



Medford City Council
Medford, Massachusetts

MEETING DATE

August 5, 2025

SPONSORED BY

Isaac Bears, Council President

AGENDA ITEM

25-123 - Resolution on Shared Path Forward to Extend Rezoning Project Timeline and Request Necessary Funding and Resources from Mayor

FULL TEXT AND DESCRIPTION

Whereas, on July 16, 2025, the Council President outlined a shared path forward for Medford's Zoning Updates Project that outlined a clear and responsive approach to continuing this essential project to enable Medford's future growth and development; and,

Whereas, the specific zoning amendment proposals reflect hard work to make our city's vision and plans a reality over the past several years, starting with requests for funding for zoning updates prior to 2020; the initiation of the first phase of this project from 2020 to 2022 by recodifying the zoning ordinance; the planning processes between 2020 and 2024 to create the Comprehensive Plan, Climate Plan, and Housing Plan that incorporated input from thousands of residents and hundreds of public engagement events and approaches; and continuing over the past 18 months with the City Council and Mayor's Planning Department staff, Building Commissioner, Communications Director, and other city staff working with Innes Associates to create zoning proposals that concretely implement our city's plans; and,

Whereas, it is essential to the well-being of Medford residents and the future of our city that the Medford Zoning Ordinance is amended so that we can build more housing, create more vibrant commercial squares, and focus on mixed-use development that activates corridors of our city with so much potential that have been ignored for too long; and,

Whereas, after more than five years, our community is in the hardest phase of this project, and we must secure the progress we all know Medford needs by seeing this work through to completion; and,

Whereas, for nearly two years, the Council, Community Development Board, and city staff have worked with the resources made available to us by the Mayor and have consistently and persistently advocated to the Mayor to engage more deeply in the process, provide more city resources to ensure the success of this collaboration between the City Council and the Mayor's administration, and work

to ensure that accurate information reaches as many residents as possible to get them involved in this rezoning project; and,

Whereas, the Mayor's written response on July 31, 2025 contained inaccurate information and presented a narrative that does not correctly represent the Mayor or her administration's core role in the Zoning Updates Project since its beginning; and,

Whereas, the Mayor's decision to limit her direct participation in this essential, major, and transformative project until recently has been a barrier to accessing City communications resources under her control to ensure as many residents as possible are able to engage with this process; and,

Whereas, the proposed extended timeline was drafted with the specific intention of receiving collaborative input from the Mayor; and,

Whereas, Council leadership continues to extend its hand of open engagement and collaboration on this project as it has for nearly two years and the Council President has offered times to sit with the Mayor to discuss the specifics regarding additional funding and resources for expanded public engagement to support the extended consideration of proposed zoning amendments; and,

Whereas, the people of the City of Medford have placed their trust in the elected members of the Medford City Council to update the Medford Zoning Ordinance and the City Council has conducted a robust and extensive process to propose zoning amendments with the resources provided and within the restrictions of the contract signed by the Mayor; and,

Whereas, a potential decision by the Mayor to end this Zoning Updates Project by canceling the contract with the zoning consultant team and refusing to provide the resources and support necessary to implement the city's plans and address decades of inaction and broken zoning, which has caused to harmful outcomes in all of our neighborhoods, would be a disservice to the city's residents and seriously damage the future of Medford; now, therefore:

Be it Resolved by the Medford City Council that we collaboratively establish an extended timeline for the consideration of the proposed Residential Districts and ADUs zoning proposal as well as off-street residential parking requirements with the Mayor's Office and planning team, which includes proposing a new draft no sooner than November 2025 after a series of neighborhood discussions to take place this fall and any final City Council vote no sooner than April 2026.

Be it Further Resolved that the City Council requests that the Community Development Board continue its plan to meet on August 6, 2025 to provide direction regarding drafting of new recommendations for the Residential Districts zoning proposal that incorporate the feedback provided by residents during the CDB's public hearings and discussions over the last several months to the City Council and planning team.

Be it Further Resolved that we request that the City Council, Community Development Board, and planning team prioritize completing the proposed commercial framework and focus on the remaining proposed districts for Medford Square, West Medford Square, the 'Other Corridors', and Tufts Institutional Zoning through the end of 2025.

Be it Further Resolved that we request that the Mayor allocate the necessary resources from the city's reserve funds to provide the Council, Community Development Board, planning team, and city staff

with the support needed to conduct even more robust public outreach over the next year, including, subject to discussion:

- At least \$150,000 in total funds (including any funds currently appropriated in FY26 budget) to extend the city's contract with the Innes Associates team through December 2026
- An additional \$50,000 in funds to pay for communications to residents that are reviewed and approved by the consensus of all of the branches of the city leading the project (Mayor's Office, City Council, and Planning Department) that help inform residents about the proposals and what opportunities they will have to make their voices heard and share their comments with the Community Development Board and the City Council

RECOMMENDATION

FISCAL IMPACT

ATTACHMENTS

None