



Memo for Boston's Next Mayor: Extending Boston's Leadership on Climate Change

Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide Boston's next Mayor with background on the Boston Green Ribbon Commission, the City Climate Action Plan, and actions the new Mayor can take to continue and strengthen Boston's leadership on climate change.

The Green Ribbon Commission is a voluntary network of 33 business and civic leaders convened by Mayor Menino to support the City in its implementation of the Climate Action Plan. The Commission represents all of the key sectors in the city – including the public sector, health care, commercial real estate, higher education, utilities, hospitality, finance, worship, and NGOs. The Commission provides advice to the City on the design of the plan; organizes sectors to align their operations with greenhouse gas emissions and climate preparedness goals; and shares best practices and successes.

Boston Is Already Recognized As A National Leader On Climate Change

Boston is already recognized as a national leader in responding to the challenges of global climate change. Under Mayor Menino, the city has set goals and taken action to reduce our city's carbon footprint, to spark innovation and growth in the region's clean energy economy, and to prepare Boston for the consequences of a changing climate. This work places Boston in a small cohort of aggressive urban innovators (including New York City, Seattle, Chicago, Portland, San Francisco and others) that are showing by example how to simultaneously reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prepare for climate disruptions, and improve the quality of life in our urban centers. Boston's next mayor will have a running start on climate leadership.

Why It Matters: Leadership Is Critical To Our Global Competitiveness

The leading global cities in the world are all competing for scarce talent and investment – and this investment is increasingly flowing to urban centers that master the art of the triple bottom line – a high quality of life; a green city with clean air, open space, walkable communities, energy efficient systems and reduced carbon emissions; and a growing jobs base solidly anchored in the emerging clean energy economy. These urban places are resilient, adaptable, vibrant and affordable – the places where young, innovative talent wants to live and create wealth. Boston needs to be at the forefront of this global leadership to maintain and grow our prosperity.

The benefits to Boston from taking a proactive leadership approach to these challenges are multiple:

- Improved resilience that reduces risks and protects people, neighborhoods, buildings and other key assets from harm.
- Cost savings for property owners, tenants and taxpayers.

- Creation of new jobs and businesses in the “clean technology” sector.
- An overall higher quality of life (improved public health, better transit systems, more green space, less pollution, more walkable communities).
- A national reputation and brand that attracts the best talent to our region.

Boston is responsible for releasing about 8.5 million tons of greenhouse gas per year or about 14 tons per capita. Energy conservation alone can cut emissions significantly, and lead to savings of about \$2 billion by 2020 for residents, institutions and businesses. It can improve public health and reduce health care costs by reducing air pollution.

Why It Matters: Boston Is Highly Vulnerable To The Harmful Effects Of Climate Change

Boston is highly vulnerable to the harmful effects of climate change. As a coastal city with many densely populated, low-lying residential and commercial areas and an under-maintained and aging transportation infrastructure, sea level rise is a very real threat. This year provided a near-miss example of Boston's vulnerability. If Hurricane Sandy had hit Boston five hours earlier, at high tide, the devastating images we saw of Breezy Point, NY or the Jersey shore could have been East and South Boston. The human and economic toll resulting from climate change is simply unacceptable if Boston is to remain a thriving economic, residential and cultural center in the Northeast. But with millions of square feet of new construction approved or planned along Boston's waterfront, the City has the opportunity to thoughtfully design and develop so as to be the most climate and sea level rise resilient city in the country for decades to come.

A Leadership Roadmap: Boston's Climate Action Plan

As the stakes grow higher, the next mayor will have an even greater responsibility – and a great opportunity – to provide leadership on this issue. This kind of leadership has two core goals:

- “**Managing the Unavoidable**” – Reduce our risks from inevitable changes caused by global warming (sea level rise, extreme weather, disease, etc.)
- “**Avoiding the Unmanageable**” – Reduce our greenhouse gas emissions to set an example to the world to avoid even worse impacts that could exceed our capacity for adaptation.

These goals are both embodied in the City of Boston's Climate Action Plan, which lays out a strategy for reducing emissions and preparing for climate changes. The Climate Action Plan seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2020 and 80% by 2050 compared to 2005 levels. Strategies for achieving this include:

- Improving the energy efficiency of commercial and residential buildings
- Increasing the use of renewable energy
- Increasing transportation options to reduce the use of automobiles
- Increasing the efficiency of vehicles and reducing the carbon intensity of fuels
- Reducing waste going to landfills

The Climate Plan also seeks to prepare the City for the risks of climate change by assessing climate risks, preparing key infrastructure (roads, sewers, power, water, etc.) for future conditions, improving emergency preparedness, and designing future buildings and infrastructure for higher levels of resilience.

Critical Partnership and Leadership from all of Boston's Key Sectors: The Boston Green Ribbon Commission

The current Climate Action Plan encompasses the 2010 recommendations of the Boston Climate Action Leadership Committee, which included members from all parts of the Boston community: business, academia, neighborhoods, students, and more. In this tradition of inclusiveness, the mission of the Green Ribbon Commission (GRC), convened by Mayor Menino, is to mobilize leaders from Boston's key sectors – business, education, health care, civic society, finance, real estate, professional services, tourism and others – to support the City's Climate Action Plan. The Commission plays three important roles in advancing the community-wide vision for climate action:

- **Advise** the City on the implementation of its Climate Action Plan.
- **Engage** sector leadership in aligning their assets and initiatives to support the plan outcomes.
- **Highlight** and promote best practice examples within and across sectors that advance the Climate Action Plan goals.

A list of the Green Ribbon Commission members is included as Attachment 1. The work of the GRC is supported by a coalition of six local foundations.

The GRC is engaged in a number of important initiatives:

- **Organizing major property owners** in Boston to advance the city's goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency and sustainability initiatives. More than 50 percent of total emissions in Boston come from commercial/industrial properties.
- Assembling and **sharing energy efficiency data** and best practices.
- **Advocating for city and state policies** that support climate mitigation and preparedness, such as the new Building Energy Reporting and Disclosure Ordinance (BERDO).
- Developing a new **branding and communications** strategy for the City on climate action (Greenovate Boston).
- Supporting private and institutional property owners to **prepare** for the impact of sea level rise and other risks of climate change.
- Capitalizing on business opportunities in **efficiency savings** for existing businesses and through the use of **cleaner and greener technology**.

The enthusiastic participation in the Green Ribbon Commission has demonstrated that business and civic leaders support a proactive approach to the challenges of climate change and the use of aggressive goals and targets to spur innovation and creativity in building our capacity to thrive as a global city under radically changed circumstances.

Recommended Priorities for Boston's Next Mayor

The Green Ribbon Commission recommends that the new Mayor reinforce and grow Boston's climate leadership in the following ways:

- 1) **Speak Out on Climate Issues.** Our society has a moral imperative to keep global average

temperatures within a few degrees Celsius of the temperatures at which human civilizations have developed and flourished. And we have a responsibility to prepare our citizens to adapt to the changes that have already been put in motion. The actions we take over the coming decades will determine the conditions on Earth for thousands of years to come. The greatest enemy to success is silence and denial. Political leaders must have the courage to speak out and engage the enthusiasm and creativity of all citizens in finding win/win solutions. Outspoken leadership from Boston, along with other forward looking cities across the globe, is critical to motivating ever-increasing climate action at local, regional, national, and international levels, within governments and the community at large.

- 2) **Collaborate with the Green Ribbon Commission.** Continue the strong partnership between the City and the GRC by actively engaging with the Green Ribbon Commission – attending meetings, engaging with sector leaders, collaborating on strategy, and supporting staff engagement with GRC working groups.
- 3) **Demonstrate City Leadership.** Publicly endorse the targets in the Climate Action Plan and support the continued excellent leadership of the Environmental and Energy Services (EES) Cabinet in plan development and implementation.
- 4) **Support the Climate Plan Update.** Complete the planned update of the Climate Action Plan in 2014, including a robust process that engages all sectors of the community; revisions to initiatives and programs to keep the City on track to meet its 2020 goals; implementation of a comprehensive performance management system to track and share progress on the plan; and a detailed climate preparedness plan for the City.
- 5) **Begin Planning For Carbon Neutrality.** The City's long-term goal of an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050 is the functional equivalent of becoming a carbon neutral city. This will require fundamental transformation of many urban systems – our building stock, energy generation and distribution, transportation, land use planning, and water and waste. We should begin developing this aggressive plan now so we have time to implement necessary changes.
- 6) **Advance the Greenovate Boston Brand.** Support the continued implementation of the Greenovate Boston branding and engagement strategy to engage 30%+ of city residents and businesses in take sustainability actions, including the annual Mayor's Greenovate Boston awards.
- 7) **Strengthen Climate Preparedness.** Accelerate the integration of climate preparedness into all parts of City government, and forcefully advocate for preparedness with regional, state, and federal agencies addressing areas beyond City control. Create more staff support focused on coordinating the City's climate preparedness work and its interactions with public and private partners.
- 8) **Implement the Building Energy Reporting and Disclosure Ordinance.** Provide resources to support the rapid and efficient implementation of the new Building Energy Reporting and Disclosure Ordinance.
- 9) **Create a Vision for a Modernized, Clean Transportation Network.** Create a regional vision for increasing the use of clean transportation – walking, biking, public transit and vehicles powered by clean fuel.
- 10) **Engage our Utility Partners.** Continue the City's partnership with NSTAR and National Grid through the Renew Boston initiative to dramatically accelerate energy efficiency investments in our building stock and make sure Boston gets its "fair share" of utility incentives.
- 11) **Leverage District Energy & CHP.** Develop a detailed plan to increase the City's use of

district energy and Combined Heat and Power (CHP), including exploration of the use of anaerobic digestion opportunities and district energy planning for the Innovation District.

- 12) **Promote Renewable Energy.** Continue supporting the expansion of renewable energy production in the City, including solar on municipal buildings and promoting solar at commercial and residential buildings.
- 13) **Facilitate Clean Energy / Green Technology Sector Development.** Expanding on recent successful business development and expansion in the Innovation District and elsewhere in Boston, continue to leverage university and institutional partnerships and development opportunities to further expand the clean energy and green technology sector and employment opportunities for Boston residents.
- 14) **Hold an Annual Climate Summit.** Hold an annual summit in Boston to share progress on the Climate Action Plan and engage key stakeholders (including the Commonwealth) in on-going implementation to hit our targets.
- 15) **Demonstrate National Leadership.** Continue Boston's leadership on climate issues through engagement with national stakeholder groups, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities, and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

Signatories

This briefing memo is submitted on behalf of the Boston Green Ribbon Commission by the Commission's Executive Committee.

Amos Hostetter, Trustee, the Barr Foundation (GRC Chair)
Michael Mooney, Chairman, Nutter, McClennen & Fish (GRC Vice Chair)
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For more information, please visit:

- Green Ribbon Commission: www.greenribboncommission.org
- Greenovate Boston: www.greenovateboston.org
- City of Boston Environmental and Energy Services:
www.cityofboston.gov/environmentalandenergy

Boston Green Ribbon Commission Members

1. **Joseph Aoun**, President, Northeastern University
2. **Robert Brown**, President, Boston University
3. **David Colella**, Chairman, Greater Boston Conventions & Visitors Bureau
4. **Anne Finucane**, Global Strategy and Marketing Officer, Bank of America
5. **John Fish**, President, Suffolk Construction
6. **David Fubini**, Director/Boston, McKinsey and Co.
7. **Paul Gaynor**, CEO, First Wind
8. **Gary Gottlieb**, MD, President and CEO, Partners HealthCare
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10. **Joe Grimaldi**, President & CEO, Mullen Advertising
11. **Rev. Ray Hammond**, Pastor, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church
12. **Amos Hostetter**, Trustee, Barr Foundation (*Commission Chair*)
13. **Deborah Jackson**, President, Cambridge College
14. **Michael Keating**, Partner, Foley Hoag; Chair, The Boston Foundation
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