



City of Boston, Massachusetts  
Office of the Mayor  
**MICHELLE WU**

March 3, 2025

## TO THE CITY COUNCIL

Dear Councilors:

I transmit herewith for your approval a revised home rule petition to the General Court entitled "Petition for a Special Law Re: An Act Relative to Creation of a Branch of the Boston Public Library (BPL) within an Affordable Housing Development in the Dorchester Section of the City of Boston."

Through this special act, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, d/b/a The Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA) seeks to ground lease BPDA-owned vacant land at 555- 559 Columbia Road to a developer selected via a Request for Proposals process who will participate in a redevelopment of the BPDA land using city and state funds to fund the development of affordable housing. This project will also create a shell and core space within it that would be conveyed to the Boston Public Library at cost, to allow BPL to build out the space as the new Uphams Corner branch library in Dorchester. Creating the branch library within a larger affordable housing development is a way to achieve two much-needed public purposes within one development. This redevelopment necessitates certain exemptions from the Commonwealth's contract procurement and award laws. Although there have been reforms to the state statutes regarding filed sub-bids under Ch. 149, the changes are insufficient to allow for the selected developer to move forward in a redevelopment effort of this kind. Without passage, the project must adhere to an extremely structured filed sub-bid process, with separate General Contractor and subcontractor selection. The Chinatown Branch Library development project has highlighted some additional exemptions to state law that would facilitate these projects, which is why a revised version of this special act has been submitted to the Council. These exemptions will not compromise a fair and transparent process because the BPDA's selected developer and the BPL must still adhere to the stringent regulations of its public funding sources.

This model has been utilized successfully by several agencies who have applied for similar legislation. R-1, the BPDA's first development project of affordable housing with a branch library space project in Chinatown, was passed in December 2022, and the Legislature passed a similar HRP for the redevelopment of the West End Branch Library in December 2024. The Boston Housing Authority (BHA) has filed similar legislation for BHA housing located at Whittier Street, Orient Heights, Bromley Heath, Mission Main, Orchard Gardens, Maverick Gardens, West Broadway Homes, and Old Colony, Washington Beech, Franklin Hill, Amory Street, and Lenox-Camden family developments.



I urge your Honorable Body to support this special act so that we can make this redevelopment effort a reality for the Uphams Corner neighborhood in Dorchester and its people who have been waiting for a new branch library.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michelle Wu', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Michelle Wu  
Mayor of Boston

# CITY OF BOSTON

## IN CITY COUNCIL

*WHEREAS*, The Boston Redevelopment Authority seeks to participate in a redevelopment to create affordable housing that includes shell and core space for a branch library in Uphams Corner in Dorchester. This redevelopment necessitates certain exemptions from the Commonwealth's contract procurement and award laws; and

*WHEREAS*, Participating in the redevelopment will increase the supply of affordable housing in the neighborhood, as well as provide space for a long-awaited branch library, furthering the aims of the Commonwealth's housing and community service initiatives; and

*WHEREAS*, The exemptions will not contravene the legislative intent behind the affected procurement and public contract laws because the additional regulation and public oversight that accompanies the Boston Public Library's funding sources minimizes the risk of unfair competition and misuse of taxpayer funds.

*NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED*,

That a petition to the General Court, accompanied by a bill for a special law relating to the Boston Planning & Development Agency and the Boston Public Library to be filed with an attested copy of this order be, and hereby is, approved under Clause 1 of Section 8 of Article II, as amended, of the Articles of Amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; provided, that the Legislature may reasonably vary the form and substance of the requested legislation within the scope of the general public objectives of this petition:

**PETITION FOR A SPECIAL LAW RE:**

**AN ACT RELATIVE TO CERTAIN AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND BRANCH LIBRARY SPACE IN THE DORCHESTER SECTION OF THE CITY OF BOSTON**

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

**SECTION 1.** Construction and development activity related to redevelopment by the developer selected by the Boston Redevelopment Authority of subsidized affordable housing, including space for a branch library to be procured by the Boston Public Library, to be built on Boston Redevelopment Authority-owned land under a ground lease, or any part thereof, shall not be subject to any general or special law related to the procurement and award of contracts for the planning, design, construction management, construction, reconstruction, installation, demolition, maintenance, or repair of buildings or public works by a public agency, including chapter 149, chapter 7C, or section 39M of chapter 30 of the General Laws, but shall be subject to sections 26 to 27H, inclusive, of chapter 149 of the General Laws. Nor shall the acquisition of any interest in real property by the City of Boston necessary to support the completion of the project be subject to section 16 of chapter 30B of the General Laws, nor shall the cost of any such acquisition be limited by any general or special law, including section 12 of chapter 642 of the Acts of 1966. Contracts for the construction, reconstruction, alteration, remodeling, or repair of any publicly owned public works that service this project and would otherwise be subject to section 39M of chapter 30 of the General Laws shall be subject to said section 39M if the redevelopment of the project is funded in part by state or federal government low-income housing tax credit, grant, or loan, or pursuant to the issuance of tax-exempt bonds authorized by general law. A conveyance of the project, whether by leasehold or fee estate, to an urban redevelopment corporation organized under chapter 121A of the General Laws or to a nonprofit state and federally tax-exempt corporation organized for the purpose of revitalizing the project, shall be subject to chapter 30B of the General Laws to the extent that the project is conveyed to an entity that is not owned, controlled, or managed by the Boston Public Library on the date of the conveyance.

**SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect upon its passage.

**I HEREBY CERTIFY  
THE FORGOING, IF PASSED IN  
THE ABOVE FORM, WILL BE IN  
ACCORDANCE WITH LAW.**

  
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**ADAM CEDERBAUM  
CORPORATION COUNSEL** kmw