



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation
Sharon Durkan, Chair

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

January 24, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Planning, Development, and Transportation was referred the following docket for consideration:

Docket #0189, Order regarding a Text Amendment to the Boston Zoning Code regarding the Bulfinch Triangle District use regulations.

This matter was sponsored by Councilors Sharon Durkan and Gabriela Coletta Zapata and was referred to the Committee on January 8, 2025.

Summary of Legislation

Docket #0189 proposes shifting ‘Residential Uses’ from a conditional use to an allowed use in the Bulfinch Triangle, to help facilitate the creation of additional housing units and aligns with the City’s and State’s goals of mixed-use neighborhoods.

The Docket seeks to amend the Boston Zoning Code, 46-9. – Bulfinch Triangle District Use Regulations – as follows:

1. In Article 46, Section 9-3. - Bulfinch Triangle District Use Regulations, Conditional Uses
 - a. Strike part (d), “Residential Uses. Multifamily dwelling; artist’s live/work space; apartment house; group residence, limited; lodging or boarding house; temporary dwelling structure; group care residence, general; and any dwelling converted for more families, provided that any nonconformity of such structure as to floor area ratio is no greater after conversion than prior to conversion. Residential uses include any affordable dwelling units, including but not limited to rental units, condominiums, and limited equity share cooperatives.”
2. In Article 46, Section 9-2. - Bulfinch Triangle District Use Regulations, Allowed Uses
 - a. Insert part (t), “Residential Uses. Multifamily dwelling; artist’s live/work space; apartment house; group residence, limited; lodging or boarding house; temporary dwelling structure; group care residence, general; and any dwelling converted for more families, provided that any nonconformity of such structure as to floor area ratio is no greater after conversion than prior to conversion. Residential uses include any affordable dwelling units, including but not limited to rental units, condominiums, and limited equity share cooperatives.”

The current zoning code designates ‘Residential Uses’ as a conditional use in the Bulfinch Triangle, thereby imposing additional regulatory hurdles that hamper potential housing production by creating preference for developers that have the ability to withstand the risk associated with obtaining a



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation
Sharon Durkan, Chair

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

conditional use permit. The proposed zoning amendment seeks to change ‘Residential Uses’ from a conditional use to an allowed use, thereby reducing reliance on conditional approvals that delay development timelines.

Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a hearing on Thursday, January 23, 2025 to discuss Docket #0189. Aimee Chambers, Director of the Planning and Zoning Division, Boston Planning Department, and Jeff Thomas, Special Assistant to the Chief of Planning, Boston Planning Department testified on behalf of the administration. The Administration officials answered questions and mentioned they support the Council efforts in the Text Amendment to the Boston Zoning Code.

The Bulfinch Triangle District, located in Boston’s West End, is designated under the National Register of Historic Places, originating in the early 19th century when renowned architect Charles Bulfinch designed its street layout on land reclaimed from the old Mill Pond, also known as North Cove, the last remaining portion of the original West End neighborhood.

The elevated JFK expressway formerly occupied one-third of the district, but the completion of the Big Dig project revitalized the Bulfinch Triangle with the introduction of the Rose Kennedy Greenway and new residential and commercial developments. The Bulfinch Triangle’s location within the West End neighborhood, with its proximity to public transit, employment centers, and amenities, makes it an ideal candidate to support increased residential development while preserving its historic character, helping address the City’s critical housing shortage.

Summary of Amendments

The text amendment was amended to correct a clerical error in Section 2.a., line 5, replacing the word “conversation” with “conversion”.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation 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**.

Sharon Durkan, Chair
Committee on Planning, Development and Transportation