

Offered by City Councilor Julia Mejia



**CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL**

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FIVE

**ORDER FOR A HEARING ON GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY,
TRANSPARENCY, AND ACCESSIBILITY OF DECISION MAKING
PROTOCOLS IN CITY GOVERNMENT**

- WHEREAS,** Sherry Arnstein, writing in 1969 about citizen involvement in planning processes in the United States, described a “ladder of citizen participation” that ranges from non-participation to full citizen control, where people handle the entire process of planning, policy-making, and program management. Arnstein’s framework underscores the importance of inclusive decision-making processes, particularly in matters that impact local communities; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The City of Boston develops and dedicates substantial resources and conducts in-depth decision-making related to housing, education, public safety, public health, and zoning, but these resources and decision-making processes are often inaccessible to the individuals and communities most directly impacted by the systemic issues these initiatives aim to address; *and*
- WHEREAS,** Protocols and procedures in the City of Boston, established through the city charter, legislative action, or the discretion of city officials, have created a civic culture where individuals with the most privileged access often hold disproportionate influence over decision-making, while many residents feel excluded from or unheard in shaping policies and programs that affect them; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The renovation of White Stadium in Franklin Park has raised concerns about how effectively large-scale city projects incorporate meaningful community input. The project’s significant cost increase—from \$50 million to \$91 million—has highlighted questions regarding transparency, the accessibility and inclusiveness of decision-making processes, and how these decisions align with the needs and priorities of neighboring communities such as Roxbury and Mattapan; *and*
- WHEREAS,** The Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) is conducting Squares and Streets planning and rezoning initiatives in several neighborhoods now and with a total of 17 neighborhoods in the future. Concerns have been raised about

the inclusiveness and effectiveness of community engagement in these efforts, as participation data shows underrepresentation of protected demographic groups relative to neighborhood populations, suggesting insufficient outreach and equitable access, alongside a lack of specific measures to prevent the potential displacement often linked to rezoning, highlighting the need for more inclusive and proactive planning processes.; *and*

WHEREAS, The Housing Accelerator Fund, created through a \$110 million appropriation of unrestricted free cash, is intended to address financing gaps for approved housing projects, including the Bunker Hill Housing Redevelopment. However, questions remain about how effectively this fund is aligned with anti-displacement goals, equitable access to affordable housing, and transparency in its implementation and oversight; *and*

WHEREAS, The modernization of Article 80 development processes by the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) has raised concerns about reductions in public participation, the transparency of decision-making protocols, and the inclusion of protections against displacement and inequity in housing and development outcomes; *and*

WHEREAS, Since its creation, the Boston City Council Committee on Government Accountability, Transparency, and Accessibility has worked to review the efficiency, effectiveness, and accessibility of city operations and programs. This includes the importance of examining decision-making protocols for projects like the White Stadium renovation, Squares and Streets up-zoning, Article 80 modernization, and the Housing Accelerator Fund to ensure they align with legislative intent and community priorities; *and*

WHEREAS, More work remains to ensure that the City of Boston's departments and agencies adopt accountable, transparent, and accessible decision-making processes that center the voices of all residents, particularly those in historically underserved neighborhoods; ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing on Community Engagement, Transparency, and Accountability in City Development Decision-Making to examine how the White Stadium renovation, Squares and Streets rezoning, the Housing Accelerator Fund, and Article 80 modernization, involve residents in decision-making, to review how initiatives like the White Stadium renovation, Squares and Streets rezoning, the Housing Accelerator Fund, and Article 80 modernization engage residents, ensure transparency in public-private partnerships, and align with legislative goals to benefit affected neighborhoods.

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