



Improving our Development Review Process

Article 80 Modernization

May, 2024



**boston planning &
development agency**

How and Why are We Improving Our Development Review Process?

THE PROBLEM



Development review in Boston today is a lengthy, opaque, and unpredictable process which, when coupled with an outdated zoning code, makes it harder to grow our City.

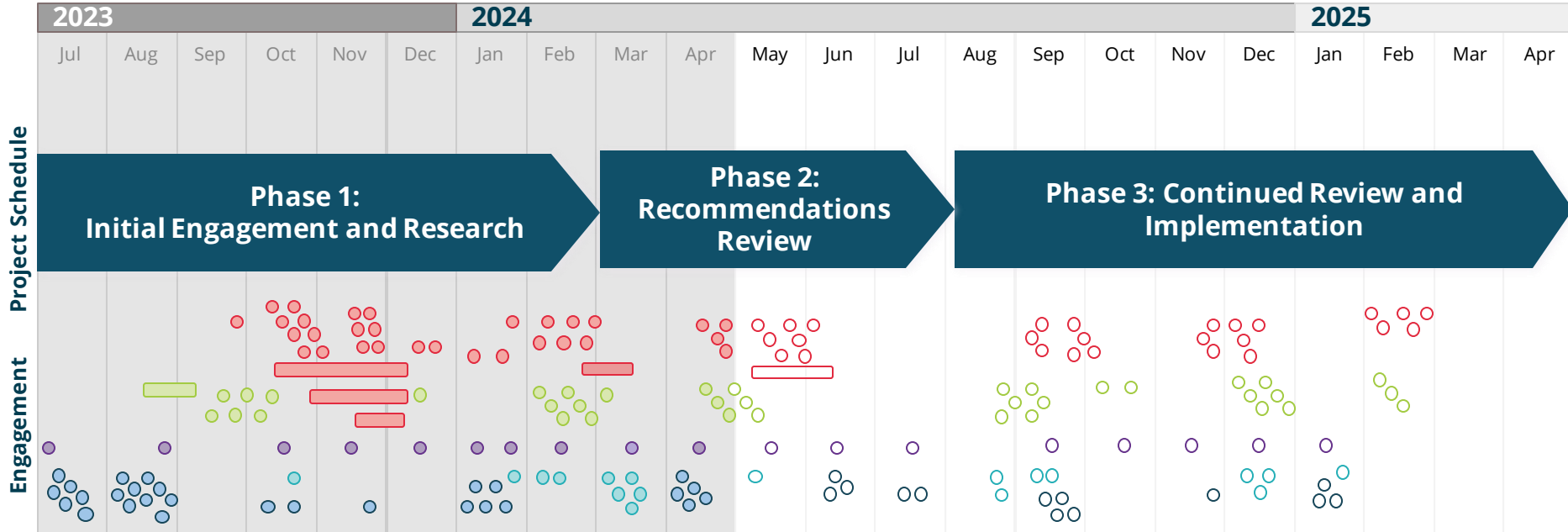
THE SOLUTION

Article 80 Modernization is building Boston better by creating a new development culture.

Project details

A project led by the BPDA and supported by two consultant teams to review, analyze, and recommend improvements to the technical code, operations, and community engagement practices related to our development review process.

Project Timeline



Engagement Activities

Phases 1 and 2 focused on identifying issues, building a case for change, and determining direction. We did this through:

- 2600 survey responses (across 4 surveys)
- 50+ focus groups (IAG members, developers, institutions, labor, city staff, advocates, civic groups)
- 2 public meetings (in person and Zoom)
- 13 Steering Committee meetings

[Project webpage](#)

[Project storymap](#)
[Full survey results](#)



Draft - For Internal Planning



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Survey to improve the BPDA's Development Review Process

Please answer these questions to help us understand how you want to be involved in shaping new development projects in Boston:

1. Are you interested in shaping and learning about current or new development projects coming to your neighborhood?
 Yes
 No
2. Are you able to get involved and when you do, do you feel heard in shaping new development projects that come to your neighborhood?
 Yes
 No
3. What prevents your participation in learning about and sharing your thoughts about development projects? Select all that apply
 Not interested
 Do not have the time
 Meetings are not accessible
 Timing of meetings
 Location of meetings
 Lack of childcare
 Do not know where the meetings are
 No or limited access to the internet
 No or limited access to a computer or smart phone
 Personal barriers (transportation, work, family)
 Meetings are not welcoming
 Lack of diversity in meetings
 Language or cultural barriers
 Meeting content is confusing
 Meetings do not feel worth attending
 People do not listen to me

Ideas I'm excited about



BPDA survey shows strong support for broader development review procedures

By Clark Lovett, Reporter Correspondent
January 10, 2024



Phase 2 Feedback

Emerging Ideas Survey

March 2024

210 total responses

Survey Question 2:

Which of the initial ideas do you like the most?

54%

Establish **clear, transparent** performance tracking and approval (and rejection) **standards**

48%

Establish a **predictable** approach for determining **mitigation and community benefits**

46%

Reform advisory groups to build trust and generate more impactful and targeted input

Recommendations | Framework

CORE CHANGES

3 transformative changes that are signature outcomes of the project, relevant to all stakeholder groups, and have a significant impact on operations

CORE CHANGE
1

CORE CHANGE
2

CORE CHANGE
3

TARGETED IMPROVEMENTS

Necessary changes that can be quickly implemented and deliver early wins

TARGETED IMPROVEMENTS

Recommendations | Core Changes

CORE CHANGES

3 transformative changes that are signature outcomes of the project, relevant to all stakeholder groups, and have a significant impact on operations



Diversify Input in Development
By expanding community participation opportunities



Take the Fight Out of Approvals
By standardizing mitigation and community benefits



**Prevent 3 Steps Forward
2 Steps Back**
Through a transparent, sequential and coordinated approval process

Core Change #1 | Effective Engagement

Diversify Input in Development

By expanding community participation opportunities



CORE ACTIONS

- A. Expand community engagement methods** to allow for more inclusive and diverse participation. Including in-person and digital multi-lingual engagement strategies
- B. Require early engagement** from developers based on standards and guidelines established by the BPDA
- C. Replace IAGs with new Community Advisory Teams (CATs)**

Core Change #1 | Community Advisory Teams

Community Advisory Team Features

- Accountability and continuity in decision making through multi-year terms with term limits, a code of conduct, conflict of interest rules, and standards for participation
- Training provided for all CAT members and BPDA staff
- Diverse and broad participation through random selection based on housing situation, age, community expertise, etc.
- Portfolio review approach with fewer meetings and multiple projects discussed at each meeting

	Community Advisory Team	Impact Advisory Group (IAG)
Scope	Review a group of projects in an area	Review individual projects
Preparation	Training to develop a broad base of citizen experts in partnership with CBOs	No training
Support	Dedicated staff support the teams to convene and facilitate discussion	Project Managers manage the IAG as one part of their role
Standards	Clear and enforced role of review, code of conduct, and conflict of interest rules	Unclear role, inconsistent meeting expectations and rules

Core Change #2 | Consistent Standards

Take the Fight Out of Approvals

By standardized mitigation and benefits

An illustration of several stacks of coins of varying heights, rendered in a light gray, semi-transparent style. The stacks are positioned to the left of the main text area, with the tallest stack on the left and two shorter stacks to its right.

CORE ACTIONS

- A. Create and enforce through zoning new definitions** for community benefits, mitigation, and enabling infrastructure
- B. Update eligibility criteria** to standardize “typical” small and large projects while exempting affordable housing and retaining flexibility for “XL” and institutional projects
- C. Establish clear \$/sf policies** for transportation & infrastructure and open space & public realm mitigation
- D. Require proponents to file two new disclosures** for fair labor practices and displacement impacts and set clear standards for evaluation
- E. Create and enforces new guardrails for community benefits** that require projects to “choose from a menu of options” determined through recent planning and policy

Core Change #3 | Coordinated Review

Prevent Three Steps Forward Two Steps Back

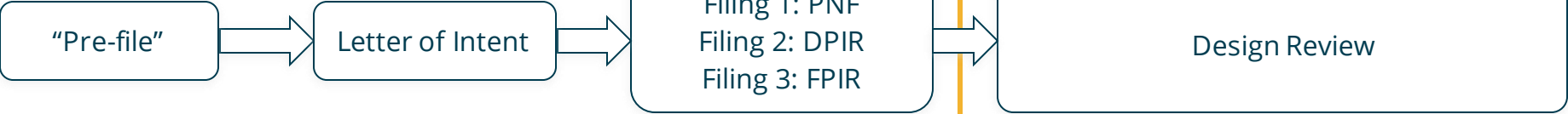
Through a transparent, sequential and coordinated approval process, including early no's to bad projects

CORE ACTIONS

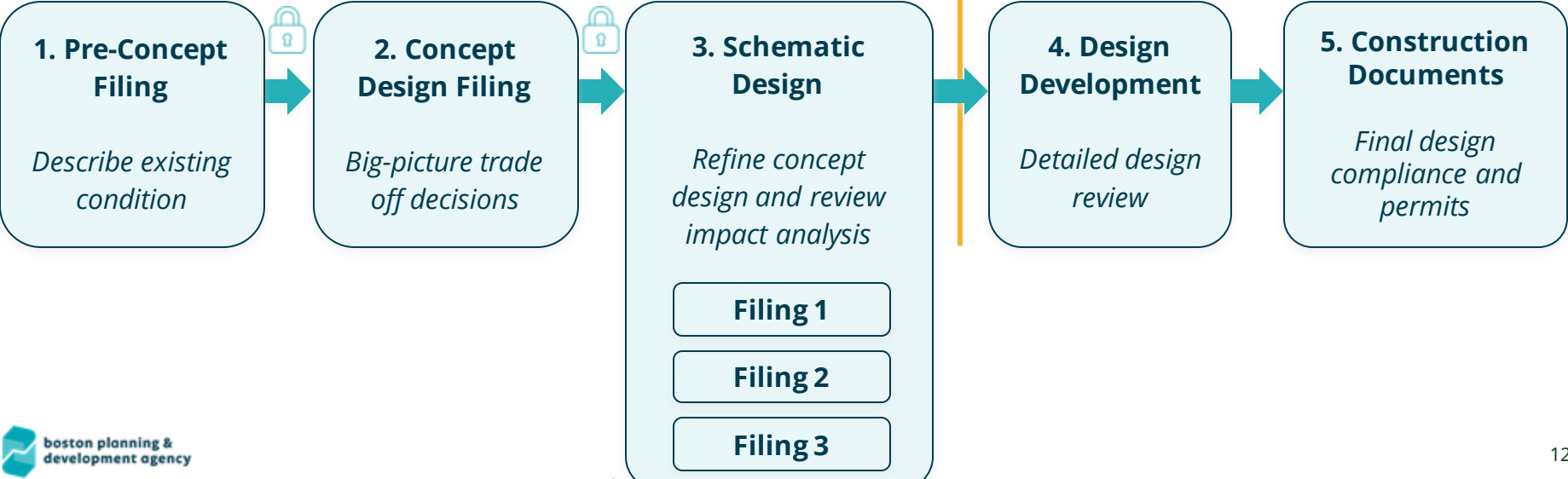
- A. Split up filings** into four clear steps that align with industry practice (1: Pre-concept, 2: Concept Design, 3: Schematic Design, 4: Design Development)
- B. Establish incremental “Status Vote”** to confirm key decisions included in the Concept Design, such as land use, massing, density, and size of mitigation package
- C. Waive concept design review** for projects compliant with recent zoning to ensure consistency with planning decisions
- D. Update and enforce** response times (e.g. “90 days per filing document”)
- E. Create interagency **portfolio review teams**** managed by veteran Development Review project manager to coordinate review, prioritize feedback, and enforce response times

Core Change #3 | Coordinated Review

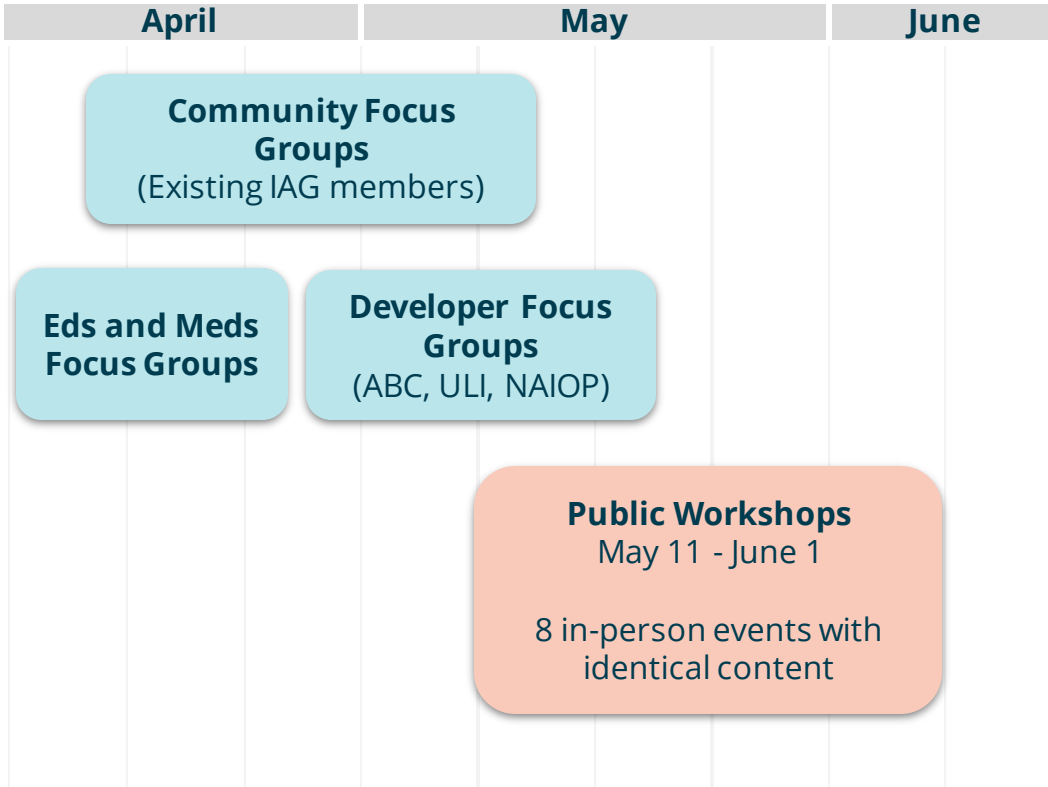
Today's Process



New Proposal



Upcoming Community Engagement



Public Workshop Schedule

- **Sat May 11, 2-4 pm** - Garage B, 525 Western Avenue, Brighton
- **Tue May 14, 6-8 pm** - Civic Pavilion, 5 Congress Street, Downtown
- **Wed May 15, 6-8 pm** - Perkins Community Center 155 Talbot Avenue, Dorchester
- **Sat May 18, 2-4 pm** - Condon Community Center, 200 D Street, South Boston
- **Tue May 21, 6-8 pm** - Fenway Community Center, 1282 Boylston Street, Fenway
- **Thu May 23, 6-8 pm** - Veronica Robles Center, 282 Meridian Street, East Boston
- **Thu May 30, 6-8 pm** - Menino Community Center, 125 Brookway Road, Roslindale
- **Sat Jun 1, 2-4 pm** - Bolling Building, 2300 Washington Street, Roxbury