FACT SHEET

Overseas Duty Visit
Panel on Development

Spatial planning and urban renewal in Boston

Table 1 – Basic information on Boston

Basic facts	• Boston, the capital of the state of Massachusetts and the largest city in the New England region, is one of the historic, wealthy and influential cities in the United States (US). Boston has an area of 125 km² and a population of 600 000. It lies at the centre of the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy metropolitan area – the 11th-largest metropolitan area in the US, which has a population of 4.4 million. • As regards the governance structure, Boston implements a mayor-council system in which the mayor is vested with extensive executive powers. The mayor is elected to a four-year term by universal suffrage. The city council, which has 13 members, is elected every two years. • In addition to the city government, numerous state authorities and commissions play a role in the politics of Boston, including the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Massachusetts Port Authority.

Table 2 – Spatial planning in Boston

Responsible authority	• Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA).
Legislation	• Housing and Urban Redevelopment Act and Urban Redevelopment Corporations Act.
Spatial planning policy	• BRA plays a key role in formulating the spatial planning policy in Boston. Some of BRA's responsibilities are: (a) co-working with developers, businesses and citizens to formulate master spatial plans that address the city's needs for infrastructure and community economic development; (b) approving development projects; (c) acquiring, selling and leasing real estate to achieve economic redevelopment and to promote public policy objectives, such as encouraging growth industries and implementing appropriate land use policies; (d) owning real estate throughout the city and selling any such property when an attractive plan for the use of the property is submitted and approved; (e) issuing bonds and notes to finance the development projects; and (f) granting tax concession to encourage commercial and residential development, if necessary.

Table 3 – Urban renewal in Boston

Responsible authority	• BRA.
Legislation	• Housing and Urban Redevelopment Act and Urban Redevelopment Corporations Act.
Urban renewal policy	• Some of the guiding principles of the urban renewal policy include: (a) BRA plays an important role in formulating the urban renewal policy. Commercial enterprises, professional associations and local citizens are consulted to determine the best urban renewal option. In many cases, BRA co-works with the private sector to implement large urban redevelopment projects. (b) BRA may sell land to developers for redevelopment purpose. (c) After evaluating the social benefits, BRA determines the priority of implementing urban renewal projects. (d) BRA develops good transport infrastructures and regenerates green spaces to improve the living environment.

Table 4 – Possible sites for the visit

John Fitzgerald Expressway/Tunnel Project (spatial planning)
• The John Fitzgerald Expressway/Tunnel Project is a mega-project rerouting the John Fitzgerald Expressway, the main highway through the heart of Boston into a 5.6 km tunnel under the city. The project also includes the construction of the Ted Williams Tunnel, the Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge and the Rose Kennedy Greenway. The John Fitzgerald Expressway/Tunnel Project is the most expensive highway project in the US, which costs over US$14.6 billion.
Back Bay (spatial planning)
• Back Bay is an upscale residential, retail, and commercial office district. Within the district, Newbury Street, Boylston Street and Commonwealth Avenue are lined with unique shops, trendy restaurants and vintage homes, making Back Bay a fashionable destination for Boston residents and visitors. • Architecturally, Back Bay is dominated by Victorian brownstone buildings in its northern, more residential portion; the southern part of Back Bay is far more commercial and is home to some of Boston's tallest skyscrapers such as the Prudential Tower and the John Hancock Tower.
Boston Harbour Islands National Recreation Area (spatial planning)
• The Boston Harbour Islands National Recreation Area is made up of a collection of islands near the harbour, many of which are open for public recreation and some of which are very small and best suited for wildlife. The area is managed by the Boston Harbour Islands Partnership. • Attractions of this recreation area include hiking trails, beaches, the Civil War-era Fort Warren on Georges Island and Boston Light on Little Brewster Island, one of the oldest lighthouses in the US. Georges Island and Spectacle Island are served seasonally by ferries to and from Boston and Quincy, connecting on weekends and summer weekdays with a shuttle boat to several other islands.
Cycle paths (spatial planning)
• Many Boston residents use bicycles as one of the primary modes of transit, and Boston's small size and relative flatness make cycling an appealing way to get around. The mayor has plans to construct more cycle paths and bicycle parking spaces to encourage the use of bicycles. Among the cycle paths in Boston, the eleven mile Minuteman Bikeway is the most famous one.

Table 4 – Possible sites for the visit (cont'd)

Government Center (urban renewal)
• Boston has built an entirely new development on top of old Scollay Square, bounded by Cambridge, Court, Congress and Sudbury Streets, and renamed the area Government Center. Government Center is often used for large outdoor urban events, including free concerts in the summer and a large Santa's Workshop display in the winter. The centrepiece of Government Center is the Boston City Hall.

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