

WALKUP

WALKABLE URBAN PLACE

ROSLINDALE

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

22 October 2026

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY (nbhdzoning@boston.gov)

Boston Planning Department
Boston City Hall, Ninth Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02201
Attention: Will Cohen, Senior Zoning Reform Planner II

RE: Comment and Support Letter – Neighborhood Housing Zoning Amendments
Roslindale, Hyde Park, and West Roxbury

Dear Mr. Cohen:

Please accept the following comments on behalf of WalkUP Roslindale with respect to the currently proposed zoning amendments regarding the residential portions of the city's neighborhoods in Roslindale, Hyde Park, and West Roxbury, being advanced under the title and concept of "Neighborhood Housing" (the "NHZ Amendments").

Briefly stated, we enthusiastically support the NHZ Amendments. The revisions to our neighborhood's residential zoning will provide greater flexibility in the day-to-day experience of living in, maintaining, and occasionally expanding our housing stock and help us to address the ongoing housing affordability emergency in our city, region, and commonwealth. We see three (3) particularly meaningful elements of the NHZ Amendments as worthy of specific support, as follows:

1. Finally, making our neighborhood mostly conforming. For decades now, our city's zoning code has treated most of its residential neighborhoods, which those of who live in them generally like and would like to see made better over time, like an unfortunate accident that should never have happened. Minimum lot sizes and setbacks in particular, along with allowable floor area and off-street parking requirements, all worked together to make in excess of 90% of the residential fabric non-conforming – it could stay, but the zoning code was saying it shouldn't be there

and instead something far more suburban should be our future. With the NHZ Amendments, we finally flip this script and make significant majorities of residential structures conforming. This is something for which WalkUP Roslindale has consistently advocated. It has been a long time coming and it is good to see it is finally here.

2. Paying attention to the forms that make up our urban fabric. Roslindale's existing residential urban fabric is meaningfully tight-knit, with human-scaled streets and housing stock that has the capacity to grow if we let it do so in ways that reinforce what we have, instead of chopping it up or allowing it to attenuate. The NHZ Amendments reflect extensive study of the highly livable and valuable residential structure and lot configurations we have in place today and their new requirements provide more flexibility where it's warranted – reducing setbacks generally to what we see most commonly and allowing for asymmetry and eliminating off-street parking minimums – while reinforcing and simplifying standards like building height.
3. Allowing for more folks to live here, gradually. As has been pointed out in many of the meetings and discussions our members have attended, the NHZ Amendments will allow for a step up in the number of homes allowed on residential properties. This is both part of the city's response to the ongoing housing cost emergency and an attempt to catch up to state law, which was recently changed to allow for an accessory dwelling unit (aka, ADUs or granny flats) to be built by-right in single-family zoned property everywhere in Massachusetts, except in Boston. This is the case due to a quirk in how zoning is regulated at the state level – 350 of the commonwealth's cities and towns are governed by one zoning statute and Boston is governed by another. It is to the Planning Department's credit that the NHZ Amendments are aimed squarely at starting the process of bringing our neighborhood's zoning up to the standard of the rest of the state and even making the rules simpler by not confining the additional units to just ADUs. The NHZ Amendments also create opportunities for more people and families to live in neighborhoods like Roslindale, where access to transit, local businesses, parks, and other amenities makes urban living so compelling and attainable. In turn, welcoming more residents will help support more frequent and reliable transit service, sustain neighborhood businesses, and reinforce our communities as vibrant, walkable urban centers.

In sum, it is our conclusion that, taken as a whole, the NHZ Amendments are finely attuned to allowing our neighborhood both to better inhabit and operate its existing urban fabric and allow it to grow and accommodate more residents within that fabric. We wish to thank the Planning Department staff who have worked on these amendments. They have done very good work here. Finally, we wish to reiterate our strong support for the NHZ Amendments

and urge the Planning Department to move with urgency to bring them through the required process and, ultimately, Zoning Commission approval.

Sincerely yours,
WalkUP Roslindale Board of Directors

Copy (by email) to:
Michelle Wu, Mayor (mayor@boston.gov)
Enrique Pepén, City Councilor, District 5 (enrique.pepen@boston.gov)
Benjamin Weber, City Councilor, District 6 (benjamin.weber@boston.gov)
Jhonaiquer Juan Cruz, ONS Representative, Roslindale (jhonaiquerjuan.cruz@boston.gov)

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 an all-volunteer non-profit organization led by a board of directors of eighteen individuals and have over 800 additional supporters. More information about WalkUP Roslindale and our initiatives can be found at www.walkuproslindale.org.