



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Government Operations
Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair

One City Hall Square 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02201 ♦ Phone: (617) 635-3040 ♦ city.council@boston.gov

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

December 3, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Government Operations was referred the following docket for consideration:

Docket #0766, Ordinance extending and enhancing protections for tenants facing displacement due to condominium or cooperative conversion in the City of Boston.

This matter was sponsored by Councilors Liz Breadon and Ruthzee Louijeune and was referred to the Committee on March 31, 2025.

Summary of Legislation

Docket #0766, seeks to amend the City's Rental Housing Equity Ordinance by broadening the ordinance's scope and applicability, updating key definitions to ensure continued alignment with state law, enhancing tenant notice requirements, rent safeguards, and purchase opportunities during the conversion process and extending the ordinance's sunset date to 2030.

Section 1 reaffirms that Boston continues to face a rental housing emergency, citing rising costs, limited availability, and displacement pressures. This declaration provides the legal basis for adopting local condominium conversion protections that go beyond state law.

Section 2 broadens the ordinance's scope by narrowing the small-building exemption so that only owner-occupied buildings with fewer than four units remain exempt, while non-owner-occupied buildings of the same size become subject to the ordinance.

Section 3 updates several definitions to incorporate Chapter 527 "as amended from time to time," to preserve the City's authority to update the ordinance upon any future changes in state law.

Section 4 increases the minimum notice a landlord must give before requiring a tenant to vacate for a conversion from one year to two years, providing tenants with additional stability during the process.

Section 5 requires landlords to extend tenants' leases through the full notice period and limits rent increases during that time to one annual increase capped at the lesser of 5% or the Boston-area CPI-U.

Section 6 extends the deadline for offering tenants a right to purchase their unit from six months to twelve months before the end of the notice period, giving tenants more time to evaluate purchase options.

Section 7 amends the ordinance's expiration date from December 31, 2025, to December 31, 2030, preserving the City's conversion protections for an additional five years.



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Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a hearing on Tuesday, September 23, 2025 to discuss Docket #0766. The Committee heard testimony from panelists which included Sheila Dillon, Chief and Director, Mayor's Office of Housing; Karina Oliver-Milchman, Director of Policy Development and Research, Mayor's Office of Housing; and Mac McCreight, Access to Justice Fellow, Greater Boston Legal Services.

The panel testified that Boston's condominium conversion ordinance—first adopted in 1999 under authority granted by the 1983 state condominium law—functions as one of the City's longstanding anti-displacement tools, protecting tenants in residential buildings with four or more units built before 1983. It was explained that the ordinance requires property owners seeking to convert rental units into condominiums or cooperatives to provide tenants with advance notice, lease extensions, relocation payments, and a right to purchase, with enhanced protections for elderly tenants. The panel further emphasized that current displacement pressures are concentrated in two- and three-family buildings not covered by the existing ordinance, particularly in lower-income neighborhoods, and outlined ongoing efforts to strengthen enforcement through earlier identification of conversion activity and improved compliance practices.

The Committee voiced broad support for renewing and strengthening the rental equity ordinance under the new state authority. Councilors raised questions about operational procedures, enforcement practices, and the implications of expanding eligibility to smaller buildings. Discussion focused on the City's ability to detect early conversion activity, whether the current look-back period is adequate, the feasibility of extending longer notice protections to general tenants, and the administrative workload associated with expanding the ordinance's scope. In considering the ordinance's broader impacts, Councilors questioned how these changes would affect both tenants and property owners, reaffirming that small owner-occupied buildings would remain exempt and exploring whether right-to-purchase options or affordable homeownership pathways should be incorporated into future policy work. Finally, the Committee and the panel discussed potential changes that could further strengthen the ordinance by extending enhanced protections to veterans, families with children, returning citizens, and undocumented immigrants. The panel expressed support for exploring these additions and a willingness to work with the Committee on language amendments.

Summary of Amendments

Given the issues raised during the hearing related to enforcement, penalties, and early-detection mechanisms, additional review and discussion are necessary to determine how best to expand and strengthen tenant protections consistent with the authority provided by the Legislature, including most recently under the 2024 Affordable Homes Act. However, because the current ordinance is set to expire on December 31, 2025, it is necessary to take action to prevent a lapse in these protections. Therefore, in order to preserve the existing framework while allowing the Committee time in the coming year to undertake further conversations and develop a more comprehensive update to this docket, I recommend passage of an amended version of Docket #0766 that reaffirms the City's recognition of the continued rental housing emergency in the City of Boston and extends the sunset date by five years, to December 31, 2030.



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Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Government Operations, I recommend moving the listed docket from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At this time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that this matter **OUGHT TO PASS IN A NEW DRAFT.**

Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair
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