin J. Walsh emphasized the importance of housing to the future of this city. Since his election, he has repeatedly said that housing is a “foundational cornerstone for connecting diverse neighborhoods, improving schools and communities, and cultivating civic engagement.” He recognizes, as does the Housing Working Group, that housing must be at the core of a comprehensive effort to promote equity at the neighborhood, city, and regional levels, expand opportunity, enhance the quality of life, reduce economic and educational disparities, and stop violence.

We must connect our housing strategies to other sectors and treat housing as a platform for successful lives and thriving, diverse neighborhoods. We believe that increased

investments in housing will pay big dividends for the city and yield positive outcomes across many sectors—the economy, education, health, public safety, and the environment.

## THE PROCESS

Mayor-elect Walsh asked the Housing Working Group, “What can Boston city government do—whether by itself or in partnership with private business, institutional entities, community based groups or others—to expand the city’s supply of affordable housing so that low-, moderate- and middle-income Bostonians can live in healthy, vibrant neighborhoods, while we continue to provide for homeless people and other vulnerable populations?”

It is widely acknowledged that we must build significantly more housing to meet the needs of our growing city and economy. Much of that housing must be affordable to low- and moderate-income families—and we must preserve the affordable housing that we already have—to meet the demographics of Boston, the incomes of our workforce, and the needs of our most economically disadvantaged citizens. While more housing development at all income levels is critical, new development and improved neighborhoods should not result in the displacement of the very people that helped to create those improvements in the first place. We believe that development without displacement is critical for the city’s future; properly planned, mixed-income development will be essential to avoid displacement of our low- and moderate-income residents over the next decade. This means implementing a housing strategy that is equitable, meeting the different needs of our

diverse neighborhoods and people. We need housing that can stabilize the lives of our most vulnerable residents, to dramatically reduce the scourge of homelessness. We need housing that can serve the needs of students, seniors, young professionals, families, and empty nesters across a range of income levels. We need a housing strategy that supports racial, ethnic, and economic diversity in all of our neighborhoods. We need a variety of housing types from rental to ownership to cooperatives, as well as single family homes, triple-deckers, and multi-family buildings. In the end, Boston will not thrive if it becomes a city just for the rich and poor. We seek to create a city where everyone who wants to live here can: both those already here and those yet to come.

To achieve this vision, Boston will need strong leadership from City Hall. Mayor Walsh has already demonstrated his commitment to provide that leadership. The Housing Working Group embraces his call to create a Housing Partnership Committee. The Housing Partnership Committee should have diverse representation from the housing field both inside and outside of city government, as well as from related sectors such as education, public safety, and health care to assist in linking housing strategy to comprehensive civic improvement. The committee should help refine and implement the recommendations set forth in this report, and provide oversight and monitoring of our progress toward specific multi-year goals. The Housing Partnership Committee can build on the prior administration’s Housing 2020 plan, but include present recommendations that set more ambitious goals for affordable housing development. We echo Mayor Walsh’s commitment to establish specific goals and benchmarks that can be carefully measured and evaluated over time to

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ensure that we are making progress and making mid-course corrections as needed.

Mayor Walsh should form an internal City of Boston “Housing Starts and Solutions” commission. The commission would be chaired by the mayor or his designee, and would include representatives from many areas of City Hall, such as the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Zoning Board of Appeals, Department of Neighborhood Development, Boston Housing Authority, Boston Fair Housing Commission, Inspectional Services Department, Transportation Department, Boston Public Health Commission,

Environment Department, Parks & Recreation Department, Boston Public Schools, Elderly Commission, Veterans’ Services and the Chair of the City Council’s Committee on Housing. The commission would meet regularly to discuss housing-related issues and trends.

This commission’s purpose would be two-fold: to increase regular communication between agencies handling housing matters, such as the BRA and DND, and to adopt an interdisciplinary approach to addressing the issues highlighted in this report. An interdisciplinary approach would allow the city to better target housing services and funds to those who would benefit the most. A separate standalone section of this report titled, “Improve Administration of Housing Programs” addresses the need for better communication between the BRA and DND.

As a State Representative, Mayor Walsh stood up for affordable housing. We know that he will continue to do so as mayor, whether it is fighting for a new and stronger inclusionary development policy or standing up for specific new housing development projects in the face of unreasonable neighborhood opposition. It is important that the city use an “equity lens” when making decisions about policy and projects. Such a lens asks how decisions will impact historically disadvantaged people and neighborhoods. We know the mayor will be a powerful voice with the state and federal government and with the private sector to advocate for the resources and policies we need.

## THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these tenets, our Housing Working Group Report provides policy recommendations

for Mayor Walsh to Keep, Implement, and Dream about in the following five major areas:

1. Support healthy, stable, diverse neighborhoods without displacement
2. Promote better community planning that meets the housing needs of Boston residents in every neighborhood
3. Reduce and prevent homelessness for families and individuals
4. Expand financial resources for affordable housing
5. Make Boston a national leader in healthy and green housing

We look forward to Mayor Walsh providing the type of collaborative leadership for which he is known, and which is essential to making progress. The mayor should use his office to convene key partners and stakeholders to help us to work together, across silos, sectors, and despite past battles, to achieve our shared vision of a Boston that provides good homes in good neighborhoods for all of its residents.

## **FOCUS 1: SUPPORT HEALTHY, STABLE, AND DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOODS WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT**

As Boston recovers from the Great Recession, we face both opportunities and challenges. The foreclosure crisis has

reduced homeownership rates in our most distressed neighborhoods, increased investor and absentee ownership, and led to skyrocketing rents. As home prices begin to rise, we could see further displacement and disruption in many of our neighborhoods. New development will bring jobs, opportunities, housing, and amenities to our city.

But new development also often brings change to neighborhoods, and if the change is not planned for and efforts are not made to preserve long-term affordability for existing residents, it can lead to displacement. While neighborhoods are continually changing under all economic circumstances, the Walsh administration must use planning and smart housing policy to manage the rate and scale of this change. The mayor's proposed Housing Partnership Committee can help address this issue.

## **KEEP**

- 1) Preserve existing affordable housing: Boston has approximately 40,000 privately owned housing units that have received public subsidies. Several thousand of these are at risk as their subsidies are set to expire over the next five or ten years. The city should continue its pro-active efforts and set a goal of preserving at least 95% of these units by convincing owners to renew subsidies or getting them to sell to



responsible owners who will, including non-profit developers and community development corporations. The city should continue to use M.G.L.c.40T to work with the state to strategically target resources on the most important preservation projects, especially those in neighborhoods with strong rental markets and/or a lack of other affordable housing.

2) Preserve public housing: The city should ensure that the Boston Housing Authority is able to maintain its 12,000 homes in good condition with an occupancy rate of at least 98%. Existing BHA properties may offer opportunities for on-site expansion.

3) Protect cooperative housing: Cooperative housing is an effective way to maintain affordability and build stronger communities. The city should resist efforts to weaken cooperatives.

4) Maintain homeownership education and foreclosure prevention: The city has a strong network of nonprofit organizations that provide high quality homeownership education and foreclosure prevention services. Boston should take proactive steps to ensure that this infrastructure is not only maintained, but that partnerships with the city are deepened. By investing in these organizations, Boston can leverage its limited dollars more effectively and ensure better outreach.

5) Enforce Boston Jobs Residents Policy: The city should seek to obtain the goals of the Boston Jobs Residents Policy to ensure that that local residents benefit from the construction jobs and contracting opportunities associated with new housing development in the city. This will enable more local residents to stay in their neighborhoods if they choose to do so.

## IMPLEMENT

1) Preventing eviction and foreclosure: The city should step up efforts to reduce unnecessary evictions by expanding pro-bono legal representation of tenants, increasing landlord/tenant mediation efforts, increasing education for tenants and landlords of their respective rights and responsibilities, and providing small amounts of financial assistance to stop evictions caused by very small rent arrearages.

2) Review and strengthen fair housing efforts:

Consistent with the new Fair Housing regulations expected to be released by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development in 2014, the city should undertake a comprehensive assessment of current fair housing efforts to ensure that all Boston residents are free from discriminatory actions and to reduce racial and economic segregation in the city and the region.

3) Acquire existing private housing stock and make it permanently affordable: Boston needs to increase its stock of homeownership and rental options that remain affordable as communities transform. Private parties around the country are buying up homes and renting them out. The city should create a system by which responsible nonprofits, community land trusts (CLTs), and other responsible owners can purchase small multifamily properties in key neighborhoods and build up a stock of affordable units over time, as properties can be acquired on a per unit cost lower than we can create a new unit of housing with subsidies. Key financial players such as banks and foundations could provide a working capital fund for such acquisitions, providing more flexibility and nimbleness in acquisitions than would public funds.

4) Expand home improvement/rehab lending and support: The Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) has operated effective home repair programs for years, assisting hundreds of Boston homeowners to ensure that their properties are safe and attractive. Demand for these programs currently

outstrips resources, yet these programs can be a very cost-effective way to preserve lower cost homeownership and rental opportunities. Existing Weatherization Assistance Program funds should be coordinated with general rehab efforts to stretch the dollars further.

5) Create Business opportunities: The city should develop goals and a strategy to expand opportunities for minority- and women-owned business enterprises to secure contracts on new housing development in all of the city's neighborhoods.

## DREAM

1) Artist live/work housing: The city should explore ways, including zoning changes, to create more artist live/work housing to ensure the city's vibrant artist community can remain in Boston.

2) Create a customer friendly/one-stop interface for residents to access affordable housing resources: Housing services and resources are spread across several city agencies, making it difficult for individuals and families to access the resources they need. New efforts should be undertaken to make processes and programs more accessible and transparent, including the consolidation of waiting lists and marketing lists, and the use of new technology tools to guide consumers towards appropriate housing services. Boston's technology community should be engaged to help the city make shopping for an affordable place to live as simple as the best online shopping experiences.

3) Increasing use of community land trusts: Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are a proven

model for creating long-term affordable housing opportunities—both ownership and rental—and ensure long-term stewardship of the properties. During the foreclosure crisis, CLTs locally and nationally showed a foreclosure rate of less than 1%, and have been an effective tool for supporting development without displacement. The city should develop tools and resources to help CLTs acquire both public and private land so it can be developed in way that creates broad public benefits. Many Boston neighborhoods anticipating development pressures could benefit from CLTs.

- 4) Connect housing to workforce development programs: More Boston families will be able to afford housing in the city if they are able to secure higher paying jobs. Housing providers should be encouraged to work with enhanced workforce development and asset development programs in order to help families move up the economic ladder and stay in Boston.
- 5) Analyze neighborhoods for appropriate planning and development: Planning at the neighborhood level will be critical to the development of new mixed-income housing. Many neighborhoods across the city could handle increased density. A thorough analysis would determine appropriate densities for each neighborhood.

## **FOCUS 2: PROMOTE BETTER COMMUNITY PLANNING THAT MEETS THE HOUSING NEEDS OF BOSTON RESIDENTS IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD**

Boston's economic growth and high quality of life is attracting more people and businesses. This creates opportunities and challenges that must be managed effectively to ensure that the benefits of growth are shared and sustainable. We need more effective citywide and neighborhood planning that achieves critical city, regional, and statewide goals while respecting the impact of growth on local neighborhoods and residents.

According to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Boston needs to create 35,000 to 52,000 new homes by 2030 to meet the needs of our growing and changing population and to at least partially address the serious shortage of affordable housing. With 23,000 low-income renters paying over 50% of their income toward rent, the status quo is not acceptable. While increasing job opportunities and income supports are part of addressing the cost burden, housing production and preservation strategies are also critical to addressing this affordability crisis.

### **KEEP**

- 1) Target resources to those most in need: Boston should continue to target the majority of existing public subsidies to support low-income families with the greatest housing needs. While some members of both the committee and the public support the allocation of subsidies



to create/maintain housing for moderate and middle income families, there is a consensus that the vast majority of city dollars should continue to go to those in greatest need.

2) Sustain strong market rate development:

Boston must keep attracting significant market-rate housing development that can meet the needs of our growing population, ease pressure on the existing housing stock, and generate create the taxes and other revenues needed to produce affordable housing. Where appropriate, higher densities can help lower the cost per unit, making homes less expensive, and more accessible to middle income households.

3) Leverage resources: Boston has an outstanding

track record of attracting significant federal and state resources for the production of affordable housing. Boston’s high capacity housing sector is able to successfully compete for these resources and we should maintain our competitive edge.

4) Support nonprofits and CDCs: Boston has one of the strongest networks of nonprofit housing development organizations, including CDCs. These mission-driven organizations are committed to permanent affordability and recycle their earnings back into the community for further public benefit. The city should seek to ensure the continued success of these organizations by targeting them for resources, helping them leverage private, state, and federal



dollars, and partnering with them to achieve shared goals.

## IMPLEMENT

- 1) Complete a market analysis and needs assessment to better understand what it means to be low-, moderate-, and middle-income in Boston's neighborhoods, what the housing needs are by income group and household type, and how this varies by race and ethnicity. This information will enable the city to adjust its planning efforts and allocation of resources appropriately. Generally, state and federal subsidies aid households making 60% or less of area median income (which for a family of 4 in Boston would be those making less than \$56,000.) This means many Boston families cannot afford even an "affordable" apartment, while many others who are also struggling are over the official income guidelines.
- 2) Better community and citywide planning: As part of a top-to-bottom review of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), reforms must strengthen the city's planning efforts. Boston needs a neighborhood process that is inclusive, transparent, and respected so that development decisions actually adhere to neighborhood plans. At the same time, these efforts must retain the flexibility to address changing market conditions and encourage responsible development. In addition, existing community task forces and oversight committees need to reflect the cultural, ethnic, income, and

generational diversity of the neighborhoods. Neighborhood plans need to help advance critical citywide goals, such as the production of more affordable and middle-income housing, and increases in neighborhood density. These plans should address racial and economic equity for each neighborhood and consider environmental and health impacts. In short, we need to move from an approach that is ad hoc, reactive, and siloed, to one that is proactive and comprehensive.

- 3) Better agency coordination: To achieve these goals, it is crucial to improve the communication and coordination between and among city and state agencies, including the BRA, the Department of Neighborhood Development (DND), Department of Transportation, MBTA, and others. Furthermore, all of the agencies responsible for permitting (e.g. ISD, BFD, BRA) need to better coordinate the process to reduce time, redundancy, and costs.
- 4) Transit oriented development (TOD): The City should work with the state, MBTA, and MAPC to map its critical transit nodes to determine the development opportunities available and to consider up-zoning and other strategies to leverage these opportunities. Transit locations should be developed as mixed-use, mixed-income areas that capitalize on transit assets. Boston must advocate for the transit improvements that are essential to making TOD sustainable for the long term.
- 5) Middle Income Housing: Over the past decade, the city's population increase has been largely at the low and the high end of the income spectrum, raising the prospect that Boston

could become a city stratified between the rich and the poor. The city needs to develop a comprehensive strategy for creating and retaining a strong middle class through zoning changes, homeownership programs, new development, and other tools. The average Boston schoolteacher heading up a family of four would not be eligible for most subsidies but could not afford the average rent of a two bedroom Boston apartment. While some committee members oppose using public subsidies for middle income households, others believe that this is an appropriate use of limited dollars as part of an overall housing program. In the end, the city's strategy must be carefully developed so that it does not reduce the funds available for housing low- and very low-income families, but rather increases total funding for housing, leverages market tools, and uses shallow subsidies to create economically diverse and stable neighborhoods. One low-cost option would be to provide zoning relief associated with frontage and setback requirements for small houses on small lots to encourage the building of small single and multi-family homes.

- 6) Inventory of Buildable, City-Owned Land: The city should conduct a thorough survey and create a master list of land held by the BRA, DND, Boston Housing Authority, and any other department holding title to land to identify buildable parcels. Applications to develop these parcels for public and affordable housing should be streamlined.

## DREAM

- 1) Student housing: Boston needs to work with its universities and colleges to dramatically increase on-campus housing for both undergraduate

and graduate students. With graduate school enrollments growing quickly and 92% of graduate students living off campus, the city needs to explore innovative ideas for housing this population. One idea worth serious consideration is a privately developed graduate student village that provides housing for students from multiple universities. The mayor should convene university leaders, developers, and state officials to explore this and other options. The city also needs to require that institutional master plans include sufficient on-campus student housing to meet the needs of undergraduate and graduate students.

- 2) Reduce cost of building housing: The city needs to convene key stakeholders to develop a concrete action plan for reducing the cost of housing development, looking at such issues as density, parking requirements, building techniques, design standards, labor costs, permitting, etc.
- 3) Seize large-scale development opportunities: Boston has several opportunities over the next decade to undertake large-scale development in transit friendly locations. The mayor should identify transit-oriented lots across the city, in which high-density, mixed income, mixed use, green developments that utilize the best current thinking in urban planning can be built. The scale and location of these sites should allow for significant income diversity, with the goal of creating housing that is one-third low-income, one-third moderate/middle-income, and one-third market rate.
- 4) Set ambitious goals for affordable housing production: The current Housing 2020 plan calls for 30,000 new homes by 2020, with 5,000 aimed at middle income and 5,000 aimed at low/moderate income households. We should

seek to maintain overall production levels while striving for a more balanced mix of housing for the lower, middle, and higher segments of the market. The Housing Partnership Committee should establish an aggressive, long term affordable housing production goal for the city that will increase projected affordable housing production by 2020 from the 5,000 to at least 6,000 units, or more if possible. This will require more resources (see below), quicker approval times, more density, modified design standards, reduced construction costs, federal and state support, and access to public land.

### **FOCUS 3: REDUCE AND PREVENT HOMELESSNESS FOR FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS**

There is a homelessness crisis in Boston<sup>1</sup>. On any given night, almost 7,000 Bostonians do not have long-term stable housing. Even with an overall improvement in the economy, low and moderate income families and individuals continue to struggle. Indeed, our shelter resources are stretched well beyond their limits, as over 2,000 families across Massachusetts (most from Boston) are housed in motels.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> City of Boston Homeless Census, December 12, 2012. <http://www.bphc.org/programs/esc/homeless-census/Forms%20%20Documents/2012-2013%20Key%20Findings.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts Department of Housing and Commu-

Boston has had a lot of success in, ensuring people don't have to sleep on our streets through a range of initiatives which have included increasing the availability of supportive housing, setting up homelessness prevention programs, and requiring a homelessness priority in affordable housing developments. However, more must be done to address homelessness, both in the short- and long-term, with the recognition that individuals and families experiencing homelessness face different barriers to housing stability.

We recommend the implementation of several strategies identified in the recently released "Bringing Boston Home: An Action Plan to House Boston's Homeless,"<sup>3</sup> and have included some of the plan's tactics here as guides for the Walsh administration.

## KEEP

- 1) Keep the homelessness set aside in affordable housing projects: Affordable housing developments that receive funds from the City of Boston are required to set aside 10 percent of units for those who have been homeless. In addition, homelessness is a priority for public housing.
- 2) Continue the efforts to reduce street homelessness, as well as the High Utilizers of Emergency Services (HUES) program: HUES identifies medically frail homeless individuals and places them in permanent supportive housing with the aid of individualized service and housing plans, increasing their stability

nity Development housing stabilization entry data, as of 1/14/2014.<https://hed-dhsentry.azurewebsites.net/default.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> The City of Boston Leadership Council on Homelessness (2013). Bringing Boston Home: An Action Plan to Housing Boston's Homeless 2013-2016.[http://www.cityofboston.gov/dnd/PDFs/Bringing\\_Boston\\_Home\\_web.pdf](http://www.cityofboston.gov/dnd/PDFs/Bringing_Boston_Home_web.pdf)

and reducing emergency service and health care costs.

- 3) Continue to provide homelessness prevention programs: Prevention efforts that enable individuals and families to keep their housing reduce the costs to government that homelessness can create. For example, one-time assistance of \$6,000 or less can prevent homelessness while the annual cost of housing one family in a shelter can reach \$43,000 even before taking into account the additional costs of homelessness related to ill health and the need for other services.
- 4) Maintain strong linkages between homeless shelters, supportive housing providers, and alcohol and drug recovery programs: For some individuals, housing stability depends on pathways to recovery, and existing sobriety programs should be maintained.

## IMPLEMENT

- 1) Build on prevention efforts through the expansion of eviction prevention programs: While the city cannot and should not try to prevent all evictions—sometimes evictions are appropriate and necessary to protect other residents and the financial health of the property—steps can be taken to prevent unnecessary evictions. For many households, a small level of financial assistance can prevent an eviction for rent arrearages. In the short-term, we recommend an analysis of court records to determine the number of families that could benefit from such a program. In addition, measures should be taken to prevent unnecessary evictions related to doubling up. Furthermore, innovative approaches to mediation between tenants and property management should be implemented by relying

on strong resident services that serve as a support liaison and advocate. Such programs can help tenants retain their housing and landlords reduce their costs and vacancies.

- 2) Advocate at the state level for additional and more flexible housing resources: The city's resources should be examined so that they can be fully aligned with the Commonwealth's funding. These resources should include
  - 1) additional congregate housing units, specialized to address each of the following: veterans, the elderly, those with a history of chronic substance abuse, and families
  - 2) additional mobile rental vouchers (MRVP)
  - 3) continued efforts and funds to address the immediate housing needs of families transitioning off the HomeBASE program and
  - 4) increased flexibility of RAFT funding to respond to the greater needs (E.g., income profiles) of Boston families in need.
- 3) Aid the BHA to complete their review of turnovers in BHA housing: The BHA has begun a review of the turnover of vacant units. The city should assist in both the review process and development of the resulting implementation plan.
- 4) Complete an inventory of the homelessness service infrastructure: A top to bottom review could reveal gaps and deficiencies that can be addressed immediately with minimal resources.
- 5) Coordinate with DHCD, neighboring jurisdictions, and agencies to more actively participate in the statewide family homelessness efforts: More than 50% of the state's homeless families claim to originate from Boston. These families are often sheltered out of the area. It is important to work with

other entities across the Commonwealth to have a strong presence in the statewide strategy development and implementation of shelter and placement policies for Boston families, with particular attention to family proximity to jobs, schools, and medical services.

## DREAM

- 1) Increase availability of supportive housing: Expand the production of homeless housing production beyond the historic production rate of 75 units per year. This will require strong leadership from the city to site developments despite opposition from some neighborhood residents.
- 2) Increase the availability of affordable housing for families: Families should not be forced to be homeless in order to gain access to affordable housing. The availability of affordable housing targeted to very-low income households should be increased. The homeless set-aside and priority should be reviewed and possibly expanded.
- 3) Provide pathways out of poverty: In conjunction with the state, we need to formalize case management and stabilization efforts and ensure quality control across homeless service agencies. The goal is to ensure that individualized plans and linkages to programs are created that help individuals and families address the educational, workforce development, and public health needs of those who have experienced homelessness. These programs help families and individuals break the cycle of poverty.
- 4) Increase linkages between homeless service

agencies and programs that support those most likely to become homeless: Expand connections to programs that address veterans' services, mental health issue, alcohol and drug recovery, domestic violence prevention, and other specific needs.

- 5) Improve relations between homeless service agencies and landlords/property owners in the private sector: It is crucial to acknowledge the important roles landlords can play in combatting the crisis of homelessness. The city should engage them in regular landlord education groups and landlord/tenant mediation programs to reduce evictions.

#### **FOCUS 4: EXPAND FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

According to the Housing 2020 report, Boston will need to invest \$115 million of its own resources to produce the 5,000 affordable homes projected in that plan, assuming level federal funding. To build 6,000 or more units will require significantly more city resources, perhaps as much as \$200 million by 2020.

The Housing Working Group heard testimony about a number of different options for raising money and protecting tenants, from easier to implement changes such as an increase in linkage fees, to ideas where there is significant

disagreement, including real estate transfer taxes and rent stabilization. The Housing Working Group believes that the city's strong economic growth and high-capacity housing sector creates many opportunities to generate revenues and spend them more efficiently. The Housing Partnership Committee, working with the mayor and agency leaders, should determine precisely how much new revenue is necessary to achieve our goals and use an array of tools and programs to generate that revenue in a fair and sustainable manner.

#### **KEEP**

- 1) Linkage program: The city should continue its highly effective linkage program and immediately institute inflation adjustments to catch up to increases of the past three years. It should institute regular inflation adjustments going forward.
- 2) Strong partnerships: The City of Boston has strong partnerships with a host of private, public, and quasi-public entities that support affordable housing development and preservation. The city should seek to leverage these relationships to increase the resources available for city projects and work collaboratively with them to find creative ways to lower costs and increase production.
- 3) City Line Item: For the past several years, the city has included a line item in the budget to support affordable housing. Mayor Walsh should increase that line item to \$15 million annually to provide a consistent source of flexible dollars for

housing programs.

- 4) Flexibility: City dollars are particularly valuable because they are flexible and can be deployed in accordance with city priorities and guidelines, rather than those established by the state or federal government. The city should take advantage of this flexibility to develop housing across a range of housing types, tenures, and development models.

## IMPLEMENT

- 1) Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP): The IDP policy has generated hundreds of affordable units and millions of dollars for housing, but it has been poorly implemented and monitored. The city of Boston should order a complete audit of the program to identify precisely how much money is available, whether additional funds should be collected, and to identify the complete stock of IDP units and their characteristics. Following this review, the city should consider a number of steps to strengthen the policy. The Housing Working Group supports the development of onsite units and believes that developers should have the ability to build offsite units or pay a fee that can support the development of an equivalent number of units elsewhere in the city. The Housing Working Group also agrees that this program should be implemented to promote mixed income buildings and neighborhoods, and retain economic diversity across the city. All IDP dollars should be administered by DND.

The Housing Working Group did not reach a consensus about other ideas that were proposed such as whether to increase the required percentage, adjust income targeting, or to adapt the policy to different neighborhood contexts. The Housing

Partnership Committee can help the city to determine these additional refinements and ensure complete transparency for all aspects of the program.

- 1) Improve Administration of Housing Programs: All funding for affordable housing should be channeled to the DND to ensure consistency, transparency, and accountability. The city should also make sure that dollars are being allocated across a variety of needs from new development to preservation, to homeownership education, to home improvement programs, and other uses. The goal is to ensure that the city's housing dollars are supporting a comprehensive approach to housing policy.
- 2) Advocate for state, federal and private resources: Mayor Walsh should use his bully pulpit and relationships to advocate forcefully for state and federal resources for affordable housing, including most immediately the recapitalization of the state Brownfields Redevelopment Fund. The current state Housing Development Incentive Program could be modified, for example, to be more encouraging of middle income rental development in Boston.
- 3) Inventory Public Land: Public land represents a public resource as valuable as dollars and should be deployed with equal diligence, strategy, and transparency. The city should complete an inventory of all public land and determine which parcels are best suited for permanent, affordable housing development. Such land should be made available at little to no cost for affordable, deed-restricted housing development.
- 4) Investigate new sources of housing funds:

DND should explore new funding sources that can be created or expanded, including city implementation of a bond-financing source for housing development, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and other models from other cities.

## DREAM

- 1) **Community Preservation Act:** While there was not complete consensus on this point, a majority of the committee believes the city should enact the Community Preservation Act in 2014 in order to generate millions of dollars for affordable housing, historic preservation, and green space development. CPA would generate additional tax revenue—and significant state matching funds—to be used for a variety of housing and community improvement projects. Given the differences in opinion around the enactment of the CPA within the Housing Working Group and within the broader community, we believe that this is one area in which Mayor Walsh’s leadership and his ability to bridge people and communities will be extremely important.
- 2) **Double city funding for affordable housing:** Consistent with the need for a substantial increase in affordable housing development, the city should seek to double the amount of funding it provides to housing over the next five years. This requires a complete assessment of current funding levels and an exploration of potential new funding sources, including a potential bond financing program for housing development, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and models from other cities.

## FOCUS 5: MAKE BOSTON A NATIONAL LEADER IN HEALTHY AND GREEN HOUSING

Boston is a national leader in affordable housing development, green energy technology, and health care. This gives us an opportunity to be a national leader in connecting these sectors in ways that dramatically improve the quality and health of our environment, our neighborhoods, and our housing options, while reducing health disparities and improving overall health among our residents. Recent and projected policy shifts related to climate change, energy, and health care are creating substantial opportunities to leverage the connections among these sectors.

## KEEP

- 1) **Strong lead paint programs:** Boston and the Commonwealth have long been national leaders in lead poisoning prevention and treatment. Boston should continue its aggressive approach to lead

paint abatement in our older housing stock.

- 2) **Renew Boston:** Renew Boston has helped to bring energy efficiency improvements to hundreds of Boston homeowners and tenants. The program should be continued, expanded, and improved to make it more customer friendly and easier to use.
- 3) **Retrofit existing affordable and private rental housing:** In recent years, the Boston Housing Authority and many owners of affordable housing units have begun to retrofit their buildings to make them more energy and water efficient, and to improve air quality. These efforts should continue and become commonplace, and should include the integration of solar and other renewable energy technologies. However, many private landlords, for-profit and nonprofit developers lack access to the funds and technical knowledge they need to undertake these “green retrofits.” The City of Boston should launch a targeted financing program, perhaps in conjunction with local banks, that will allow the city to share energy savings and, over time, generate a source of additional funding for housing. The city should also continue to help landlords with Housing Choice Voucher tenants to maintain and repair their apartments following regular inspections.

## IMPLEMENT

- 1) **Resident Services and Property Management:** The city should work with the BHA and private owners of affordable housing units to expand resident services and to ensure top-notch property maintenance. These efforts should include programs to educate tenants about the importance of

energy and water conservation, and the need to properly maintain their apartments.

- 2) **Address problem properties:** The city must maintain and expand efforts to address dilapidated properties that blight neighborhoods, reduce home values, and threaten public safety. The Committee heard a range of testimony on the effectiveness of the new Rental Housing Inspection Ordinance, with some people voicing strong support for the law and others expressing concern about its costs. That said, all agree that we need to make sure that our private rental housing stock is safe, clean, and healthy. The mayor should convene stakeholders to evaluate the ordinance and other strategies to ensure high quality rental housing throughout Boston’s neighborhoods. This will require a proactive code enforcement strategy led by a more efficient and responsive Inspectional Services Department (ISD). ISD should focus the bulk of its resources on the worst violations and the worst landlords by creating incentives/rewards for good owners, and increasingly stiff penalties for the worst. The city should also make more effective and aggressive use of the receivership law that allows the local government to fix up properties when owners refuse to do so.
- 3) **Promote partnerships between community health centers and housing developers/owners:** Many CDCs and community health centers have begun working together to provide health education and outreach services to residents. These programs should be encouraged and expanded.

## DREAM

1) Form New Partnership to Make Boston a National Leader: Mayor Walsh should convene the CEOs of the city's largest hospitals, insurance companies, and health care providers (such as community health centers) with those from the affordable housing and development sector and charge them with developing a strategy for making Boston the nation's leader in connecting housing and health. Research from Boston and elsewhere has shown that vast amounts of health care spending, and particularly health problems among the poor, can be prevented by improving the quality of housing and eliminating the causes of chronic asthma, lead poisoning, and the like. This suggests that a pilot effort to direct Medicaid funds towards housing quality improvements, for example, could save lives and taxpayer dollars. Such a strategy would take advantage of the new requirements under the Affordable Care Act for hospitals to invest in community needs, and the incentives in the ACA to address the social determinants of health disparities.

2) Health Impact Assessments: The city should promote the use of Health Impact Assessments to ensure that new housing developments will advance health and reduce health disparities.

3) Housing as anti-crime strategy: Violence is one of the most significant public health issues facing our neighborhoods. At the same time, there is growing evidence that strategic community and housing development can significantly reduce crime and violence in our neighborhoods. The Boston Police Department should work closely with DND, BRA, CDCs, and others to identify trouble spots where redevelopment could have a positive impact

on crime. This partnership should help developers design buildings and common spaces in such a way that keeps "eyes on the street" and reduces crime.

4) Net-zero housing: Work with developers and property owners to set and achieve a goal for increasing the number of homes that have a net energy use of zero by dramatically increase the use of solar and other renewable energy technologies to heat and power homes, and by encouraging deep energy retrofits.

5) Promote Eco-Innovation Districts: The Codman Square NDC has launched an eco-innovation district in its neighborhood with the goal of pursuing a comprehensive sustainability agenda in the area. This model should be replicated in other neighborhoods.

## Housing Working Group

### Co-chairs

- Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, CEO, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)
- Joe Kriesberg, CEO, Massachusetts Association of Development Corporations

### Members

- David Abromowitz, Partner/Director, Co-Chair of Real Estate Practice, Goulston & Storrs, PC
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- Tim Davis, Consultant and Senior Research Fellow, University of Massachusetts Boston
- Mark Fortune, Business Agent, Sprinkler Fitters Local 550

- Donna Haig Friedman, Director, Center for Social Policy, Research Associate Professor, McCormack Graduate School, UMass Boston
- Stephen Fulton, Rehousing Contractor, Department of Housing and Community Development
- Kevin Honan, State Representative, Chairman of Joint Committee on Housing
- Chris Jones, Executive Director, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative
- Chrystal Kornegay, President and CEO, Urban Edge
- Gail Latimore, Executive Director, Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation
- Lydia Lowe, Executive Director, Chinese Progressive Association
- Maureen McDonagh, Director, Housing Law Clinic, Harvard Law School; Attorney and Lecturer on Law
- Andre Porter, Executive Director, Massachusetts Office of Small Business & Entrepreneurship
- Rev. Anne Rousseau, CFO, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership
- Byron Rushing, State Representative
- Alejandra St. Guillen, Executive Director, Oíste
- John Tobin, Vice President of Community Affairs, Northeastern University
- Greg Vasil, CEO, Greater Boston Real Estate
- Bridgette Wallace, CEO and Co-founder, Wallace and Grant
- Susan Woods, Affordable Housing Property Management Consultant and former Project Manager at City of Boston Department of Neighborhood Development

## Staff Support

- John Laadt, Boston resident

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