



**Remarks of Mayor Martin J. Walsh
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce Government Affairs Forum
September 20, 2017**

As prepared for delivery

Thank you, **Miceal [Chamberlain]**, thank you **Jim [Rooney]**. It's a pleasure to be here with the Chamber for the fourth year in a row. It's been an exciting four years. It's been truly gratifying to work with all the people of Boston in one of the most extraordinary periods of our city's history.

We're doing something right, because people want to live here. We've added about 30,000 new residents. We've responded to a historic housing shortage by getting 22,000 homes into construction, including 8,700 for low and moderate income families. The Boston Public Schools' graduation rate is at an all-time high. And we've earned perfect, AAA bond ratings four years in a row, the first time it's been done in the City's history.

Business has thrived. Companies are growing, startups have bloomed, and new employers have flocked here. Most recently, I'm pleased to welcome PTC and Alexion Pharmaceuticals—and a combined 1,400 new jobs to the South Boston Waterfront. In all, we've built 12 million square feet of new commercial space. We've added more than 60,000 new jobs. And we cut the annual unemployment rate from 6.1 percent in 2013 to 3.4 percent last year.

I want to thank every employer in our city for your role in Boston's success. And I want to share some new data. The year before I took office, unemployment in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan was in double digits. By last year, it was down to below 6 percent. More people are working in every neighborhood, and that's something our city can be proud of.

That's good news, but it's not the full story. Income inequality is a national challenge, so we won't solve it by ourselves. But we can show the way forward. We can fight to be a Boston for *everyone*: a city where *every* child gets the start they need, every worker can find good job opportunities, every business can get a fair shake, and every neighborhood can enjoy the great quality of life we love about our city.

A Boston for everyone is the *right* thing to do—and it's also the *smart* thing to do, to keep our economy strong. In Boston we've proven that leading with our values gets results.

We believe in education. It's the reason for our talented workforce, for our leadership in science and medicine, and for our policies like free community college.

We believe in the environment—a clean harbor, a greenway, and a goal we set this year to be carbon neutral by 2050. These things take our quality of life to a new level.

We believe in equal rights. I fought for marriage equality in the Legislature because it was the right thing to do. But that stand also brought untold talent and goodwill to our economy.

We're a welcoming, global city. 28% of us are foreign-born and nearly 50% are first-generation, like me. I will always stand with our immigrants.

We're a city that knows strong labor rights make more productive workers and more confident consumers. That's what built our middle class.

And we're a city that believes when women succeed, we all succeed. We've led the nation in promoting pay equity and women's leadership. By the way, she couldn't be here today, but I want to congratulate **Marianne Harrison**, the new CEO of John Hancock and the first woman to hold that important role in our business community.

We believe in a Boston for everyone. It's the reason for our success. And it's the goal we heard loud and clear from residents, as we drafted Imagine Boston 2030, our first citywide plan in over half a century. The people of Boston gave us a mandate for inclusive growth—a Boston for everyone. I'm going to talk this morning about how we are building that Boston today, tomorrow, and over the next 4 years.

I want to start with climate change. We've been ranked the most energy-efficient city in America over the last 4 years. And we led the charge to defend the Paris agreement when the White House turned its back.

Our reasons are clear. We saw the devastation in Houston. We saw the scenes from Florida. We know it could happen here. We have a duty to protect our city today, and for future generations. That means we must take action locally and work together globally.

This morning, I can announce two new steps. First, we will begin creating a landmark new green space on Boston's waterfront—a series of connected parks at Fort Point Channel, designed to protect us from storm surge and sea level rise. These parks will protect not only Fort Point, but also downtown, Chinatown, and South Boston. They will foster new possibilities for growth from South Station to Widett Circle. They will be a new jewel in our park system, accessible by public transit in a Boston for everyone. I want to thank the Trustees of Reservations for their research. And I look forward to working with the community and all our nonprofit partners on a more resilient city and a more welcoming waterfront.

Climate change is not an issue that a city can solve by itself. But our leadership can be far-reaching. So I can announce that next summer, I will host a Climate Summit for America's cities with my fellow mayors. We're not only going to make our city stronger. We're going to rally our nation and our world to meet this fundamental challenge.

I want to talk next about housing. If you are an employer, it's the biggest challenge to talent recruitment—and talent retention—that you face. We've worked every day to help meet that challenge. Our Housing Plan set an unprecedented target of 53,000 new homes in our city by the year 2030. We put in place a more transparent development process; city investments and city land for affordable housing; a stronger Inclusionary Development Policy; new college dorms; and new senior housing. With 22,000 new units, I'm proud to say we are well ahead of pace to meet our housing goal. And those units are having the right effect. They helped stabilize rents in existing homes.

We've got bold plans to keep the momentum going. In the years ahead, we will create new affordable housing using the Community Preservation Act we passed last year. We will turn the proceeds from the Winthrop Square Garage into hundreds of new low-income units in South Boston, East Boston, and Chinatown. In addition, we will rebuild our biggest public housing developments into mixed-income communities that protect and upgrade thousands of low-income units in Jamaica Plain, Charlestown, and South Boston.

I can also announce two new supports for residents. We will increase the amount we provide to qualified first-time home buyers through the Boston Home Center, to reflect increased home prices. And for our seniors, we are piloting a Homeshare Network that safely matches senior homeowners with graduate students. Seniors get help with home maintenance, and students get discounted rent.

We don't do this work alone. We have committed and creative partners in the nonprofit and private sectors. I want to thank Related Beal for their work on The Beverly. It's the first all-affordable building for the middle class in downtown Boston. And I invite every developer to join us, in creating more homes at price points that work for more families.

To help us in that work, I will push for passage of the bipartisan bill, already introduced in the United States Senate, that would expand the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. It's the least the federal government can do to empower American communities to meet our housing needs.

Getting from good homes to good jobs takes good transportation. It's fundamental to economic growth. But getting to work in Boston can be a challenge. I'm sure you agree.

We've taken steps to relieve congestion and increase safety. We've installed more efficient parking meters, lowered the default speed limit, improved signal timing, and we are revitalizing crosswalks and lane markings.

We're going to keep improving Boston's streets. But the heart of the solution has to be public transportation. Boston contributes \$85 million annually to the MBTA, more than all other cities and towns combined. That's in addition to what our residents and employers pay in fares.

I have two proposals to help move us forward. The first is a pilot for increased train frequency on the Fairmount Line. One-fifth of Boston's population lives along its nine-mile route. 83% are black or Latino. They deserve better service. And from an economic perspective, they are an under-utilized workforce in our city that we need to activate. The City is investing in neighborhoods along the line, such as Upham's Corner. But we need the

state's partnership to improve service.

I want to thank the governor and the MBTA for investing in repairs and moving forward plans to upgrade cars on the red line and orange line. That's going to help. But at this point, it seems like we're stuck between stations. So my second point is that must we get past this privatization issue, bring real resources to the table, and move the MBTA forward.

I understand there is a plan for 2040. Long-term planning is important. The City is doing plenty of it ourselves. But we're working to attract global employers to our 21st-century city right now. Boston can't wait 23 years. Roxbury, Mattapan, and Hyde Park can't wait. The businesses in this room can't wait. It's not just about Boston's needs. Growing our statewide economy depends on 21st-century transit in the urban core.

I'm proud of the success that the students, teachers, principals, and staff in our schools are achieving. We have more students learning in high-quality pre-kindergarten; more Level 1 and Level 2 schools; more students graduating from high school; and more going to college and completing college, than ever before. But we can't declare victory until every child gets the opportunities and supports they need—not just to graduate, but to be ready to thrive as workers, innovators, and lifelong learners in a changing world.

That's why this fall, with our partners at the Boston Opportunity Agenda and Success Boston, we are launching a citywide College, Career, and Life Readiness Framework. We're calling on every public school, charter school, and private school to move toward a common definition of readiness and a robust set of supports to help students achieve it. Together we'll create a promise to students, colleges, and employers that every high school degree is a real steppingstone to the next level.

I'm asking employers to play your part by helping to connect learning in our schools to the careers of today and tomorrow. For example, this February vacation we will partner with Red Hat software to pilot a STEM careers boot camp for students at the Dearborn 6-12 STEM Academy. It will qualify them for summer jobs at tech firms, footholds on the careers of tomorrow.

The truth is, we can't start early enough, when it comes to closing opportunity gaps. That's why we've increased access to high-quality pre-kindergarten seats by 25% in 4 years. It's a proven equalizer. But to achieve full equity, we need help. And we have a clear and achievable solution. Tourism taxes collected in Boston create an annual surplus in the Convention Center Fund. Our bill would direct those funds to create universal high quality pre-kindergarten for the children of Boston. I ask my former colleagues in the state legislature to make this a priority. Boston set the standard for quality in pre-kindergarten. We should work together to set the standard for access as well.

Education is the foundation. But the fight against inequality—and the job of strengthening our workforce—must reach far beyond our classrooms. A new report shows that if national trends continue, median wealth for black and Latino families in America will fall to *zero* dollars by the middle of this century. That's a stunning statistic—and it's a wake-up call for the future of our economy.

It's why we have focused so much of our policy work on economic mobility. We're providing the supports that workers and their families need to overcome barriers and get ahead: free college savings accounts and free community college; summer jobs for teens and apprenticeships for adults; financial coaching and small business support.

This fall, we'll launch an Economic Mobility Lab to improve these supports and get them to more of the people who need them, when they need them. We'll add new programs, like job training for veterans recovering from PTSD and career pathways from Boston Public high schools into city agencies. And I'm pleased to announce we are expanding eligibility for our free community college program.

Instead of just talking about inequality, we're creating solutions—real solutions, for real people. People like **Jasmine Vigo**. A few years ago, Jasmine got out of an abusive relationship. That takes a lot of courage. But she found herself facing another challenge. She was a single mom, making \$12 an hour in a part-time job. You can do the math. Then she heard about Project Hope. It's a job-training nonprofit on Dudley Street that helps women meet challenges just like hers. They made sure she had the transportation and the child care she needed. Jasmine said it was like having "a whole new family." After graduating, she got a job handling insurance claims—full-time, at over \$18 an hour, with benefits, a retirement plan, and weekends off to be with her kids. It's still tough to make ends meet for her family. But she has gained a career path and she has gained hope.

That's a great Boston story. It's about a resilient, hardworking mom, and the unsung heroes at our nonprofits. It's also a story of Boston's growth. Jasmine's slot at Project Hope was funded by the Neighborhood Jobs Trust, using revenue that comes from development fees. It's one of the many benefits of new investment in our city. As Boston has grown, linkage revenue has grown with it, by over 50% in the last four years.

We are putting these resources to better use than ever before. We now collect, measure, and maximize the impact of every dollar. In three years, we've directed nearly \$11 million to train over 2,600 low-income residents for careers in high-growth sectors. Most got a job right away, with a living wage and a career path.

I want to thank everyone in this room who has contributed to this growth. And I want to thank the dedicated women and men who fight to bring opportunity to every corner of our city, including **Jasmine Vigo**, Sister **Margaret Leonard**, who is the founder of Project Hope; and **Trinh Nguyen**, our Director of Workforce Development. These remarkable women are here with us, please give them a hand.

Growth *does* create new opportunity in our city. And we *can* spread these opportunities to everyone. But we can't do it alone. We need the private sector as our partner in this work—not just to grow the pie, but to get more people a seat at the table. So I invite employers to work with us to hire more residents of Boston's neighborhoods. We are growing the pathways that workers need to be strong candidates. We need more employers willing to extend these pathways into more workplaces. We want to repeat Jasmine's story many times over, because a strong economy depends on a secure workforce. It's the right thing to do, and it's the smart thing to do.

I am committed to helping every business that wants to start here, grow here, or move here. That's why Boston will be submitting a proposal to be Amazon's East Coast home. My team has studied this opportunity closely. We see a company ready to invest \$5 billion. We see a company looking to grow 50,000 good jobs. And we see a company using technology to change the world.

We are the city that is ready to shape that change and meet this challenge: with our talented workforce, with our culture of innovation, and with our bold housing plan. Our bid will reflect the values that drive our success. That's the city we invite Amazon and every employer to be a part of.

Four years of speaking at the Chamber have taught me something. When I ask for help here, I know we will get results. I called for more creative building designs, and developers stepped up. I asked for help re-imagining the Adopt-a-School program—and we did, with InvestBPS bringing more companies into our schools than ever. Early on, I asked you to join our Youth Summer Jobs program—and we grew it by 18%, adding 576 new private-sector jobs, thanks to many of the employers in this room. You are changing young people's lives.

A year ago, I challenged you to help our city get serious about uprooting systemic racism. I want to thank the Chamber for supporting our citywide dialogue on race. And I want to thank the Chamber, along with Eastern Bank, for leading a movement to grow opportunities for businesses owned by people of color.

We're proving at a time of national division that we *can* work together and move our city forward. But there's much more work left to do, to build this Boston for everyone. I want to close by sharing a powerful way we can recommit to our highest values.

As the 50th anniversary of his death approaches, I can announce that Boston is finally going to build a fitting memorial to Dr. **Martin Luther King Jr.** in the city he once called his second home. We will work with philanthropist **Paul English**, the African-American community, and the people of Boston. Together we will identify a design, and a site, that honor this towering figure of history—and that never lets us forget his call to racial equality and economic justice.

During his time in Boston, Dr. King embodied the best of our values. He completed his education here. He built community here, and met his wife Coretta. He served the people here, at Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury. Pastor **Arthur Gerald** from Twelfth Baptist is here with us. His congregation will be at the heart of the project.

When Dr. King returned to Boston in 1965, he stood on the Parkman Bandstand on Boston Common and said: "The vision of the New Boston must extend into Roxbury. ... Boston must be a testing ground for the ideals of freedom." Dr. King's challenge is as real today as it was then. So we will honor his legacy with a memorial, and we will honor his legacy by living his values, by fighting inequality, by sharing opportunity, by building a Boston for everyone.

Thank you. God Bless You. God Bless the City of Boston.