

# Boston City Councilor Michelle Wu Files Ordinance to Make Municipal Data Transparent

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Boston City Councilor [Michelle Wu](#) is just as committed to the theme of transparency as Mayor Marty Walsh is, if not more. On Monday, the City Councilor At-Large filed an ordinance to afford everyday Bostonians access to municipal data to the benefit of the business community.

The open data ordinance stems from Wu's 50 Ideas for Boston Families, a campaign initiative aimed at better understanding the immediate needs of residents throughout the city's various neighborhoods. The 29-year old City Councilor hopes that by opening up Boston's various datasets, city culture will subsequently be opened up to more lucrative opportunities. Possibility abounds.

Councilor Wu told BostInno in an email that she plans "to file it around 9:30 or 9:45 a.m." Monday morning.

"Government today should center on making data-driven decisions and inviting in the public to collaborate around new ideas and solutions," said Councilor Wu in a statement. "The goal of this ordinance is greater transparency, access and

innovation. We need a proactive, not a reactive, approach to information accessibility and open government.”

The City of Boston currently uses the site [data.cityofboston.gov](http://data.cityofboston.gov) to publicly house certain statistics. But, according to Wu's office, the city is only required to divulge information that appeases the Freedom of Information Act obligations. Her ordinance would put information from all city agencies and departments on display.

"Boston currently has 46 datasets available on its portal," posited Wu's office in a press release. "New York City, which passed an open data law in 2012, has over 1,100 datasets at [data.cityofnewyork.us](http://data.cityofnewyork.us)."

Wu has already worked extensively [to revamp the city's licensing and permitting process](#) to help streamline economic growth and business development within city limits. The idea, of course, is to rid prospective business owners of any antiquated or redundant red tape that hinders the entire system and repels any semblance of new business.

According to a copy of the filing, the ordinance would designate one department or organization member as the Data Coordinator to oversee implementation and compliance with applicable Open Data Policies. The coordinator will therefore prepare a public Open Data plan for the agency, comprised of a timeline, a summary description of all data sets under the control of the agency, and proposed data sets to be made public data.

To ease the tensions of those who, for whatever reason, may think the idea will prove to be less successful than initially thought, Councilor Wu has pointed to San Francisco and New York as proof that open data works symbiotically between the public and the city. Wu uses the example of both cities' partnerships with Yelp to display Boston's publicly available health inspection scores on each restaurant's Yelp profile.

Departments will have to provide data on an "as is" basis as opposed to an "as needed" one, keeping all information up to data to the best of the coordinator's capacity.

“Boston is a world-class city full of energy and talent. In addition to promoting open government, making information available to the fullest extent possible will help leverage Boston's energy and talent for civic innovation,” continued Councilor Wu. "From public hackathons to breaking down silos between city departments, putting more data online can help us govern smarter for residents in every neighborhood.”