

Boston City Council Approves Urban Renewal Plan Extensions

April 25, 2016

The Boston City Council has approved six-year extensions of most urban renewal plans, which grant the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) powers of land assembly and disposition. The BRA originally adopted 40-year plans in the 1960s and early 1970s, covering approximately 10% of Boston's land area. As plans began expiring in the early 2000s, the BRA successfully sought extensions of 19 of the 21 then-active plans until April 30, 2015.

In December 2014, the BRA requested a second 10-year extension of 14 of the plans. In response, the City Council approved an interim extension until April 30, 2016 so that the BRA could conduct a community engagement process. On March 21, 2016, after reviewing community feedback and an outside audit of the BRA conducted last summer, the City Council approved an extension of the plans for a shorter term and with greater oversight than originally proposed by the BRA.

The Council's vote approves an extension of six years. The extension requires that the BRA:

- expand the level of notice given to the City Council and the general public of minor modifications of urban renewal plans and eminent domain takings;
- testify at any hearing the City Council chooses to hold regarding a proposed minor modification to an urban renewal plan;
- compile an inventory of all land disposition agreements within urban renewal areas;
- review boundaries of plan areas to determine where modifications may be warranted;
- explore the creation of new urban renewal plan areas;
- compile an inventory of BRA-owned land;
- review procedures for disposition of BRA-owned land;
- meet with the City Council twice per year to provide updates on urban renewal activity; and
- submit an annual report of urban renewal activities to the City Council that includes an update on the progress and completion of the urban renewal plans.

The BRA must next obtain approval from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) prior to the plans' expiration. Goulston & Storrs will continue to follow the extension efforts. For questions about the information in this advisory, please contact your usual Goulston & Storrs attorney.

UPDATE: In August 2016, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) approved the six-year extensions, subject to additional restrictions and conditions.

This advisory should not be construed as legal advice or legal opinion on any specific facts or circumstances. The contents are intended for general informational purposes only, and you are urged to consult your own lawyer concerning your situation and any specific legal questions you may have.

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