

WALKUP

WALKABLE URBAN PLACE

ROSLINDALE

A Call to Action to Make Roszie the Most Walkable Neighborhood in Boston

June 3, 2026

Committee on Planning, Development, and Transportation

Boston City Council
Boston City Hall
1 City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Attention: City Councilors

Staff Contact: Shane L. Pac (shane.pac@boston.gov)

Committee email: ccc.plandev@boston.gov

Re: Order for a Text Amendment to the Boston Zoning Code with respect to parking minimums for residential development

Dear Councilors,

WalkUP Roslindale writes in support of the proposed amendment to the Boston Zoning Code eliminating minimum off-street parking requirements for residential development.

WalkUP Roslindale is a community organization dedicated to making Roslindale and Boston safer, more walkable, and more transit-oriented. We support policies that make it easier for people to live, work, shop, and socialize without being dependent on a car for every trip. We also support efforts to expand housing opportunities in walkable neighborhoods and ensure that public policy reflects the transportation choices residents increasingly make.

Parking minimums are an outdated planning tool that require new housing developments to dedicate scarce land and limited resources to automobile storage regardless of whether future residents need or want those spaces. While these requirements were created during an era when cities assumed rising car ownership should dictate development patterns, Boston's

challenges today are different. The city faces a housing shortage, rising housing costs, and a growing demand for safe pedestrian and bike infrastructure and improved transit. More than a third of Boston households do not own cars and we observe, in our neighborhood, a newer generation of kids being raised to expect walking and biking as a daily, enjoyable activity.

Eliminating parking minimums will help address these challenges by allowing housing to be built based on the needs of residents rather than arbitrary parking quotas. Importantly, this proposal does not prohibit parking. Developers will remain free to provide parking as justified by market conditions, neighborhood context, or resident demand. The amendment simply removes a one-size-fits-all mandate and allows more flexibility in how housing is designed.

Roslindale offers a useful local example. Under the City's recently adopted Squares + Streets zoning reforms, many projects in Roslindale Square are no longer required to provide off-street parking. Yet developers continue to include parking where they believe it is warranted by resident demand and neighborhood context.

For example, the recently approved project at 4487 Washington Street proposed 28 residential units and 12 off-street parking spaces despite no parking being required under its S2 zoning designation. Similarly, the proposed project at 4301 Washington Street includes 16 residential units and 7 off-street parking spaces despite no parking requirement under its S1 zoning designation. During the community review process for 4301 Washington Street, an abutting neighbor noted that the existing off-street parking serving their own building was often underutilized and that the proposed parking ratio appeared appropriate for the area.

These projects demonstrate that removing parking minimums does not eliminate parking. Rather, it allows the amount of parking provided to better reflect actual neighborhood conditions, resident needs, and site-specific circumstances instead of relying on a one-size-fits-all mandate. Our experience in Roslindale suggests that developers are fully capable of responding to market demand without government-mandated parking quotas.

Parking mandates also make housing more expensive and encourage developers to build for higher-end purchasers at the expense of affordable and workforce housing. Every required parking space consumes land and adds construction costs that are ultimately passed on to residents through higher rents and home prices, including residents who may not own a car. At a time when Boston is working to expand housing opportunities and improve affordability, it makes little sense to require every new home to subsidize the cost of parking.

From a walkability perspective, parking minimums often produce outcomes that undermine the very neighborhoods residents value most. Land devoted to excess parking cannot be used for homes, public space, trees, businesses, or other community-serving uses. Parking mandates encourage development patterns that prioritize vehicle storage over people and make destinations farther apart and less accessible on foot. A city cannot simultaneously require abundant parking and expect walkability to flourish.

Boston has spent years investing in transit, safer streets, bicycle infrastructure, and transit-oriented development. Eliminating residential parking minimums is a logical extension of those efforts. It aligns the zoning code with the City's goals of creating more housing, supporting transportation choice, and building neighborhoods where residents can comfortably meet more of their daily needs without relying on a car.

For these reasons, WalkUP Roslindale respectfully urges the City Council to adopt the proposed amendment.

Sincerely,

WalkUP Roslindale

About WalkUP Roslindale

WalkUP Roslindale, which takes its name from the international movement to foster “**Walkable Urban Places**,” is a collaborative group of residents and business owners dedicated to making Roslindale the most walkable neighborhood in Boston. We advocate for more housing of all types and at all levels of affordability as well as improvements to our public and private built environment that strengthen walking, cycling, transit, and other forms of active mobility as means toward better personal and public health, safety, social capital, economic development, and environmental sustainability. We are led by a board of directors of about just over twenty individuals and have over 800 additional supporters. More information about WalkUP Roslindale and our initiatives can be found at www.walkuproslindale.org.

Copy (by email) to:

Michelle Wu, Mayor (mayor@boston.gov)

Nicholas Gove, Interim Chief of Streets (nicholas.gove@boston.gov)

Enrique Pepén, City Councilor, District 5 (enrique.pepen@boston.gov)