

OFFERED BY COUNCILOR BRIAN WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY SIX

**ORDER FOR A HEARING REGARDING THE
HOMEOWNERSHIP VOUCHER PROGRAM**

WHEREAS: The escalating cost of housing in Boston continues to disproportionately impact long-term residents, low-income households, and communities of color, exacerbating the racial homeownership gap, destabilizing communities, and limiting pathways to generational wealth; *and*

WHEREAS: Boston's homeownership rates reveal persistent racial disparities, with significantly lower rates of homeownership among Black and Hispanic/Latinx households compared to white households, reinforcing long-standing inequities in housing stability and wealth accumulation; *and*

WHEREAS: Rising home prices, limited housing inventory, and tightening credit conditions have made homeownership inaccessible for income-eligible first-time buyers, particularly for households earning below 80% of Area Median Income; *and*

WHEREAS: In November 2024, Mayor Michelle Wu announced the creation of the City of Boston's Housing Accelerator Fund, a \$110 million investment to close financing gaps for housing developments that have been approved but stalled, support new mixed-income and income-restricted construction, and accelerate production of housing across the city; *and*

WHEREAS: In January 2025, the Boston City Council approved an appropriation of \$110 million for the Housing Accelerator Fund, authorizing the use of one-time municipal funds to invest in eligible housing projects and support broader city goals for housing production; *and*

WHEREAS: While increased housing production through the Housing Accelerator Fund contributes to addressing Boston's housing shortage, expanding housing supply alone remains insufficient to close the homeownership gap without corresponding investments in ownership pathways, which is why the City Council pushed for \$10 million of the fund to go toward homeownership projects; *and*

WHEREAS: The City of Boston and the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) have cultivated innovative homeownership pathways, including the ONE+ Boston Mortgage Program and the BHA First Home Program, which allows eligible Section 8 voucher holders and other income-qualified households to transition from renters

to homeowners through mortgage Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) and down-payment assistance; and

WHEREAS: Since 2023, the BHA First Home Program has supported 105 total home purchase closings, including 95 homes purchased within the City of Boston, and 38 home purchases in 2025, of which 35 were in Boston, demonstrating continued progress in expanding access to homeownership for income-eligible residents; and

WHEREAS: As of January 2026, the BHA First Home Program has a robust active pipeline, including 44 households in mortgage shopping, 39 households actively home-searching, seven (7) households with accepted offers, and two (2) households already closed in 2026, reflecting sustained demand and forward momentum within the program; and

WHEREAS: The average timeline from program application to home purchase closing is approximately 317 days for Boston-based First Home Program participants, and 397 days for Citywide Voucher participants, highlighting the need for sustained funding, staffing, and housing inventory to accelerate successful outcomes; and

WHEREAS: Since 2023, the program has received 610 total First Home Program applications, including 93 applications in 2025, and 91 total Citywide Voucher Program applications, indicating strong interest among residents seeking homeownership pathways; and

WHEREAS: There is currently no waitlist for the program, with new applications typically processed within 48 hours to two weeks, yet many applicants are deemed not yet homebuyer-ready due to barriers such as credit scores below 650, expired or missing first-time homebuyer certifications, insufficient savings below \$4,000, or ineligibility based on tenancy status; and

WHEREAS: Aggregate program data shows that participating households span a wide range of income levels, with the largest concentration earning between \$50,000 and \$79,999 annually, and that the majority of households served are Black/African American, with many families including children, reinforcing the program's role in advancing racial equity and family stability; and

WHEREAS: Since 2023, nine (9) former public housing residents have successfully purchased homes through the program, and the majority of participants are Section 8 voucher holders, highlighting the program's importance as a bridge from rental assistance to asset-building homeownership; and

WHEREAS: Home purchases have occurred across multiple Boston neighborhoods, including ZIP codes 02136, 02126, 02124, 02132, and 02131, demonstrating geographic reach and neighborhood-level impact across District 4 and beyond; and

WHEREAS: The average monthly mortgage Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) provided through the program is \$1,519, with payments ranging from \$83 to \$3,167 per

month, determined based on household income, payment standards, and actual homeownership expenses at the time of purchase; and

WHEREAS: Program scale and sustainability are constrained by several factors, including the impending expiration of ARPA funding for down-payment assistance, staffing capacity limitations, lender participation challenges, the complexity of training financial institutions on layered subsidy programs, and reduced housing inventory at price points below \$600,000; and

WHEREAS: Expanding and stabilizing funding for the Homeownership Voucher Program and related assistance initiatives is critical to increasing the number of successful homebuyers, reducing racial disparities in homeownership, and strengthening long-term housing stability for Boston residents; **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing to examine the current status, outcomes, funding structure, and future expansion needs of the Boston Housing Authority's First Home Program and Citywide Voucher Program, including strategies to increase program scale and throughput, identify sustainable funding solutions beyond ARPA, assess staffing and operational capacity needs, address barriers to applicant readiness and lender participation, review program redesign efforts currently underway, and explore opportunities to deepen racial equity, geographic reach, and long-term affordability outcomes. Representatives from the Boston Housing Authority, the Mayor's Office of Housing, the Administration, participating lenders, and relevant housing and community stakeholders shall be invited to attend and testify.

Filed on: January 26, 2026