

Mayor Martin J. Walsh
Annual Report to the Boston Municipal Research Bureau
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As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Matt [Keifer]. Thank you, Sam [Tyler]. And thank you everyone for being here. This is a great opportunity for me to speak to leaders in so many different fields. We share one goal: to make Boston the best it can be.

Let me begin by introducing some of the members of my cabinet who are here today. This is the City of Boston's new management team, and I'd like you to meet them.

- Dan Koh is my new chief of staff.
- Lisa Pollack is my chief communications officer.
- Joyce Linehan is my chief of policy.
- Representative Gene O'Flaherty is corporation counsel.
- Joe Rull is chief of operations and administration.
- Felix Arroyo is my chief of health and human services.
- Sheila Dillon is chief of housing and director of Neighborhood Development.
- And I'm so pleased to introduce our new superintendent-in-chief of the police department, William Gross. Willie, take a bow.

Finally, Meredith Weenick, who, as I think most of you know, is our chief financial officer. Meredith, I want to say a special thank you for the hard work you're putting into our upcoming budget, and for your years of dedicated service to the people of Boston.

It's been exactly 60 days since I was sworn in as Mayor. A lot has happened in

two months. There may still be some snow on the ground, but it's a time of growth in Boston. We've cut ribbons on new buildings. We've celebrated new startups. We've listened to new voices and welcomed new ideas.

And we're not slowing down. We're going to build on this growth. We're going out into the neighborhoods, around the country, and across the globe to promote Boston as a place to do business. We're going to bring new economic opportunity to the city. I'm going to talk today about how we'll do that.

But let me start by doing something different. I know that traditionally, the mayor closes this speech by asking you to hire Boston youth for summer jobs. I want to do that right now. Because before I talk about economic growth, I want you to commit with me to making our young people a part of that future. Unfortunately, most of our largest employers don't participate. But look at John Hancock: They hire hundreds of young people every summer. The young men and women they mentor do real and productive work. They gain meaningful experience, and they earn good money.

If you haven't made summer job hires before, consider it today. We make it very easy for you. Just go to www.bostonsummerjobs.org. Remember, it's not just good for our young people, it's good for our city; and it's good for your business.

Let me describe my administration's progress so far in some key areas. We are tackling the most urgent challenges directly, while at the same time building a lasting foundation for long-term success.

We have a new commitment to data-driven management. In cabinet meetings, each chief is responsible for reporting key metrics and trends. And I'm able to track this data in real time. This information will enhance our performance in everything we do: from sending out snow plows at a moment's notice; to

identifying crime hotspots before they erupt; to anticipating the needs of our schools for years to come.

In public safety, we have listened to survivors of violence and community leaders. We appointed the most diverse Command Staff in the history of the police department. I'm very proud of this team. For the first time, our command staff reflects accurately the population of our city. In addition to Chief Gross, Superintendent Randall Halstead is in charge of the Night Command. And Superintendent Lisa Holmes is overseeing the police academy. It's truly a new era.

In education, we have put together a diverse search committee to find the next Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools. Bob Gallery of Bank of America is a co-chair, bringing a business perspective to the table. I charged this team with finding a proven leader, someone dedicated to closing the achievement gap and putting our children on a pathway to good careers. Beginning next week, we will hold six public hearings across the city to make sure that parents, students, and the entire community have a voice in this decision. I encourage all of you to attend one of these meetings, because we need the input of experienced leaders.

In economic development, we have kept Boston moving. Projects across the city are advancing from approval, to groundbreaking, to ribbon-cutting.

We marked the opening of a one-million-square-foot facility by Vertex Pharmaceuticals on Fan Pier.

We cut the ribbon for WeWork, with startup space for over 2,000 entrepreneurs in Fort Point.

On Columbus Avenue we broke ground on a 225 million dollar science complex at Northeastern University.

And because we kept the pipeline open, dozens of innovative projects are moving forward: from the expansion of the Landmark Center in the Fenway; to affordable housing in Chinatown; from a surplus-energy building in Mission Hill; to startup space in Allston.

And we are close to opening our own new civic gem. The Ferdinand Building will be the new headquarters of the Boston Public School Department. With retail and civic space, it will provide a new economic engine for Dudley Square.

Looking ahead, we have begun to design a more efficient, transparent, and equitable system for future growth.

It starts with permitting. My standard as Boston's mayor is that you'll get the same attention whether you're a big company, or someone in need of a back porch. I have directed the Inspectional Services Department to meet aggressive new benchmarks: our goals are to respond to all questions within one business day; and approve 75 percent of as-of-right permits in under 20 days. Furthermore, we will completely revamp our online permitting system. We're going to hold a hackathon, tapping Boston's innovation community to create a more user-friendly experience.

To move forward, we also need to know where we stand. For that reason, I've commissioned a performance audit of the BRA by the professional services firm KPMG. Meanwhile, we've asked the BRA to open up more of the development process to the public. Starting soon, the documents under discussion at board meetings will be visible in real time on the web. This is a strong step toward a new level of transparency.

But it's not enough to reform the existing system and then just sit back and hope for the best. We have to be proactive. As soon as we stop to admire how far we've come, we will be at risk of falling behind. Businesses and workers know that. And my Administration does too.

That's why in the months and years ahead, we are going to recruit businesses from around the nation and across the globe.

Locally, we want to cultivate the businesses that call Boston home. If you're a startup ready to expand, or an established company outgrowing your headquarters: we want you to build your business in Boston, whether that means Downtown Crossing or Mattapan Square.

Nationally, we will pitch Boston to entrepreneurs and established businesses all over the country. We have talent and culture that no other city can match. I am confident we can put Boston's business environment up against any other.

And we are not going to wait for businesses to come to us. I spoke last week at City-to-City, a program in which Boston leaders forge ties with cities around the world that are eager to partner with us. My economic development chief John Barros and I will be joining City to City on its next venture, in New York in October. And by the way, let me predict right now that long after the Yankees have gone on vacation, both we and the Red Sox will still be competing.

In the meantime, we're thinking globally. Boston is already a mecca for international students, artists, and scientists. We can also be a mecca for international business.

Next week, I am meeting with the consuls general stationed in Boston from dozens of countries. My message to the Consular Corps will be this: Boston wants to be your nation's number one business partner. We have everything your employers and entrepreneurs need:

- a 21st-century workforce;
- a thriving ecosystem of creative workspaces;
- and the richest concentration of medical, scientific, and cultural innovators in the world.

Now, as I think all of you know, in a global economy, retaining talent is just as important as recruiting employers. For that reason, an international business hub needs a truly cosmopolitan culture. Diversity is already a strength of ours. And Logan Airport now connects us to more cities around the world than ever before. But again, we have to be proactive.

That's why we're making culture a priority. That's why we've created a cabinet-level position for arts and culture. And it's why I'm appointing a Late Night Task Force, a diverse group of restaurant and bar owners who will look at how we can foster a safe and vibrant late-night culture. Working with the state on legal barriers, and listening to voices from all over the city, we can create the kind of nightlife that visitors expect in a world-class city. Those international students who flock to our colleges, we want them to stay here, start their businesses, and tell their friends back home that Boston is the place to be.

Finally, a city on the move needs to be forward-thinking about transportation. Our streets are historic, but we are moving into the future: on foot and in wheelchairs, on bikes and in buses, in cars and on trains. Therefore, I'm pleased to announce the Boston Mobility Action Plan, a public process to guide and envision our transportation future. We will cut travel times, help the environment, and make Boston a better place to live and work.

We are dedicated to achieving these goals, but City Hall can't do it alone. It has to be a citywide mission. We need the support of leaders in business, in nonprofit, and in the community. That's why I'm asking for your help today.

First, please join with me as ambassadors for our great city. As you meet partners and clients from around the world, spread the word that Boston is open for business.

Second, help us convince our government partners to support our efforts.

After the success we've seen with the Vertex project, I'm asking the Legislature to expand Boston's access to the I-Cubed program. These public-private partnerships develop neighborhoods, create good jobs, and more than pay for themselves.

And I'm calling on Congress to reform immigration. We need a system that works for our city, our country, and our economy.

If we work together, we will create new forms of opportunity, bringing good jobs and smart growth to the entire city.

As we seek new partners, the City has to make sure its own house is in order. In that spirit, I want to say a few words about our budget outlook.

We met last week with the rating agencies that monitor the city's fiscal health. I'm pleased to announce that for the first time ever in the city's history, we have received perfect Triple-A ratings from both Moody's and Standard & Poor's. As we head to the bond market this week, this upgrade is going to save us real money. And it reaffirms our bright prospects for the future.

As I prepare to bring my first budget to the City Council, we will not do anything to jeopardize this coveted status. We will present a balanced budget and a smart budget. Embracing efficiency, we can be lean and provide the same level of service. Embracing innovation, we can take our services to another level.

The school budget is a special priority of mine. We've seen shortfalls in federal and state funding. But I will NOT shortchange our kids, ever. Even in these difficult fiscal times, I am committed to expanding pre-kindergarten seats and reforming our high schools, to put kids on track for college and career success.

Wages and benefits are a large part of the city's expenses. So I want to report good news in our relationship with employee labor unions. As you may have heard, this is important to me. Our workers are the backbone of what we do. It takes trust on both sides to keep that work going. Working with several different unions, we have seen that trust grow.

- We have earned the ability to open our branch libraries on Saturdays and our central library on Sundays;
- We have secured the right to move Code Enforcement from Inspectional Services to Public Works;
- Our police and firefighters are going to be able to carry and administer the lifesaving overdose medicine Narcan;
- And we have begun constructive talks on new contracts for firefighters, superior officers, and detectives.

This positive relationship with our workforce paves the way to a firm fiscal footing for years to come. It goes hand-in-hand with our ambitious growth strategy. We can invest confidently in the future of this city.

In closing, I want to say a word about the Boston Marathon. Our Marathon is a

major international athletic event. And it has long been a showcase for the city's best qualities. That's exactly what it will remain.

This year, we will once again share our beautiful city with the world. And we will also share our resilient spirit. We suffered a terrible tragedy last year, touching many of us in personal ways. But watching the courage of the survivors, showed us something about our city. We came to know ourselves better as a community. We are going to take time to honor these heroes. And on Marathon Monday we're going to put on a world-class race for participants, residents, and visitors alike.

Because in the end, this is Boston and this is our Marathon. It will stay that way, even as we welcome the world to our city. The world will once again see what makes us who we are. It's not just our historic streets and our iconic landmarks. It's not just the skills and smarts that make our economy tick. It's our commitment to a shared future that binds us all together and makes us Boston Strong.

This is my first time speaking to you. I'll get to do it at least three more times, God willing. I know in the years to come we will find much that we agree about, and we will also disagree on some things, too. But looking out at all of you today, I know one thing we will always share. I know we share the spirit that makes our world-class city a community. It's a spirit that embraces the future; it's a spirit that leaves no one behind; and it's a spirit that is confident and open to the world.

Thank you and God Bless you.