# Guide to the Development of the Brookline BERDO Documentation

This guide explains how the Brookline Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure documentation was developed using ChatGPT in agent mode. It summarises the series of prompts and interactions that led to the final products: a series of research documents, a draft and expanded by‑law, an addendum with external links, and a version of the by‑law without hyperlinks.

## Tools and Mode of Operation

The assistant operated in **ChatGPT agent mode**, which allows it to perform tasks such as searching the web, reading files, running code in a sandbox environment, and generating documents. It cannot act autonomously on external accounts without explicit user approval and does not disclose internal reasoning. All citations in the research documents were generated using the assistant’s browsing tools, referencing official sources.

## Sequence of Prompts and Outputs

1. **Initial Research Request:** The user uploaded the Brookline **Plan** and **Proposal** documents for Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure. They asked the assistant to:
2. Compare the Plan and Proposal and check alignment.
3. Download and summarise Boston’s BERDO, Cambridge’s BEUDO and Newton’s BERDO ordinances.
4. Compare those ordinances with Brookline’s proposal, highlighting gaps, similarities and timelines.
5. Gather positive and negative press coverage.
6. Draft a proposed ordinance for Brookline incorporating the best elements of existing ordinances.

The assistant used the files provided by the user and open‑source ordinance documents from city websites to create: - **Alignment analysis** of the Plan vs. Proposal. - **Synopses** of Boston’s, Cambridge’s and Newton’s ordinances. - **Comparison and analysis** contrasting the three existing ordinances with the Brookline proposal. - A **draft Brookline ordinance** that combined key elements and introduced equity provisions. Each document was saved in the shared workspace and delivered back to the user via file links.

1. **Format Adjustment:** The user requested the documents as separate files. The assistant synchronised each document and returned the file identifiers to the user.
2. **Length and Complexity Assessment:** The user asked whether the draft ordinance was similar in length and complexity to those of the other cities. The assistant researched the lengths of the Boston and Cambridge ordinances, noting that they are much longer (hundreds of lines) than the draft, and explained that Brookline’s ordinance would need further expansion to match that level of legal detail.
3. **Recovering Work:** After the user indicated that some work appeared to be missing, the assistant re‑synchronised the previously created files so they could be accessed again.
4. **Expansion Request:** The user asked if the assistant could expand the draft ordinance to match the other cities’ complexity. The assistant confirmed this was possible and, upon instruction, produced an **expanded ordinance**. This version included comprehensive definitions, phased emissions schedules, compliance pathways, alternative compliance mechanisms, equity safeguards, governance and enforcement provisions.
5. **Integration with LBER:** The user questioned whether the draft tied compliance reporting to the Massachusetts **Large Building Energy Reporting (LBER)** program. The assistant explained that the initial draft referenced LBER but did not make it the exclusive reporting mechanism because LBER focuses on energy usage disclosure rather than emissions performance. The user requested integration with LBER anyway, and the assistant revised the ordinance to designate the state’s BEAM platform as the primary benchmarking tool, align reporting deadlines with LBER and clarify how Brookline would use LBER data while still calculating greenhouse‑gas emissions locally.
6. **Town vs. City Considerations:** The user asked whether Brookline’s status as a town, rather than a city, affected the ordinance. The assistant researched Massachusetts municipal law, noting that towns enact bylaws through Town Meeting and that ordinances are used by cities[[1]](https://www.mma.org/members/msa/massachusetts-select-board-handbook/chapter-3-organization-of-town-government/city-vs-town-distinction/#:~:text=Note%20that%20%E2%80%9Crepresentative%E2%80%9D%20in%20these,Meeting%20or%20a%20representative%20one). The ordinance was updated to reflect this distinction, renamed as a **by‑law**, and its preamble clarified that it would take effect after approval by the Massachusetts Attorney General.[[2]](https://www.mma.org/members/msa/massachusetts-select-board-handbook/chapter-3-organization-of-town-government/city-vs-town-distinction/#:~:text=Town%20Meeting%2C%20the%20legislative%20body,local%20laws%2C%20known%20as%20bylaws)
7. **Link Removal and Addendum:** The user observed that ordinances typically do not include hyperlinks. The assistant created an **addendum** listing all external sources used in the by‑law and removed the hyperlinks from the body. The addendum includes links to the Massachusetts Select Board Handbook and the state’s LBER policy and guidance pages[[3]](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/large-building-energy-reporting-policy#:~:text=Large%20Building%20Energy%20Reporting%20,starting%20in%202025)[[4]](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/complying-with-massachusetts-large-building-energy-reporting-law#:~:text=Complying%20with%20LBER%20if%20you,benchmark%20in%20another%20program).
8. **Producing a Clean Version and Guide:** Finally, the user requested:
9. A version of the ordinance without hyperlinks, which has been provided as a separate file (the citations have been stripped from the text).
10. This guide explaining how the documentation was created.

## Summary

Through a series of iterative prompts, the assistant used ChatGPT agent capabilities—file handling, web research, code execution and document generation—to develop a suite of materials for the Brookline BERDO initiative. The process demonstrates how a complex legal and policy document can evolve through user feedback, with each prompt refining the analysis, incorporating new requirements, and ensuring legal alignment with state law and municipal governance structures. The final outputs include:

* **Alignment analysis** of Brookline’s Plan and Proposal.
* **Synopses** of Boston’s BERDO, Cambridge’s BEUDO and Newton’s BERDO.
* **Comparison and gap analysis** between existing ordinances and Brookline’s proposal.
* A **draft ordinance**, later expanded into a comprehensive **by‑law** tied to LBER and tailored to a town form of government.
* An **addendum** listing external sources and a **clean version** of the by‑law without hyperlinks.

These documents are intended to support the Town of Brookline in developing and enacting an effective, equitable Building Emissions Reduction and Disclosure By‑law.

[[1]](https://www.mma.org/members/msa/massachusetts-select-board-handbook/chapter-3-organization-of-town-government/city-vs-town-distinction/" \l ":~:text=Note%20that%20%E2%80%9Crepresentative%E2%80%9D%20in%20these,Meeting%20or%20a%20representative%20one) [[2]](https://www.mma.org/members/msa/massachusetts-select-board-handbook/chapter-3-organization-of-town-government/city-vs-town-distinction/#:~:text=Town%20Meeting%2C%20the%20legislative%20body,local%20laws%2C%20known%20as%20bylaws) Massachusetts Select Board Handbook - Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA)

<https://www.mma.org/members/msa/massachusetts-select-board-handbook/chapter-3-organization-of-town-government/city-vs-town-distinction/>

[[3]](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/large-building-energy-reporting-policy#:~:text=Large%20Building%20Energy%20Reporting%20,starting%20in%202025) Large Building Energy Reporting Policy | Mass.gov

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/large-building-energy-reporting-policy>

[[4]](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/complying-with-massachusetts-large-building-energy-reporting-law#:~:text=Complying%20with%20LBER%20if%20you,benchmark%20in%20another%20program) Complying with Massachusetts' Large Building Energy Reporting Law | Mass.gov

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/complying-with-massachusetts-large-building-energy-reporting-law>