



Climate Ready Boston

*A Project Led by the City of Boston in Collaboration with the
Boston Green Ribbon Commission*

October 1, 2015

In the fall of 2014, the GRC contracted with the Rebuild by Design (RBD) organization to help design a long-term climate preparedness planning process for the Greater Boston region. Rebuild by Design played a pivotal role in the Sandy Rebuilding Task Force that led \$1 billion of recovery efforts in the New York/New Jersey region following Hurricane Sandy. The City of Boston and the Green Ribbon Commission (GRC) have worked with the RBD team to adapt their process for the Boston region, based on the unique characteristics of our region.

This planning process, now called “Climate Ready Boston,” (CRB) will be led by Environment, Energy, and Open Space Cabinet (EEOS) of the City of Boston in collaboration with the GRC. It will provide a planning framework and technical foundation for long-term climate preparedness in the City of Boston, consistent with the City’s Climate Action Plan, approved by Mayor Walsh in January, 2015.

CRB will be undertaken in two phases at a cost of about \$3.5 million over two years. The project is premised on the assumption that carefully focused research and analysis, together with selective engagement of key public agencies, scientists, and stakeholders in Phase I, and broader engagement of the public in Phase II, can advance significantly our goal of preparing Boston for the impacts of climate change. Phase I is fully funded by a diverse set of private and public sector sources totaling \$1 million. It will commence in October 2015.

The key tasks and deliverables of Phases I and II are:

Phase I – October 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016

- **Climate projections** summarizing current consensus on the likely ranges for future climate impacts. This task will provide a clear baseline for what the City needs to plan for and when. The analysis will address multiple risks, including sea level rise, coastal flooding, increased precipitation, extreme heat, and possible changes in the frequency and/or intensity of major storms. A Scientific Advisory Group of leading climate experts will be convened to review the methodology and outputs.

- **An Integrated Vulnerability Assessment**, to identify the City’s major climate vulnerabilities, including delineation of neighborhoods, properties, and infrastructure assets that are most at risk. The integrated assessment will build upon the results of the first task above and the many risk assessments already underway or completed by MA DOT, Massport, MAPC, BWSC and other agencies. The vulnerability assessment will identify “Critical Resiliency Focus Areas” where action on climate preparedness is needed in the near term, long term, or both. These may center on specific geographic areas, classes of assets, or systems such as transportation or electric power grids. An Infrastructure Advisory Group will be convened to guide the work of this task.
- **Resiliency Initiatives**, a portfolio of potential solution strategies for each Resiliency Focus Area. The Resiliency Initiatives will span a broad range of possible types of interventions, including regulatory mechanisms, financial incentives, technical assistance, design standards, and physical infrastructure projects. The end result will be a vision and roadmap for making Boston a climate-ready city, which can then be integrated into the City’s citywide planning initiative, Imagine Boston 2030.

Phase II – July 1, 2016 – June 20, 2017

- **Design Solutions for Resiliency Focus Areas.** Design teams will be contracted to develop more detailed solution strategies for some of the most critical Resiliency Focus Areas. Generally, these will be areas where the risks are most severe, where a multi-faceted response is needed, where deep cross-functional expertise is required, and/or where there are opportunities to reap substantial benefits for a wide array of stakeholders and assets. This task will build off of ideas identified in the Resiliency Initiatives task and necessitate a significantly more intensive public engagement strategy than that for Phase I.
- **Recommendations for Governance Changes.** This task will focus on addressing gaps in the current governance structure at the city, regional, and state level, if such gaps are identified during the course of the project. The goal will be to design and create an on-going structure for key players (government, private sector, academia, NGOs, communities) to collaborate on climate resiliency planning and implementation decisions over the long term.

The City of Boston will convene a small Steering Committee to oversee the project, including a representative of the GRC. Overall project management will be the responsibility of HR&A, a planning firm from NYC with extensive experience in urban climate resiliency. The first task on analyzing future climate risks will be led by the School of the Environment at U Mass Boston.