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CITY OF BOSTON
IN CITY COUNCIL

**ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS A HOLISTIC VISION FOR
DISTRICT SEVEN IN ORDER TO REDRESS HISTORIC RACIAL
HARMS AND TO UPHOLD DISTRICT SEVEN CONSTITUENTS’
CIVIL RIGHTS**

WHEREAS, District 7 (D7) comprises the neighborhood of Roxbury, parts of Fenway, the South End, Grove Hall, Dorchester, Mission Hill, Jamaica Plain, and Back Bay with a diverse but segregated population, including a majority of Black residents, followed by LatinX, White, and immigrant groups from Cabo Verde, Haiti, other islands in the Caribbeans and smaller numbers of Indians and other ethnic groups; *and*

WHEREAS, It is imperative for the city to be intentional in equity efforts for disenfranchised communities to rectify historic racial harms, systemic discrimination, and exclusion. The city should work to dismantle inequitable structures, promote justice, and ensure that all residents have equal access to opportunities and resources which are essential for healing past injustices, building trust, and creating a more equitable and inclusive society; *and*

WHEREAS, To address disparities and redress historic harms, the D7 City Councilor needs strong community partnerships, access to research and data, and legislative support to drive meaningful change. Securing funding and collaborating with various city departments and allies willing to make sincere and intentional commitments on behalf of the administration are essential for implementing initiatives that address systemic inequities; *and*

WHEREAS, Public support, along with effective communication and outreach, ensures the community remains engaged and that all future development plans stay on track. Ultimately, strong leadership and a clear, long-term vision are critical for navigating challenges and achieving equitable development and revitalization in the District; *and*

WHEREAS, To address the systemic inequities in D7, the District 7 Councilor created the D7 Action Plan, a strategic and measurable initiative focused on Education, Public Health, Public Safety, Civic Engagement, Environmental Justice, Economic Growth, and Housing; *and*

WHEREAS, In partnership with local academics, the D7 Advisory Council, and community stakeholders, an Action Research team that works to identify necessary financial, legislative, and programmatic changes to fight displacement, revitalize commercial corridors, promote equitable development, and enhance economic and physical mobility in the District; *and*

WHEREAS, Inclusive, transparent, intentional, and sincere community engagement from the City of Boston’s administration is crucial to redressing District 7’s historic racial harms. Ensuring that the voices of those most affected by systemic inequities are heard, and respected; fostering trust, empowering residents to participate in decision-making, and creating solutions that truly reflect the community’s needs; *and*

WHEREAS, Equitable community engagement also promotes accountability, helping to ensure that the city’s actions align with its commitments. Thus, through sincere collaboration building stronger relationships between the city and its residents, making plans more effective and sustainable in addressing the root causes of inequity; *and*

WHEREAS, According to a 2023 Boston Public Health Commission, the Health of Boston report, there is about a 23-year difference in life expectancy between part of Back Bay, where life expectancy is 91.6 years, and part of Roxbury, where life expectancy is 68.8 years; *and*

WHEREAS, This same report found that Roxbury had the second lowest life expectancy at birth by neighborhood; *and*

WHEREAS, A higher percentage of Black male (28.4%), Asian male (30.8%) and Latinx male students (30.9%) had asthma compared with White male students (20.2%) and in 2021, 13.1% of Boston adult residents reported having asthma according to Boston’s 2023 Asthma Report; *and*

WHEREAS, Presently, more than 1,500 affordable housing units in Massachusetts are at risk of flood waters reaching their buildings once a year on average, a recent analysis showed, substantially impacting neighborhoods like Lower Roxbury, Roxbury, and Grove Hall, which are not only in flood zones, but also carry a disproportionate amount of the city’s affordable housing stock, with the city’s *Climate Ready* report finding that 180 acres of Roxbury will be exposed to major flooding events later this century; *and*

WHEREAS, District 7 residents currently experience disparities in mobility and transit access, with Black commuters spending an extra 66 hours a year waiting, riding, and transferring than white bus riders, according to a new analysis from Northeastern University’s Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy; *and*

WHEREAS, Because of these transit mobility problems, many residents in District 7, especially in Lower Roxbury, suffer from a lack of access to vital amenities, including supermarkets, from which many residents live at least 20 minutes away

by walking or by public transit, according to the Henry Spatial Analysis consulting firm; *and*

WHEREAS, District 7 experiences disproportionate economic disenfranchisement, as an April 2024 study found that Black and Brown small business owners, particularly those in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan, struggle to access to capital—which continues to be the primary barrier for business owners—and that while procurement is an important avenue for diverse businesses to grow, many business owners do not have knowledge of the certification process or the capacity to meet the needs of large anchor institutions; *and*

WHEREAS, This results in the further displacement of businesses supporting Black and Brown communities who depend on these businesses for jobs, services, and cultural identity, speaking to the substantial impact of gentrification and rising costs exacerbating systemic inequalities, disrupting social and economic stability, and limiting commercial viability; *and*

WHEREAS, Residents across District 7 experience difficulties in accessing common amenities that not only improve quality of life but also address the social determinants of health, and as a result live in a neighborhood classified as a pharmacy desert, a food desert, a neighborhood lacking in adequate arts and entertainment space with few liquor licenses—receiving just eight additional new licenses in the 2014 bill—and a neighborhood without holistic academic supports, and more; *and*

WHEREAS, From an education perspective, Roxbury today experiences the consequences of decades of disinvestment, with the BPS Long Term Facilities Plan finding that, of the 18 BPS facilities in Roxbury, 9 of them are listed as having “no feasible model summary”, meaning that the site could neither be updated nor redeveloped to meet the contemporary needs of its students; *and*

WHEREAS, Longstanding racial disparities continue to impact student performance in Boston Public Schools, as the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Advisory Council found that there is a 93% graduation rate among schools where most kids are white versus 72% where most kids are kids of color; *and*

WHEREAS, Furthermore, while Black and Latino males combined represent 35% of all BPS students, they comprise 53% of students with disabilities, according to the report; *and*

WHEREAS, While English learners represent 30% of the BPS student body, they constitute 47% of students identified as having a hearing impairment, 46% of those with a communication impairment and 55% of those with multiple impairments, speaking to the need for stronger intersectional supports for English Learners; *and*

WHEREAS, This District witnessed disproportionate, historic, debilitating, destructive, and racially oppressive Urban Renewal Powers under 121A, B, and C and continues to be robbed of their ability to control their economic and housing future, also

arising from deliberate disinvestment of city, state, and federal resources further propelling racial segregation and marginalization; *and*

WHEREAS, Roxbury, D7's largest neighborhood, in 2024 continues to experience the greatest impacts of decades of systemic inequities and injustice, with the racial homeownership gap wider than it was in 1980 driven by loan denials and deed restrictions disproportionately impacting Black and Brown buyers, wealth and equity being routinely extracted from Black communities; *and*

WHEREAS, The Home Owners Loan Corporation, a federally chartered lending agency created in 1933 under the Federal Home Loan Bank Board *legalized* institutional segregation of neighborhoods, especially Roxbury, through a practice known as redlining. Thus, mortgages and home improvement loans were not issued or were issued on less favorable terms to Black and LatinX buyers than were provided to White buyers because of institutionalized racism; *and*

WHEREAS, The intentional and destructive legacy of urban renewal remains and still impacts land use, mobility, environmental justice, housing, and wealth creation, as its use by city officials left Roxbury bereft of housing, commercial space, and parkland, contributing to the neighborhood's being deemed "blighted", by the very same people responsible for the neighborhood's deteriorated condition, and who then used eminent domain to take the land; *and*

WHEREAS, Residents in District 7 today still experience housing insecurity, substandard housing conditions and displacement, due in part to gentrification, lack of affordable housing investment, and restricted community-driven development partnership or collaboration. One study found that between 2000 and 2015, the proportion of Black residents in Roxbury decreased from 62% to 53%, while the proportion of white residents increased, bolstered by the fact that housing costs in Roxbury shot up by 70% from 2010 to 2015, twice the rate of the overall citywide appreciation of 36% during that period. This mirrors a similar phenomenon that occurred in the South End, a once-historically Black neighborhood where Black residents now make up just 12% of the population; *and*

WHEREAS, Only 26% of Roxbury residents own their homes, with the average median household income for an individual in Roxbury at just \$34,000 a year, 53% less than the average median income of a Boston resident at \$71,000; *and*

WHEREAS, In addition to Action Research, the District 7 office partnered with local academic institutions to conduct a spatial mapping analysis with the goal of creating a comprehensive vision for District 7, one where we take a holistic approach to the needs of constituents by understanding what amenities—be it city services or commercial amenities—currently exist and what are needed as redevelopments continue to take place in neighborhood; *and*

WHEREAS, As a means to address the ongoing housing displacement of residents, primarily people of color and low-income residents, the District 7 office is actively

pursuing means to implement Special Protection Zoning, a regulatory tool used in urban planning to protect certain areas with specific characteristics or values, such as natural resources, historical sites, or areas with particular environmental sensitivity with the goal that development and land use in these areas are controlled to preserve their unique attributes and combat displacement; *and*

WHEREAS, The District 7 office partners with city agencies, community advocates, academic institutions, and others in order to redress the systemic harms impacting District 7's displacement epidemic, including establishing through the Mayor's Office of Housing an RFP to allow rent-to-own opportunities; *and*

WHEREAS, With the understanding that holistic planning, that which incorporates the values of the community, fights displacement and gentrification, and provides for the entire needs of its residents, the District 7 office filed legislation calling for a moratorium to plan more holistically, synergistically, thoughtfully, and intentionally with the guiding values of restorative justice through land disposition; *and*

WHEREAS, In addition, the District 7 Councilor established The ARTery, a commercial revitalization effort stretching from Jazz Square in the South End through to Grove Hall with strategic investments in public facilities, placemaking, storefront revitalization, and beautification through creative arts installations; *and*

WHEREAS, The District 7 office has engaged in efforts to address the ongoing issue of revitalizing commercial corridors through strategic budgetary realignments, including funding for the Roxbury Resilient Corridors project, which will design and implement improvements for Melnea Cass Blvd., Malcolm X Blvd., and Warren Street, *and*

WHEREAS, In an effort to provide opportunities to redevelop areas in ways which can lead to increased property values, increased tax revenue, improved infrastructure, and more, the District 7 office passed a resolution advocating for District Improvement Financing (DIF), in addition to filing hearing orders exploring district improvement financing in District 7 and further provided assistance and support in developing the organization to execute upon this; *and*

WHEREAS, To help provide community benefits obtained through redevelopment to mitigate the unintended displacement of individuals as a result of new developments, the District 7 Office supported community stakeholders with technical resources in the founding of the District 7 Community Fund, Inc., a nonprofit which provides mini-grants to support small businesses and entrepreneurs, inspired by similar funds established in cities throughout the United States such as the Philadelphia Community Fund, providing matriculating High School students with scholarship opportunities; *and*

WHEREAS, To further improve and sustain the local commercial economy, the District 7 Councilor secured funding for a Digital Marketplace. Through BLocal this initiative will include technical assistance for small businesses, creating a public

online marketplace, transitioning brick-and-mortar businesses online, and partnering with local service providers. It aims to support tech adoption, improve tech assistance to merchants, data collection, coalition building, and the development of future small business infrastructure for financial sustainability; *and*

WHEREAS, In respect to Roxbury’s historic disinvestment of city services, the D7 Councilor has delivered on funding to repair public facilities in the District and to create new intervening services in the community, in addition to filing legislation which seeks to identify new and innovative ways to spur economic development and social cohesion, including a hearing order on cleaning parcels prior to their development; *and*

WHEREAS, With the understanding that the economic mobility of Roxbury is closely tied with the physical mobility of its residents, the District 7 Councilor is actively pursuing ways to address the neighborhood’s historic congestion issues impacting traffic and pollution by filing a hearing order on exploring congestion pricing as a means to ameliorate District 7’s concurring transportation and environmental justice concerns, and a hearing order addressing outstanding residential parking concerns; *and*

WHEREAS, Through community surveys, artist interviews, action research, and collaboration alongside Northeastern University architects designs, the District 7 office is actively engaged in designing a district which is welcoming, attractive, and amenity-rich through strategic budgetary and programmatic changes, including new funding for placemaking and place keeping, food farms, green open space, equity building, art space, and incubators; *and*

WHEREAS, District 7’s status as a heat island demands immediate action to expand access to greenspace, being mindful of existing developments and future redevelopments to ensure proper tree canopy coverage and that new developments add to the neighborhood’s greenspace; *and*

WHEREAS, Because of District 7’s location in the center of Boston, major thoroughfares run through the community, including Blue Hill Avenue, whose ongoing Master Plan redesign demands increased collaboration with small business owners and community members, and as such the District 7 office has continued to partner with local community advocates to ensure new projects prioritize the needs of local residents and business owners by mitigating unintended harm to fight commercial displacement; *and*

WHEREAS, Similarly, as the district which contains Boston’s largest park, Franklin Park, it is incumbent that current redesign plans, including the ongoing White Stadium redesign, incorporate a comprehensive and practical transportation plan to ensure that we move the needle in the right direction for mobility and environmental impact in District 7; *and*

WHEREAS, In an effort to address long standing educational inequities impacting students in District Seven, the D7 office has introduced and passed legislation designed at addressing the root causes contributing to these inequities, including passing a resolution opposing the proposal to move the John D. O’Bryant School, fighting to ensure that Madison Park has the resources to be a gold-standard for vocational education; *and*

WHEREAS, By working alongside mental health advocates and care providers, the District 7 office sponsored hearing orders designed to address the mental health needs of students in the district, including an order for a hearing on provisions of temporary mental health treatment or interventions and preventions for children and youth before formal diagnosis and an order for a hearing to address the mental health needs of our students with a focus on guidance counselors; *and*

WHEREAS, In addition, the D7 Councilor works to ensure budgetary realignments which work to create means through which student can achieve academic equity, including but not limited to the D7 Homework Heroes project, which works to address the difficult choices low-income students must make between earning money for their family and completing their academic studies by employing students in a tutoring and mentorship after-school job program to complete their homework while getting connected with other resources needed to ensure academic success; *and*

WHEREAS, The District 7 office works to enhance digital integration and connect constituents to resources, information, events, and more by creating the D7 App, a mobile app launched by the D7 Office which residents can download in order to access a full district inventory, get more civically engaged, and access vital information, in addition to launching the Boston District 7 website, where residents can access the same information on their web browser—going door-to-door encouraging residents to connect to their community through these digital resources; *and*

WHEREAS, In order to engage, inform, and collaborate alongside residents and community stakeholders, the District 7 Office engages in quarterly Town Halls, with events focusing on particular neighborhoods to ensure that residents are aware of the unique resources and opportunities available to them, including the State of Roxbury and the State of South End town halls; *and*

WHEREAS, In addition, the District 7 office holds monthly information sessions and workshops where residents can learn about the budget and to gain feedback on any ongoing city business, inform the office on pressing constituent issues, and to establish pathways for deeper collaboration with community stakeholders; *and*

WHEREAS, In order to uphold the civil rights of residents in District 7 living with the intersectional impacts of centuries of systemic racism, the District 7 Office co-sponsored the ordinance establishing the Reparations Task Force, lead the effort for the Council to pass a resolution apologizing for Boston’s role in the Transatlantic Slave trade, advocates for the removal of racist names, symbols,

and statues in public places, passed a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, and fights for fair wages for municipal officers; *and*

WHEREAS, This City should take into account the decades of investments, advocacy, and planning which have been taken and are already underway to ensure that we are building on the existing community work as opposed to reinventing the process from scratch; *and*

WHEREAS, The Roxbury Strategic Master Plan culminated three years of partnership with community members, resident groups and the District 7 Councilor who together designed a plan to create economic, social and educational opportunities for the people of Roxbury in a holistic and comprehensive manner, with the final plan introduced in January of 2004 by Mayor Tom Menino, ; *and*

WHEREAS, Designed to serve as a strategic framework to guide change and economic growth—originally for the forthcoming ten to twenty years in Roxbury—it is imperative that the City of Boston work in collaboration with members of the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee, in addition to all community stakeholders, to evolve this vision to serve the community over the next twenty years; ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a number of hearings so that the Council may unpack each of District 7's priorities substantively. This shall include the following hearings:

1. Hearing I: Representatives from the Mayor's Office of Housing, the Boston Planning and Development Agency, the Boston Planning Department, and the Office of Fair Housing and Equity will be invited to discuss holistic planning and development for D7 specifically to combat housing displacement, City-owned land disposition, homeownership, and housing restorative justice;
2. Hearing II: Representatives from the Economic Opportunity & Inclusion Cabinet, specifically the Small Business Department Office and Supplier Diversity, in addition to the Mayor's Office of Tourism, Sports, and Entertainment, the Worker Empowerment Cabinet, specifically the Office of Workforce Development, will be invited to a hearing to address economic mobility plans for D7, commercial displacement, small business support, the Boston Residents Jobs Policy, workforce development, entrepreneurial supports, tourism, and space activation;
3. Hearing III: Representatives from the Streets Cabinet, specifically the Boston Transportation Department, will be invited to discuss outstanding transportation issues impacting the mobility of District 7 residents, maintenance, repairs, and ongoing transportation projects, transportation displacement, transportation plans, and constituent issues such as sidewalk repair and parking issues;
4. Hearing IV: Representatives from the Environment Department, the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Office of Climate Resilience, and representatives from the Grow Boston program will be invited to discuss environmental injustice, open space, parks capital plans and updates, and communications regarding implementations;
5. Hearing V: Representatives from the Boston Public Schools will be invited to discuss school displacement, school closures, schools facility improvements, D7 capital plans for schools,

afterschool programs, early education and intervention, home-school connection and other resources to close the achievement gap;

6. Hearing VI: Representatives from the Community Engagement Cabinet, specifically the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services, the Office of Civic Organizing, in addition to the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement, the Office of New Urban Mechanics, the Office of Language and Communications, and other appropriate departments to discuss community engagement, communications, transparency, inclusion, and civic engagement;
7. Hearing VII: Representatives from the Boston Police Department, the Office of Black Male Advancement, the Office of Community Safety, the Office of Returning Citizens, and other relevant departments shall be invited to a hearing regarding the public safety concerns of District 7, including community engagement, trauma-informed services, and violence prevention efforts; and
8. Hearing VIII: Representatives from the Human Services cabinet, specifically the Age Strong Commission, the Boston Centers for Youth and Families, and the Office of Veterans Services, in addition to Boston Public Health Commission and other relevant departments shall be invited to a hearing to discuss the health and wellness of residents in District 7, with a specific focus on mental health, substance abuse recovery, trauma-informed services, and more; ***AND BE IT FURTHER***

ORDERED: In addition to the above administrative invitations, members of different advocacy organizations, including, ACE, Reclaim Roxbury, the Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association, the Highland Park Land Trust, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, BECMA, the Livable Streets Alliance, the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, in addition to members of the Roxbury Strategic Master Plan Oversight Committee, members of the Boston City Council with a particular emphasis on At-Large Councilors, other community advocates, and members of the public are encouraged to attend.

Two weeks prior to each hearing, a Request for Information (RFI) outlining specific questions will be distributed to each department, accompanied by a notification of their required attendance.

Additionally, after the Committee holds hearings on this hearing order the District Seven City Councilor will produce an end-of-year report. Next, she will collaborate with academic partners to assess her work, the gaps and identify necessary capital investments, projects, programs, and policies to add. Finally, delivering and discussing a plan with the administration, with the goal of working together to address historic racial inequities, uphold civil rights, in order to enhance quality of life for all District Seven residents.

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