



PLANNING FOR A BOSTON GREEN NEW DEAL & JUST RECOVERY

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**executive
summary**

Envision a city ...

... where all residents enjoy healthy homes, fresh food, clean air and water, and beautiful public spaces. A city where housing and transit are affordable, jobs are accessible and well-paying, and residents feel secure with strong social safety networks in place. A transformed city, where poverty, pollution, social and environmental injustices, and racial oppression are becoming stories from the past.

The time is now to transition to a thriving green economy and sustainable communities with a city-level Green New Deal and Just Recovery. Cities have tremendous power to lead the charge to mitigate the threat of climate change, eliminate the violence of poverty and economic inequality, close the racial wealth gap, and dismantle structural racism. We've long needed a radical rethinking of our systems, but the triple force of this brutal pandemic, the threat of climate change, and public activism over 400 years of systemic oppression, brings renewed urgency.

The window to reverse the destructive momentum of climate change is closing quickly. Boston is staring down a future with as many as forty days of intense heat per year by 2030, and nearly the entire summer by 2070. Sea level rise could reach over three feet by 2070, and over seven feet by the end of the century. As we plan for relief and recovery, returning to "business as usual" with harmful levels of pollution and emissions is a recipe for disaster.

The pandemic has revealed and widened existing disparities, spreading hardship and disease through communities living with concentrated poverty, racial and economic segregation, pollution hotspots and unequal access to social services. We must ensure that long-term and equitable decisions guide our way out of this crisis, beyond immediate relief, and into a Just Recovery founded on racial justice and shared prosperity.

Climate justice is racial and economic justice. For too long, we have been told there is no viable alternative to the current social and environmental injustices facing our communities. Yet the pandemic has also illuminated the scale of mobilization possible when we choose to confront a crisis. A local Green New Deal and Just Recovery must direct this scale of collective action to take aim at the root causes of systemic injustices.

Above all, we must recognize this moment in time as a call to action.

This report presents 15 examples to demonstrate the power of cities to lead:

Accelerating Decarbonization is the baseline for protecting against the most destructive impacts of climate change and grasping our just and equitable future. Boston must commit to citywide carbon neutrality by 2040, 100 percent renewable electricity by 2030, and a net-zero municipal footprint by 2024.

A Justice Audit and Framework means addressing structural injustices by starting with the structure of our city government. A comprehensive justice audit will identify institutional harms to inform a citywide justice framework to overhaul and shape decision-making going forward.

Easing Upfront Costs of Clean Energy Infrastructure through Green Municipal Bonds and the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program can remove barriers and accelerate the installation of solar and efficiency measures for city government, residents, and businesses.

Green Workforce Development will create good jobs with strong benefits to support a clean, just economy and maintain the new critical infrastructure long-term through city partnerships with technical schools, local industry, and state entities that emphasize hiring locally.

Divesting from Harmful Industries and Reinvesting in a Clean, Just Future will protect residents and businesses from the unnecessary risks of extractive industries that threaten our ability to fully fund our public pension system. Gun manufacturers and private prisons that further violence and institutional racism will also see divestments as we move our money in support of clean energy and community-based financial institutions.

An Urban Climate Corps can expand employment opportunities for our youth and residents who face barriers to employment. Through a paid training program, their work can revitalize the neighborhoods they call home through green infrastructure installation, climate resilient design, the restoration of natural spaces, and community engagement.

Decommodifying Housing includes expanding cooperative housing and community land trusts for long-term and permanent affordability, community ownership, and more socially and financially resilient communities. according to community needs, we can begin to transform urban environments to prioritize the prosperity of residents.

A Renters' Right to Counsel will give access to legal representation for tenants as added protection from unwanted or potentially illegal evictions, and will also reduce costs for shelter housing, healthcare, and foster care otherwise associated with homelessness.

Just and Resilient Development includes creating affordable green overlay districts and standard community benefits agreements to provide transparency and predictability while aligning private development with goals for equity and resiliency.

Resilient Stormwater Infrastructure is necessary to protect against flooding from more frequent and more intense rain and storms. Shifting to a more equitable fee based on land use and the extent of impervious surfaces can incentivize green infrastructure and generate resources for district-level stormwater planning efforts.

Transportation Justice depends on city authority to improve the accessibility and reliability of multimodal infrastructure by prioritizing and allocating street space for active transportation modes. Cities must also pursue fare-free transit to remove barriers to public transit as a public good.

An Equitable Small Business Recovery will anchor community recovery, but the city must leverage public contracting opportunities to set goals for equity that ramp up quickly, and create opportunity for worker cooperatives. Boston can also create a technical assistance space and virtual resource hub to support business certification and integration with sustainability measures.

Food Justice requires equitable access to affordable, nutritious, culturally appropriate foods. The city can leverage its purchasing power to align food purchasing with sustainable and local producers, as well as direct resources to expand urban agriculture.

Growing the Urban Tree Canopy through priority planting zones based on urban heat island maps and a comprehensive urban forest strategy will boost tree coverage for carbon sequestration, cleaner air, temperature regulation, and community benefit.

A Local Blue New Deal would act on the transformative potential to harness coastal and ocean resources for clean energy development, sustainable food systems, carbon capture, and good jobs. Coastal cities can reimagine a relationship with the ocean through regeneration and climate justice.

We must change the narrative around what is possible. This is a call for bold, progressive change, recognizing that we already have the policy tools and community activism we need to create a local Green New Deal and Just Recovery. When cities lead, we show that longstanding inequities can be torn down, that our systems can be transformed, and that our democracy can be strengthened to move quickly on the path towards justice.

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**the urgency for
climate justice**

The Urgency for Climate Justice

“An effective Green New Deal is also a radical Green New Deal... from the Latin radix, meaning root: radical change is systemic change that tackles root causes rather than merely addressing symptoms.”¹

Imagine the City of Boston leading the way on climate justice. Envision a city where every resident enjoys a healthy home, beautiful public spaces, plentiful local food options, fresh air and clean water, and strong social safety networks. A city with safe and reliable transportation options—including protected infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians, and fast, frequent, reliable, fare-free transit—that make personal vehicles unnecessary. A city where affordable housing policies keep people in their communities, so that they benefit from green investments in the neighborhoods where they live, without fear of displacement. A city with cultural centers and community gathering spaces, where streets are vibrant pedestrian malls and parks host open-air markets and cinemas. It’s a city where families can swim and picnic along the banks of the Charles River and pristine Harbor beaches, or walk to beautifully maintained parks and playgrounds in every community. A city powered by renewable and community-controlled energy anchoring good jobs that provide benefits for workers and secure retirements. A city where residents never worry about monthly utility costs, because they own the clean energy produced by rooftop solar systems. A hub serving as a global leader in developing new clean renewable energy systems, zero waste, and green technologies. Where Black and brown families share equitably in the prosperity of the city and children attend well-resourced public schools in net-zero, healthy school buildings. Where all residents are protected from sea level rise, flooding, heat waves, and other climate impacts. A new kind of city where poverty, pollution, social and environmental injustices, and racial oppression are rapidly becoming stories from the past

As Boston faces the most dire public health emergency in a generation, we’ve seen the scale of collective action possible when mobilizing for a crisis. In the wake of the pandemic, Boston has stopped evictions, poured resources into food security, and delivered technology to all our public school students. Unlike the sudden shock of coronavirus, climate change and systemic inequities are slow, relentless crises. Yet the same communities bear the brunt of the impacts, because our public health crisis and climate crisis grow from the same roots: a political and economic system built on structural racism and injustices that threatens us all, because each person’s health and well-being is so deeply intertwined with that of the entire community. This moment is also a time of historic activism as multicultural, multigenerational grassroots mobilizations are building in Boston and all across the country to demand action for a sustainable, resilient society. We just need to match the public mobilization for change with urgent, policy action grounded in community leadership.

¹Kate Aronoff, Alyssa Battistoni, Daniel Aldana Cohen, and Thea Riofranco, *A Planet to Win: Why We Need a Green New Deal*, (New York: Verso, 2019), page 12.

Ultimately, a Green New Deal for Boston would seek to mitigate the threat of climate change, attack poverty and economic inequality, close the wealth gap, and dismantle structural racism at the scale necessary for a Just Recovery from the devastation of this pandemic. But we can only do so through community leadership, accountability, and long-term engagement. This report includes concrete policy proposals to inform a broader mobilization toward that engagement. By illustrating ways to marshal the full power of city government, this report seeks to present a vision of empowering communities to lead in tackling institutional change while addressing the daily needs of residents.

Most of all, we must change the narrative around what is possible. This is a call for bold, progressive change, recognizing that we already have the policy tools and community activism we need to create a local Green New Deal and Just Recovery.

The Necessity to Act

The window to reverse the destructive momentum of climate change is closing quickly.² For Boston, a failure to meet our targets to reduce carbon emissions will result in as many as forty high-heat days (over 90 degrees) per year by 2030, and 90 high-heat days per year by 2070—nearly the entire summer. Up to 33 days each summer would reach 100 degrees or more. Sea level rise in Boston Harbor could reach over three feet by 2070, and over seven feet by the end of the century.³ Returning to “business as usual” with pollution and emissions is a recipe for disaster.

“This is not just a crisis of systemic proportions but a crisis of the imagination.”

- Ann Pettifor in The Case for a Green New Deal

The economic situation is just as dire. Income inequality has continued to grow even more dramatically since the COVID-19 crisis. During the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, over 22 million people lost their jobs—including 1 million people in Massachusetts.⁴ But U.S. billionaire wealth increased by \$282 billion, an almost 10 percent gain. Extreme inequality threatens not only our economy, but also our democracy itself.⁵

²The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) latest report makes clear we must cut global carbon emissions in half by 2030 and hit net zero carbon emissions by the middle of the century for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.

³Climate Projection Consensus, City of Boston, December 2016, https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/embed/0/03_climate_ready_boston_digital_climateprojectionconsensus.pdf.

⁴Callum Borchers, 1 Million Job Losses: the Economic Toll of the Coronavirus Pandemic in Mass. Keeps Rising. May 14, 2020, <https://www.wbur.org/bostonmix/2020/05/14/1-million-job-losses-the-economic-toll-of-the-coronavirus-in-mass-keeps-rising>

⁵Chuck Collins, Omar Ocampo, and Sophia Paslaski, Billionaire Bonanza 2020: Wealth Windfalls, Tumbling Taxes, and Pandemic Profiteers, Institute for Policy Studies, 2020, <https://ips-dc.org/billionaire-bonanza-2020/>.

Cities are people, and our people are fighting to afford to stay. In the last ten years, rents and home prices in Boston have soared. At a rate of \$2,349 a month, the Boston area has the fourth-highest average effective rent of 79 major metropolitan areas across the United States, following only New York, San Francisco, and San Jose.⁶ Moreover, Boston’s “house-poor” residents would have to shell out 58 percent of their monthly income to own a home, leaving less than half of their take-home pay for other life expenses and savings.⁷ The increasing pressure of rising housing costs has made it particularly difficult for families with children to stay in the city—nearly one-quarter of families are severely cost-burdened and nearly 10 percent are overcrowded, facing stiff competition for multi-bedroom units across the city.⁸

Traffic congestion is choking our city too. Boston is ranked as the most congested city in the United States, with the average Boston commuter having lost over 149 hours due to traffic in 2019—the equivalent of more than 18 eight-hour work days spent sitting in traffic that year.⁹ The congestion nightmare exacerbates racial disparities, as people of color cope with inadequate and inequitable public transportation systems. In Boston, Black bus riders spend an average of 64 hours more per year sitting and waiting on buses than riders who are white.¹⁰ Transportation inequities compound disparities, as quality public spaces, tree cover, fresh foods, healthcare, and community services are not distributed equitably across our city.

The pandemic has revealed and widened existing disparities, spreading hardship and disease through communities living with concentrated poverty, racial and economic segregation, pollution hotspots and unequal access to social services like healthcare and childcare. Across the state, the infection rate among Latinx residents was three times as high—and for Black residents two and a half times as high—as the rate for white residents.¹¹ Boston’s latest available data shows that Black residents accounted for nearly 40 percent of known Coronavirus cases in the city, though they represent only one-quarter of the city’s residents. This public health crisis has also shed light on how deeply interdependent we are: each person’s risk of exposure depends on collective action toward physical distancing, wearing face coverings in public spaces, and monitoring personal contacts. It turns out that so many of the workers who often face unsafe conditions and work without labor protections or adequate benefits are in fact essential for everyone’s health and well-being.

⁶ Catherine Carlock, Boston’s Apartment Rental Rates Among the Highest in the U.S., Boston Business Journal, January 3, 2020, <https://www.bizjournals.com/boston/news/2020/01/03/boston-s-apartment-rental-rates-rank-among-the.html>.

⁷ Sofia Rivera, Boston Has One of the Least Affordable Housing Markets in the Country, Boston Magazine, May 29, 2019, <https://www.bostonmagazine.com/property/2019/05/29/boston-most-expensive-housing-market/>.

⁸ MAPC, Crowded In and Priced Out: Housing Families in Greater Boston. February 2020, <https://www.mapc.org/planning101/crowded-in-and-priced-out-housing-for-families-in-greater-boston/>.

⁹ 2019 Global Traffic Scorecard, INRIX, March 9, 2020, <https://inrix.com/press-releases/2019-traffic-scorecard-us>.

¹⁰ Livable Streets, 64 Hours: Closing the Bus Equity Gap. September 2019, https://www.livablestreets.info/64_hours_report Dialynn Dwyer, ‘This disease is just crushing communities of color’: Emergency room doctors on how COVID-19 is laying bare inequities in health care, Boston.com, April 24, 2020, <https://www.boston.com/news/coronavirus/2020/04/24/health-inequities-coronavirus-massachusetts>.

¹¹ Dialynn Dwyer, ‘This disease is just crushing communities of color’: Emergency room doctors on how COVID-19 is laying bare inequities in health care, Boston.com, April 24, 2020, <https://www.boston.com/news/coronavirus/2020/04/24/health-inequities-coronavirus-massachusetts>.

¹² Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Boston Race/Ethnicity Case Data, The Boston Public Health Commission, July 17, 2020, <https://www.bphc.org/onlinenewsroom/Blog/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?ID=1282>.

We must ensure that long-term and equitable decisions guide our way out of this crisis, beyond immediate relief, and into a Just Recovery founded on shared prosperity. The coronavirus is a threat to human life, but a Just Recovery is about more than just surviving. It is about transforming all that falls short of supporting our health, well-being, and livelihoods so we are better prepared for all that the future could bring.

A Just Recovery and a Green New Deal are intertwined. For too long, we have been told that there is no viable alternative to the current social and environmental injustices in the city and the Commonwealth—that larger, more meaningful interventions would be “too disruptive” or “not politically feasible.” Yet various cities across the country are moving forward at a scale and urgency previously thought impossible. Evictions and foreclosures have been halted. Public transit is now fare-free in some cities, and many others have added hundreds of miles of bike lanes. Free meals are being delivered to entire school communities, new housing has been created for residents experiencing homelessness, local businesses are manufacturing equipment for essential workers, and municipalities are providing free childcare for healthcare workers. Governments are instituting mandatory paid sick leave, and mutual aid societies have blossomed all over the nation. For many, this crisis is a clear reminder that the purpose of governance is to ensure the protection and well-being of all people.

A Local Green New Deal and Just Recovery must direct this scale of collective action to take aim at the root causes of systemic injustices, setting an intersectional vision to address urgent inter-linked disparities for intersectional communities.

The Scale of Action Needed

The original New Deal was an expansive approach for solving America’s economic crisis coming out of the Great Depression, but the opportunities were not extended equally to all Americans: Black and brown communities, through institutional racism and discriminatory policies such as redlining and segregation, have been systematically denied the rights and access to build generational wealth. As a nation, we again find ourselves in a moment of dire economic and ecological crisis, again seeing historic levels of activism for structural change. The federal Green New Deal resolution is an ambitious reflection of this widespread public desire to transform our society and economy, with an explicit focus on racial and economic justice. It sets forth the vision of a 10-year mobilization to reshape our country’s infrastructure, energy systems, agriculture, transportation, environment, and economy through democratization of resources and industries, making public investments in large-scale programs, and institutionalizing a commitment to equity.

¹³ Daniel Faber and Eric Krieg, *Unequal Exposure to Ecological Hazards: Environmental Injustices in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, Boston: Northeastern Environmental Justice Research Collaborative, 2005, <https://web.northeastern.edu/ejresearchnetwork/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Final-Unequal-Exposure-Report-2005-10-12-05.pdf>.

Green New Details: the Federal Green New Deal

Buildings account for around 40 percent of the nation's annual carbon emissions.¹⁴ Our infrastructure has suffered from chronic neglect and is not designed to withstand future climate change. A federal Green New Deal would repair and upgrade buildings and infrastructure to mitigate emissions, reduce the risks of climate impacts on communities, and ensure universal access to clean water.

Our nation has consumed a disproportionate number of global natural resources and is among the countries most responsible for global emissions. A federal Green New Deal would shift 100 percent of our power demand to renewable sources, build smarter power grids, and invest in various efficiency technologies.

The U.S. agricultural and transportation sectors are responsible for significant pollutants and emissions, yet many American communities lack access to nutritious food and suitable public transit. A federal Green New Deal would support sustainable and family farming, create a more sustainable food system, invest in zero-emissions transit development and create affordable public options like high-speed rail.

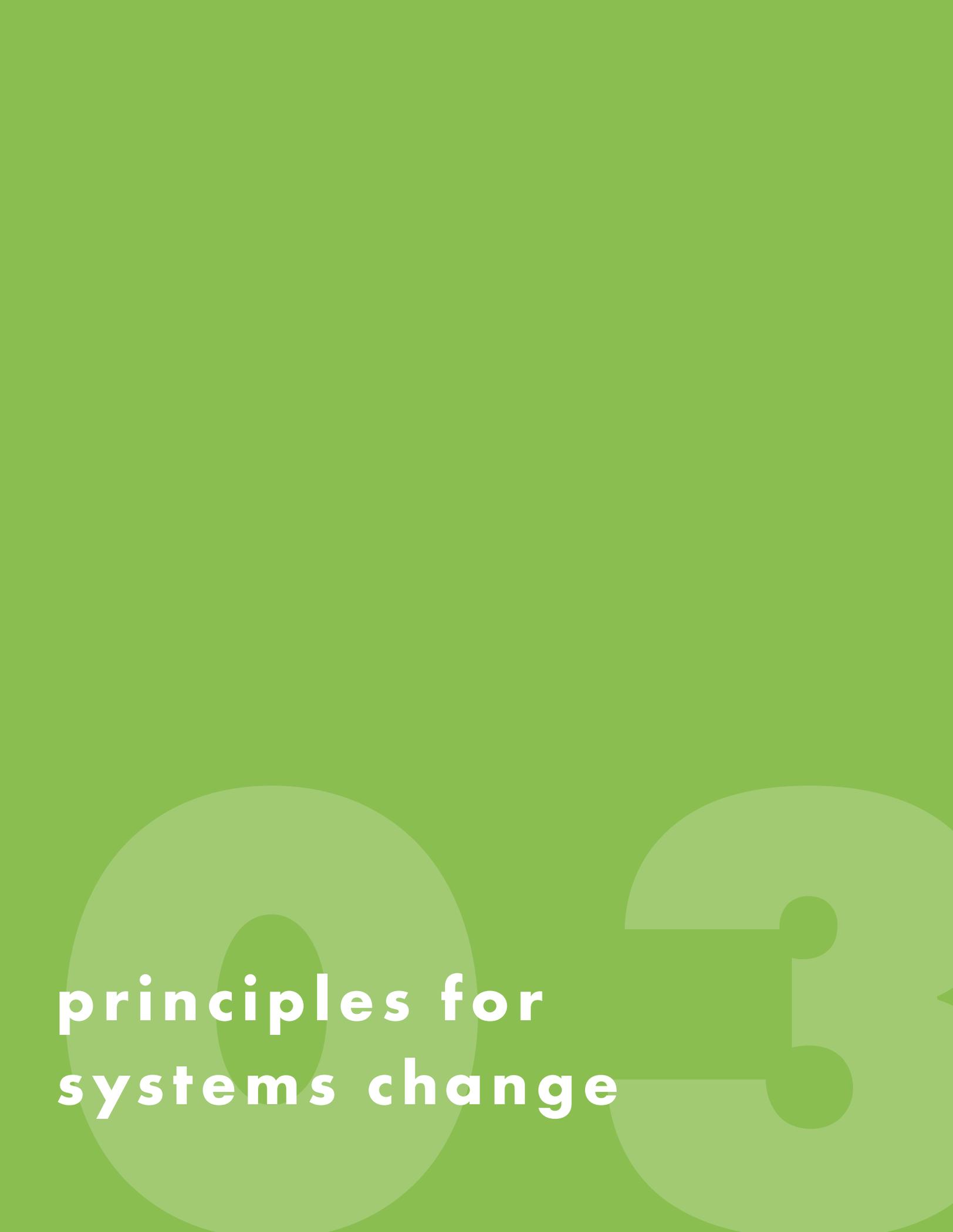
Internationally, we face dire predictions for crops, cities, coastal areas and our oceans due to acidification, floods, fires, extreme weather and sea level rise. A federal Green New Deal would restore and protect our ecosystems, invest in projects for climate resiliency, preserve open lands and transform environmental dumping grounds into economic development hubs.

Our nation has suffered from four decades of deindustrialization, stagnant wages and explicitly anti-union policies. Worker powers have been eroded, and paychecks still reflect racial and gendered divides. America today is seeing greater income inequality across our cities than we did a century ago. A federal Green New Deal would create millions of high wage jobs, protect worker rights to unionize, and institute trade rules to foster domestic manufacturing.

As the federal Green New Deal resolution makes clear, structural transformation requires directing resources to previously disinvested neighborhoods, lifting up frontline voices, and restoring a safe and healthy environment for all to enjoy. Cities can take even more immediate action to shape a more just and sustainable future. Local Green New Deals can transform municipal infrastructure, energy systems, transportation networks, housing stock, local procurement, main street economies, and most importantly, reorient our institutions and processes towards the pursuit of justice.

At its essence, the Green New Deal can shift the conversation from deeply embedded problems towards their solutions. By investing in solutions like good jobs, affordable housing, quality public services, fresh food, sustainable transportation, renewable energy, open spaces, and vibrant local economies, we can provide freedom from the fear and oppression caused by racial violence, housing insecurity, inadequate public services, unaffordable cities, disinvested neighborhoods and a history of prioritizing multinational corporations over the needs of multiracial communities. In order to best position ourselves and our cities to lead the fight against climate change, we must ensure that every one of our residents, families and small businesses has the power, support and capability to be part of decision-making.

¹⁴ Buildings and Built Infrastructure, Environmental and Energy Study Institute, Accessed July 10, 2020, <https://www.eesi.org/topics/built-infrastructure/description>.



**principles for
systems change**

Principles for Systems Change

In Boston, this scale of activism and leadership for the public good would in fact be a return to our civic roots. Boston is home to the oldest public park, public school, and public library in the country. In other words, our city was the first to recognize the collective benefit from giving access to green space, education, and our shared cultural and intellectual history—free and available to all. A century and a half after the Boston Public Library was established, Boston set another example. In 2012, the 500-unit Castle Square public housing complex became the nation’s largest deep energy retrofit project, supported by tenant organizing and funded by a federal grant.¹⁵ After wrapping the building with an insulated shell and upgrading to solar panels, high-efficiency water heaters, triple-paned windows and more, residents could enjoy a healthier building with utility costs cut in half. The development continues to be a proof point for the scale of resiliency and equity improvements possible when prioritizing public housing for energy retrofits—and for the value that affordable housing, clean energy, and sustainability should be accessible to all.

Our task is not to engineer outcomes that maintain the status quo, but to transform systems. To do so, we outline a set of principles that embodies the power and responsibility of local action. The principles here are grounded in the federal Green New Deal’s twin goals of social justice and climate safety, but also the principles proposed by grassroots and advocacy organizations, local groups and experts, and Green New Deal advocates. Every city’s Green New Deal and every community’s recovery should be guided by principles set in a local and democratic manner, but all should be accountable to the foundational purpose of government—representing the collective will to act in the public interest.

01 | People-Centered

A just recovery prioritizes our workers and communities, and seeks to build solidarity across racial, ethnic, and class lines. Core to this principle is putting people before profit and focusing on the long-term sustainability over successive generations of people. Most of all, we evaluate city actions through the lived experiences of residents to ensure that policies match community needs and leadership.

¹⁵ Leslie Kaufman, Making Homes Energy Efficient is Expensive. Stimulus Could Help. April 30, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-30/making-homes-energy-efficient-is-expensive-stimulus-could-help>

02 | Democratic and Participatory

Effective governance is responsive, democratic and participatory. At a baseline, that requires accessibility for city services and information. But true democratization guarantees the opportunity and ability for each person to shape public discourse and decision-making through accountable and inclusive institutional processes and decentralized power. Only through prioritizing the agency and voice of residents can we fully daylight and dismantle cycles of injustice.

03 | Addresses Root Causes

Tackling root causes is a commitment to reparative and transformative justice—seeking to acknowledge and repair past harms, and dismantling systems that are not supporting us in order to build emancipatory systems. Addressing the root causes of underlying crises means taking on not only the complexity of issues, but their interconnectedness.

04 | Rights-Based

At the root of a Green New Deal is a commitment to upholding the social contract between a government and its citizens: residents support a functioning government through paying taxes and following local laws, and the government guarantees residents' rights. A Just Recovery centers universal rights to a healthy and dignified life, with the right to an affordable home, reliable public transit, clean air and water, nutritious food, healthcare, worker protections, a rigorous education, social safety networks, and an environmentally sustainable future.¹⁶

05 | Decommodify Society and Nature

To decommodify means to eliminate market pressures on public services and restore public control over their management. Public housing, mass transit, schools, parks, libraries, and other city services are for public benefit, not private profit, and we collectively invest our public resources in providing these services because all benefit, not just direct users. Decommodification often involves prioritizing local production and consumption, which creates better access to affordable solutions and enhances community wealth-building.

¹⁶ Many of these rights are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the right to equal pay, food, housing, education and medical care. For a full list of rights, see: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

06 | Social and Ecological Resilience

Creating social and ecological resilience means investing in a regenerative and sustainable urban ecosystem that draws on nature-based solutions. To protect public health and well-being, we must act on climate science in solidarity across racial, ethnic, and class lines. This means becoming a regenerative, resilient city that works to meet everyone's needs while operating within ecological boundaries.¹⁷

07 | Justice-Oriented

Justice is achieving equitable power sharing, restructuring unjust structures, and creating a city that intentionally supports us all. Distributive justice ensures no community is unequally harmed by our choices and all share equitably in resources across the city. Procedural justice lifts up the voices, ideas and power of historically marginalized communities into processes for decision-making and implementation. Reparative justice aims to bring neighborhoods and communities into a state of shared well-being by addressing the impacts of existing or historical harms. Finally, transformative justice reforms and replaces the systemic ways that racism, class exploitation, discrimination and oppression continue to produce disparities.¹⁸ The lens of justice provides the roadmap for recovery and visions for a Green New Deal.

Systemic change requires systems-level action and responsibility. The American Dream is commonly understood as the possibility for boundless prosperity achieved by hard-working, determined individuals through their own labor and perseverance. But this dream has also instilled a glorification of personal responsibility where success and failure are determined by our own actions. Systems change requires expanding that frame of responsibility to include a collective dimension—seeing public budgets, assets, and policy as resources to build shared wealth, collective power and common purpose. This unprecedented moment in recent history is a call to address not only the symptoms, but also the underlying causes that separate and harm us. We have a moral obligation to act, making the transformative changes we need to decommodify, democratize, and decarbonize our lives. A local Green New Deal and Just Recovery must embody principles for systems change in order to achieve the transformative scale possible when cities lead the way.

¹⁷ Myles Lennon, No Silver Bullets, April 22, 2020, <https://jacobinmag.com/2019/04/green-new-deal-black-radical-tradition>.

**the impact of city
leadership**

The Impact of City Leadership

Cities are centers of creativity, vibrancy, diversity, culture, knowledge, wealth, and innovation. America's cities are home to nearly half the population and generate almost 60 percent of our economic activity.²⁰ Yet economic inequality is higher in urban areas, and soaring housing costs continue to destabilize communities.²¹ The concentration of buildings and industry in urban centers means that city policies can deliver changes with scale and immediacy.²² As such, cities have tremendous power on the front lines of the climate crisis and pandemic to create impact.

Especially in this moment, we need progressive leadership to set a collective vision grounded in community. The lack of federal government direction has shifted the burden and action to local government in a time of extreme hardship. The predicted state budget shortfall this year in Massachusetts is expected to be around \$6 billion, a drop of nearly 20 percent. Over 725,000 jobs are expected to be lost statewide due to the pandemic,²³ and full recovery is not predicted until at least 2024. Now is a time for the creativity, community empowerment, and immediate impact that can only come from the level of government most closely connected to the people.

Connection to community makes city governments more nimble, responsive and collaborative than state and federal institutions. Cities must be more practical in addressing collective problems and accountable to constituents. More than any other level of government, there is a pressure on cities to be democratic and participatory. Local government is the most immediate place where power and access can be shared among all stakeholders.

There is no single piece of progressive legislation that can remedy our longstanding ills, prepare us for climate change, and provide reparative justice to all who deserve it. Instead we must change processes and structures of governance to alter outcomes so that they bend towards justice. That means broadening our understanding of the potential of governance for good, and channeling the power and ideas of the people into designing and implementing policies for our common future.

²⁰ In fact, local government spending alone accounts for approximately 10 percent of our GDP. See Roxana Tynan, Nikki Fortunato Bas, Donald Cohen, Unmasking the Hidden Power of Cities, *In the Public Interest*, June 2018, 1, <http://www.inthepublicinterest.org/wp-content/uploads/Unmasking-the-Hidden-Power-of-Cities.pdf>.

²¹ Katelyn Newman, Harvard Study Finds Rental Housing is Becoming More Unaffordable, *U.S. News and World Report*, January 31, 2020, <https://www.usnews.com/news/cities/articles/2020-01-31/harvard-study-finds-rental-housing-is-becoming-more-unaffordable>.

²² Unmasking the Hidden Power of Cities, 6.

²³ Bruce Mohl, Tax foundation: Mass. fiscal situation worsening, *CommonWealth Magazine*, May 18, 2020, <https://commonwealthmagazine.org/state-government/foundation-mass-fiscal-situation-worsening/>.

The Power of Cities

When cities lead, we can transform society. At the most local level, effective government means empowering communities, delivering results, and strengthening our democracy. Municipal action also reverberates beyond city boundaries when cities work in coalition with regional partners and dovetail efforts with advocacy at other levels of government.

City power is derived from state government, either through the granting of home rule authority or through specific and limited delegation of powers. In Massachusetts—a home rule state—cities have some discretion to pass local laws for the protection of public welfare, health, and safety, but local authority is expressly limited if the state has crafted relevant legislation in that area. In Massachusetts, cities control zoning and permitting, but the state government regulates building codes. Cities may raise new forms of revenue, but only with express permission from the state. Public transit is funded and operated by the state, but cities control the allocation of street space for transit priority lanes and the timing of traffic signals that can make bus service faster and more reliable. Even where state government controls, cities can set the agenda and drive momentum for larger legislative change, especially in regional municipal coalitions. City government is also uniquely impactful, because the levers of power within municipal control are immediate and direct:

Budgets and Investments. With city government as not just a source of capital, but also a powerful platform, public budgets and investments can reflect and advance democratic principles and practices in the community. One of the most direct ways of democratizing municipal power is by instituting some form of participatory budgeting, which brings affected residents into deciding what to fund. City assets such as employee pension funds and operating funds should be invested in ways that align with the public interest. Some local jurisdictions are exploring the creation of public banks to ensure fairer access to funding for local businesses and individuals.

Zoning and Land Use. Through zoning and land use regulations, cities determine neighborhood density, diversity of housing options, placement of public amenities such as parks and sidewalks, aesthetics of a community, housing affordability requirements, whether residents can grow their own food, place-based safety, and where to locate businesses, industry, and environmental hazards. Zoning can be inclusive, mixed-use and integrated with transportation planning, or it can accelerate gentrification hotspots, force people to drive, create urban heat islands, and compound other health and environmental risks. When large tracts of land are up for sale and redevelopment, zoning and land use decisions create a generational opportunity to build vibrant, resilient communities.

Procurement and Contracting. Cities oversee municipal purchasing, procurement, and contracting—powerful tools to ensure our shared wealth is used to enhance the local economy, source sustainably, and even shape industry standards. These practices can codify reparative justice through investment of public dollars to create local wealth in underrepresented segments of the economy, such as entrepreneurs of color. The standards set with large public contracts can also shift markets toward sustainability and local jobs. London purchased more than 200 electric city buses to improve air quality and reduce city emissions. Los Angeles has a Good Food Purchasing Pledge that generated over \$12 million in healthy food purchases and 150 new jobs in its first year.²⁴

Employment. Cities and towns in the U.S. employ over 14 million people,²⁵ providing public employment benefits and economic stability. With fair hiring standards and racial justice training, local programs and employment can anchor shared prosperity and economic mobility. The programs and people that cities invest in should reflect collective values to invest intentionally in our communities and institutionalize justice principles.

Municipal Assets. Local governments control public assets that can include parks, schools, public housing, municipal buildings, city vehicles, roads and sidewalks, ports and airports, and utilities. When we invest in resilient public infrastructure in our neighborhoods, we are shaping the health, well-being and prosperity of the people who rely on them. The management and use of public assets not only set up our communities for a resilient future, but serve as proof points for the practicality and benefits of sustainable management.

Taxation. Cities can raise revenue through various taxes and fees. Local taxes can be punitive, or they can reshape harmful externalities of the market—vacant units in a high-cost city, excessive waste or water use, predatory short-term rentals, chronic traffic congestion—by aligning the costs of behavior with impacts, and generating resources to address the harms.

Local Legislation. Cities can pass local regulations to protect public health and the general welfare. At least 50 cities and county governments in the US have enacted living wage ordinances that go above and beyond their state’s standards. Boston recently passed a Local Wetlands Protection Ordinance that expands the city’s ability to require green infrastructure and protect valuable natural areas from development. Local regulations can be vulnerable to state preemption, but cities still have wide authority to empower progressive and proactive measures in the public interest.

²⁴ Ann Dilleuth and Kimberley Hodgson, Local, Healthy Food Procurement Policies, Growing Food Connections, October 2015, 3, http://growingfoodconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/11/FINAL_GFCFoodProcurementPoliciesBrief.pdf.

²⁵ Ibid, 1.

Incentives. Cities can use financial, permitting and land use incentives to shape behaviors. Businesses that support local values such as onsite resiliency measures, hire locally, and create affordable commercial spaces might receive tax abatements or fast-tracked permits. In many fundamental respects, cities and local employers have a shared drive to promote neighborhood vitality, ensure economic success, and prepare for climate change.

Advocacy. The power of cities extends beyond the reach of municipal authority, to their impact in advocating for state and federal action. Especially when cities band together to call for reforms, state government responds to a unified agenda set by regional city partners representing the interests of so many constituents. Municipal advocacy can shape the direction of state and federal plans, and collaboration between cities should anchor the success of local Green New Deals.



**climate justice
policies**



01 | Accelerate Decarbonization

Boston should accelerate our decarbonization timelines to reach citywide carbon neutrality by 2040, 100 percent sustainable electricity by 2035, and net-zero municipal buildings by 2024. The City of Boston's 2019 Climate Action Plan set a goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050, with an interim goal of a 50% emissions reduction by 2030. Although this is sooner than the goal set in 2004 for an 80% emissions reduction by 2050, it has become increasingly clear that even reaching net-zero by 2050 will mean no more than a coin flip's chance of staying within habitable temperature thresholds. Cities must embody the spirit of an urgent, action-oriented drive to decarbonize our society and economy. Net-zero emissions means reducing carbon emissions from Boston's buildings (which are responsible for 71% of total emissions), transportation (29% of emissions), waste (less than 1%), and energy supply, while promoting soil carbon sequestration initiatives and other offsets to compensate for any remaining emissions. We must set a sector-by-sector roadmap that centers protections for historically marginalized and impacted environmental justice communities, and it must equitably invest state revenue in green infrastructure to immediately reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Boston can also demonstrate leadership by accelerating the timeline for reducing emissions from local government operations. Boston Public Schools makes up the largest part of municipal buildings, representing one-third of municipal electricity consumption and two-thirds of municipal gas consumption—offering the potential to make progress towards our climate goals while prioritizing the safety and well-being of students, educators, and school communities.

Why Take Action

Two years ago, the landmark IPCC 1.5° C report outlined both the undeniable risks of inertia in the fight against climate change and an ambitious pathway for global decarbonization over little more than a decade. This path requires swift, significant action on every facet of our society and economy. The global report also called out the East Coast of the United States as one of the most climate vulnerable regions in the world. Thanks to local researchers, we have a clear and terrifying picture of where Boston would be headed without action to decarbonize. We would live with a dramatically hotter climate—forty high-heat days (over 90 degrees) per year by 2030, and 90 high-heat days per year by 2070, including more than one month's worth of days over 100 degrees. That would dramatically increase health risks, particularly for outdoor workers and residents unable to afford air conditioning. Sea level rise in Boston Harbor could reach over three feet by 2070, and over seven feet by the end of the century—causing intense flooding at high tide and during storms, and displacement across the city as residents of luxury downtown and waterfront buildings are forced to abandon these areas and the safe, dry parts of the city become unaffordable to many. More frequent and more intense rain and storms would subject seven percent of the city's land area to stormwater flooding and the resulting public health harms for residents contending with mold and other impacts. The cost of inaction can be projected in public health risks, damage to buildings and public infrastructure, and economic losses. But we are also missing out on a just and equitable future with thriving, sustainable communities.

Cities Taking Action

New York City: passed the NYC Climate Mobilization Act to require emissions caps for large buildings and other sweeping changes to reduce building sector emissions 40 percent by 2030.

Munich, Germany: committed to 100 percent renewable energy by 2025 and signed a contract to supply power to its urban rail system with offshore wind energy.

Kansas City, MO: committed to buying 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2020. Part of the renewables procurement will come from a new community solar installation and a new wind farm.

Vancouver, Canada: set goal to reduce transportation emissions by shifting two-thirds of all commuter trips to walking, biking or transit by 2030, and remaining vehicle trips in low-emission vehicles. The city's non-emergency vehicle fleet.

Companion Policies

- Increase the adoption of renewable heating technologies.
- Require all new buildings to be net-zero carbon.
- Advocate through the Transportation Climate Initiative design process to ensure funds are earmarked for electrification of public transportation systems.
- Revisit Community Choice Aggregation during periodic electricity contract negotiations with the utility to increase the default percent coming from renewables. When feasible, consider making the default 100 percent renewable, with an "opt-out" option.
- Cities not constrained by state preemption may enact bans on construction of new natural gas infrastructure to protect resident health and safety.
- Advocate for statewide legislation promoting 100 percent renewable energy and the creation of funding pools to help cities achieve that goal.



-02 | Justice Audit and Framework

To truly address structural injustices, we need to start with the structure of city government. A comprehensive Justice Audit would analyze internal municipal processes, hiring, decision-making, leadership, budgets, and communications to identify where public dollars are actually exacerbating disparities. The audit should not only focus on gathering feedback and data from all levels within city government, but also external community feedback on access to government services and barriers to justice. The results will inform a justice framework to overhaul and shape decision-making going forward. This citywide framework should set a clear tone and expectations for what does and does not orient outcomes towards justice, rather than requesting each department review their own operations. Such an approach would grant real power to the City's Equity and Inclusion Office to take corrective action, culminating in the passage of a local justice framework ordinance after the completion of the justice audit and an open discussion with the public on what values and principles should be included.

Why Take Action

The results from a nationwide survey of Black individuals shows Boston is considered the least welcoming of eight major American cities,²⁷ and only 4 percent of households earning \$75,000 or more across Greater Boston are Black.²⁸ Changing the perception and reality of Boston's deep disparities and discrimination must start with city government. Currently, institutional structures continue to exacerbate disparities through policies and decision-making. Low-income residents and residents of color experience higher levels of energy insecurity and less access to government supports for energy efficiency improvements. Air pollution and related illnesses are more prevalent in communities of color and result from government decisions about zoning and transportation infrastructure. City approvals for development continue to shape structural inequities as Boston misses opportunities for equitable wealth creation and justice. Once envisioned as an opportunity to build a "true neighborhood with families," the \$18 billion development of the Seaport district has instead created the least diverse neighborhood in Boston: a climate-vulnerable coastal neighborhood marked by its lack of schools, civic spaces, transit access, and affordable housing—where housing costs are sky-high, and only three percent of residential mortgages went to Black homeowners.²⁹ City government must take corrective action and also set the tone for other sectors.

Cities Taking Action

Austin: recently developed an Equity Assessment Tool to identify inequitable policies and practices and conducted an equity assessment of whether departmental operations, budgets, and public engagement are aligned with local priorities.

West Linn: requested proposals for a citywide equity audit and municipal training program to be completed by an outside organization in April 2020.

Madison: uses three racial equity tools: for hiring, for assessing other processes, and for fast-track projects with a short timeline and limited budget. Every department completes at least three equity analyses or equitable hiring tools a year with full public transparency.

Seattle: in 2005 became the first city in the nation to create an initiative on institutional racism, later adopting a racial equity lens and toolkits, offering racial equity training in the community, built core teams across offices for intensive anti-racism training, and publishes each department's racial justice work plans for public accountability.

Long Beach: currently creating a Framework for Reconciliation, including declaring racism as a public health crisis, hosting town halls on policing, youth services, housing and homelessness; convening stakeholders to review data; and proposing short, medium and long-term corrective actions to the City Council.

Companion Policies

- Boston's Communications Access Ordinance requires language access and assistive technology for people with a communications disability, but these resources must be timely and expanded.
- Institute racial and social justice training for city employees and ensure employees have a safe and accountable office to raise concerns.
- Set up a Racial & Social Justice Policy Review Committee that analyzes pieces of municipal legislation, executive orders, and budget allocations for their justice impacts.
- Formalize interdepartmental communications to ensure city processes, policies and plans align and work towards shared justice goals.
- Create a visible online platform and mechanisms for real-time feedback from residents, community organizations, businesses and employers on how the City can adapt its operations, policies and programs to equitably serve the community.
- Advocate at the state level for the passage of environmental and racial justice legislation to enshrine the proactive protection of communities under state law.



03 | Clean Energy Financing: Green Muni Bonds & PACE

Boston can leverage its strong bond rating to issue Green Municipal Bonds earmarked to accelerate the installation of solar and efficiency measures for municipal parking lots and buildings such as schools, police and fire stations, and community centers. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts issued the first Green Muni Bond in the country in 2013, and these bonds have since grown rapidly as a desirable investment opportunity³⁰ and have been used by numerous U.S. cities for water infrastructure upgrades. At a time when municipal bond ratings may be downgraded because of climate risk, Green Muni Bonds signal to bond rating agencies that the City is serious about climate adaptation.³¹ As part of its project identification study for suitable renewable energy and efficiency upgrades, the City should also explore how Green Muni Bonds can be used to fund community solar projects with returns on investment distributed to the community. One study from 2016 identified 42 areas across Boston with high potential for community energy solutions.³² The long-term goal of municipally-funded solar (both on city-owned buildings and with community solar arrays) is to meet a significant portion of the city's electrical demand from locally-generated energy. Boston can also ease the upfront costs for private property owners to install energy efficiency upgrades or convert to renewable energy by opting into the state Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program. PACE covers up-front costs, and then the building owner pays the amount back over many years through a "betterment assessment" on their property tax bill. Massachusetts passed PACE enabling legislation in 2016, and program guidelines and financing will be available this year, so Boston would be among the first cities to allow PACE. Currently, the program can be applied to commercial and industrial buildings, buildings owned by nonprofits, and multifamily buildings that have five or more units. The PACE program can help fund not just the clean energy installations, but also underlying structural improvements to make buildings ready for solar or efficiency measures. However, the City should expressly limit the program's usage to exclude funding for any new natural gas infrastructure. City agencies can provide wraparound assistance, ensuring language access services and application assistance for interested parties. Buildings that receive public funding for retrofits must also have tenant protections to ensure that tenants can remain and rents are not increased as a result. Ultimately the city can explore how PACE projects can also become sources of local renewable energy generation for the city's Community Choice Aggregation program.

Why Take Action

Massachusetts has tremendous green renewable energy potential and is well positioned to lead the way into a clean energy future. Rooftop solar alone could produce almost half of the state's annual energy needs.³³ There is a great deal of public enthusiasm and desire for a transition to renewable energy, but the upfront costs of renewables and retrofitting often make upgrades unaffordable to homeowners and businesses. Even large commercial properties like the Boston Convention Center have floated the idea of a solar rooftop, but not implemented it.³⁴ Easing the upfront costs for clean energy infrastructure would unlock opportunity and health. Energy from utility companies in the area is extremely expensive—electricity costs were 67 percent higher than the national average in December 2018, and natural gas 42 percent above average—³⁵ which creates hardship for local residents³⁶ and small businesses.³⁷ Energy efficiency improvements, including air sealing, smart thermostats, improved insulation and LED lighting on single-family homes alone could reduce utility bills by about 27 percent—saving Massachusetts residents \$1.5 billion a year.³⁸ In Boston, deep energy retrofits could reduce energy use by 30 to 40 percent, whereas more standard retrofits would still reduce energy use by at least 20 percent.³⁹ There are also public health considerations for investing in electrification and renewable energy: natural gas appliances at home can create air quality that is two to five times worse than the air quality outdoors,⁴⁰ and gas appliances emit air pollutants such as particulate matter and carbon monoxide, which have been linked to respiratory illnesses and cardiovascular disease.⁴¹

Cities Taking Action

Hayward Unified School District: installed 5.3 MW of solar photovoltaic, electric vehicle charging stations, and battery storage across 33 school buildings funded through bonds. The installations are expected to create \$65 million in energy savings for the district.

Asheville: became the first city to issue Green Muni Bonds in 2015 when it raised \$55 million for multiple water infrastructure and water service improvements.

Morris County: created an innovative financing mechanism that combines government bonds and collective purchasing power to install rooftop solar on city buildings. Since 2010, the county has built 3.2 MW of solar energy on 19 schools and government buildings.

Houston: launched PACE in 2016 and saw \$100 million of projects citywide that year. PACE projects have focused primarily on energy efficiency and renewable energy installation, but can also be a tool for investing in water conservation systems.

Milwaukee: created a local PACE program through a unique public-private partnership that leverages private capital for upfront investments rather than relying on state funding entities.

West Palm Beach: became one of the first in the state to offer PACE financing in 2012 for energy efficiency, renewables, and also water conservation projects, expanding the program in 2016 to include residential properties and passing a local ordinance enumerating consumer protections for program participants.

Companion Policies

- Research the potential for municipal utilities, which removes the profit incentive to restrict the availability of more affordable, renewable energy services.
- Pass an ordinance requiring medium and large buildings to publicly post their energy efficiency “grade”, a program similar to publicly posted inspection grades.
- Bring together a coalition of large institutions and facilities like hospitals, universities and factories within the city as well as regional municipal partners to discuss ways the city can support the implementation of decarbonized district energy solutions as well as renewables procurement and energy efficiency upgrades.



04 | Green Workforce Development

The scale of change needed to shift to a green economy and resilient society requires building up an entire green workforce. Boston must work to ensure that these jobs are local and have good wages and benefits, worker protections, and accessible workforce development pathways for residents of all backgrounds. Programs can only be designed with the active engagement of organized labor and workers centers—the only way a green jobs economy can be built is by including people who know how to build, engineer, and execute large projects. Greater Boston has a number of existing jobs training programs the City can learn from, including MassCDC’s offshore wind workforce training, and more local examples such as the green jobs work experiences pioneered by Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation. The City of Boston’s Madison Park Technical Vocational High School should be where intensive green jobs training can begin for local youth.

Why Take Action

Though Boston was benefiting from rapid economic development and a building boom prior to the pandemic, the economic opportunities of this growth were not shared by all. The city’s young adults and Black residents saw unemployment rates that were 50 percent higher than the citywide average.⁴² Latinx and Asian residents had some of the highest poverty rates—over 30 percent—while the median income for women in the city was only 85 percent of that for men.⁴³ Of the 15 percent of Boston residents over age 25 without a diploma, about one-third live in poverty.⁴⁴ At the same time, in many of Boston’s low-income neighborhoods, residents are unable to afford the building retrofits, energy efficiency investments, clean energy technologies, or even the maintenance necessary to qualify for renewable energy and energy efficiency programs. The clean energy industry in Massachusetts employs almost 112,000 people,⁴⁵ yet many of these jobs are out of reach for low-income residents and residents of color.

Cities Taking Action

Washington, D.C.: has a Green Collar Jobs Initiative to better prepare D.C. residents for green jobs in clean energy, energy efficiency, environmental restoration and high-performance buildings. The initiative connects trainees to environmental job opportunities, builds green municipal buildings through an apprenticeship program, and fosters connections with local businesses.

Philadelphia: created PowercorpsPHL, a two-phase program for unemployed or underemployed youth, starting with work-readiness and skill building first, then engaging in “industry academies” such as green infrastructure, construction, electrical and solar training or urban forestry.

Minneapolis – Saint Paul: partnered with BlueGreen Alliance starting in 2006 to identify the best strategies and opportunities for expanding the local green economy. Together, they launched Thinc.Green to expand municipal green purchasing, recruit green employers to the region and recognize local leadership in green manufacturing.

Companion Policies

- Implement hire-local requirements for city climate resiliency, sustainability and energy efficiency projects.
- Create a jobs training program to foster collaboration between youth and local nonprofits or businesses that need assistance implementing resiliency projects.
- Pass an ordinance banning the use of Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) records to determine eligibility for municipally-supported jobs programs, educational training, licensing, and housing.

- Institute Community Workforce Agreements for municipal resiliency projects to ensure more residents benefit from work experience in sustainable construction and planning.

05 | Divest/Reinvest in a Climate-Just Future

Our public investments should reflect values of long-term prosperity and sustainability, and we should use municipal power to shift investments away from harmful industries to companies that help create a more climate-just city. Boston must divest from corporations that profit off racial oppression, violence, and climate change. Boston's retirement system serves over 46,000 retirees and adds roughly 700 new people annually.⁴⁶ The City of Boston's Retirement Board controls approximately \$5.4 billion in assets – not including teachers' pensions, which are controlled by the state. Of those funds, almost one million dollars is invested in for-profit prisons and gun manufacturers. Another \$23 million is intertwined with fossil fuel and pipeline companies.⁴⁷ The city should commit to moving cash investments and working with the Boston Retirement Board to immediately stop new investments in gun manufacturing, prisons and fossil fuel companies as we construct a plan to fully divest and reinvest in socially responsible enterprises. Boston should devise clear inclusion and exclusion criteria for current and future investments while improving public reporting on the status of our existing holdings, then reinvest that funding with transparency.

*“It's important that Boston - as the cradle of liberty - send a message that it objects to human rights violations,”
- Former Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn when the city divested from Apartheid South Africa*

Why Take Action

Boston has divested before. In 1984, Boston passed the most far-reaching ordinance divesting from Apartheid South Africa of any major American city at the time.⁴⁸ 2020 has seen a wave of divestment by municipalities and large institutions such as universities. Holding public investments in private prisons, gun manufacturers, fossil fuel companies and other industries that profit off the impoverishment of our people and nature is a violation of the City's responsibility to engage in socially and environmentally responsible action. A long-term view of the energy sector shows renewable energy is rapidly becoming more affordable and cheaper than fossil fuels. Fossil fuel companies and investors will be left holding billions in stranded assets and plummeting stock values as the oil and gas markets dry up and lawsuits against these companies pile up. Boston needs to become part of the solution and reinvest in ways that enhance local wealth, equity, and climate just solutions.

Cities Taking Action

London: committed to divest close to £10 billion of city pensions from fossil fuel companies in 2016, and is actively working on full divestment this year, including implementing a policy to evaluate the climate risk of all future investments.

San Francisco: passed a resolution in 2018 to screen municipal insurers for investments in and underwriting of coal and tar sands projects and to end relationships with insurers that do not have a full divestment plan.

New York City: divested fully from private prisons in 2017, selling off \$48 million in shares. The City is also on its way to divesting the nation's largest pension fund from \$5 billion of fossil fuel holdings over five years and has committed to investing over \$4 billion in climate solutions such as wind, solar and energy efficiency.

Portland: created a Socially Responsible Investments Committee on the City Council in 2014, which reviews investments for inclusion or removal from the city's Corporate Securities Do-Not-Buy List based on environmental and social considerations.

Companion Policies

- Implement a practice to screen any municipal insurance policyholders for fossil fuel investments and other investments that do not meet socially responsible standards. Divest the City from existing insurers that do not meet these standards.
- Explore creation of a municipal bank which could provide low-interest loans to local small businesses and community-based resilience projects.

06 | Urban Climate Corps

Cities can take inspiration from the original New Deal's Conservation Corps to create an Urban Climate Corps for climate-related mitigation and resilience work that also closes employment inequities across neighborhoods and racial lines. In Boston, a city Climate Corps would complement our popular summer youth jobs program with year-round employment and training, addressing important climate infrastructure needs: offering education on sustainable land use, providing skilled employment, and proactively preparing neighborhoods for climate change. Program employment would focus on youth and residents in need of access to job training, such as adults working on their GED and formerly incarcerated community members. Corps members would work to improve the quality of open space, climate resilience, weatherization of older buildings, zero waste infrastructure such as composting and reuse, and community engagement. The program would train Corps members on how to install green infrastructure such as rooftop solar arrays, cisterns, rain gardens, and permeable pavements, or restore wildlands and wetlands.

Why Take Action

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated unemployment and under-employment in the City of Boston, especially for people of color and youth. The Coronavirus pandemic has also underlined the absolute necessity of access to clean air and water. Recent planting efforts have not effectively expanded our urban forest⁴⁹ and historically redlined neighborhoods such as East Boston and Dorchester continue to have less greenspace and tree cover.⁵⁰ This increases the urban heat island effect and health risks in frontline communities, including acute asthma attacks, heat exhaustion, and stroke. In addition, thousands of Boston residents—disproportionately families of color—are threatened with water shutoffs each year because they cannot afford their water. An Urban Climate Corps would help residents create their own on-site water harvesting solutions, releasing them from the menace of high water bills.⁵¹ We need a workforce training opportunity that seizes on our potential to solve these challenges with effective nature-based solutions and infrastructure. Climate Corps would help residents create their own on-site water harvesting solutions, releasing them from the menace of high water bills. We need a workforce training opportunity that seizes on our potential to solve these challenges with effective nature-based solutions and infrastructure.

Cities Taking Action

Seattle: provides a year of employment and life skills development for individuals experiencing homelessness through the Seattle Conservation Corps. Over 80 percent of participants finish the program with stable housing and over 90 percent with a new job.

Austin: plans to create a Conservation Corps to employ residents economically impacted by the pandemic. Residents would receive a living wage to create urban art, care for trees, protect watersheds, restore habitats and work on other nature-based projects.

Los Angeles: employs youth from under-resourced neighborhoods through the LA Conservation Corps. Members receive paid work experience in habitat restoration, tree planting, creating community gardens, building affordable housing and environmental remediation.

Companion Policies

- Partner with the City's Arts & Culture office to expand an urban arts program that trains residents in interactive art, murals, sculpture and public beautification.
- Partner with social justice and community-based organizations to pilot eco-districts.
- Provide technical and logistical assistance to local garden exchanges and reuse programs.
- Plant native species and raise native pollinators to return the grossly fractured ecosystem to a more intact state while ensuring the preservation of local species that are best adapted to this area.

07 | Decommodify Housing: Cooperative Housing & Community Land Trusts

Cooperatively-owned housing brings the costs, management, and capital investments of housing under collective control with the potential for greater stability, affordability, and resiliency. Nonprofit- and resident-owned cooperatives have a long history of creating greater social support and civic engagement, reducing carbon footprints, and strengthening housing stability and safety.⁵² Boston could expand the Department of Neighborhood Development's scope to include a portfolio of cooperative services, such as providing seed grants and low-interest loans, offering technical and legal advice on formation and management, and connecting cooperatives with knowledgeable building and sustainability experts. Urban Climate Corps members could provide city-funded onsite resilience and energy upgrades. Boston can support cooperative growth through various tax incentives or zoning and permitting incentives. One mechanism to fund these expanded services would be through an Empty Homes tax, which would levy a fee on housing left vacant for more than six months out of the year.

Why Take Action

Housing stability is foundational to family health and well-being, yet this basic right has become a luxury not everyone can afford. Just over one-third of Boston residents own their own home.⁵³ Half of Boston's renters are rent-burdened, and a full quarter of renters pay more than half their income in rent.⁵⁴ The structural and institutional roots of this problem can be traced back to exclusionary zoning and predatory lending by banks beginning in the early 20th Century, when families of color were denied equal homeownership opportunities and pushed into the rental market, where discrimination continues to this day. 86 percent of renters seeking housing with a housing voucher in Boston experienced discriminatory behavior,⁵⁵ and of those without vouchers, five times as many prospective Black renters did not receive a reply compared to white counterparts.⁵⁶ These disparities underpin the racial wealth gap and segregation. Shifting ownership to permanent affordability and community control ensures shared prosperity and opportunity in interlinked ways, especially for children, for whom family housing stability also promotes academic achievement and nutrition.⁵⁷

Cities Taking Action

Vienna: provides almost a quarter of the available housing stock in the city as social housing owned by municipal government. City government subsidizes the cost of cooperative construction, provides project loans with near zero interest rates, and provides complementary services including eviction prevention, a developers cooperative housing competition, and democratic participation for city-owned housing tenants.

Zürich: mandated by referendum in 2011 that one-third of the city's housing stock be cooperatives by 2050. The City creates public cooperatives, subsidizes non-profit cooperatives and leases necessary land, with rent prices controlled by law.

New York City: helps residents form affordable, limited-equity housing cooperatives through the City and the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB), which provides seed money, technical assistance, regulatory advice, access to energy efficiency and solar power opportunities and management training to create a cooperative. The program has created homeownership opportunities for residents in over 30,000 units.

Burlington, VT: has the largest community land trust in the country, with 370 single-family homes.

Boston: has a citywide community land trust network convening local groups that encompass several different types and locations of community land trusts.

Companion Policies

- Create zoning and tax incentives to encourage the development of cooperatives and Community Land Trusts.
- Adopt a community impact fee for luxury developments, large-scale projects and projects seeking variances to raise further funds for affordable housing, transit improvements and community services within the same district.
- Convert single-family zoning districts and parcels to multifamily, particularly near community services and transit lines.
- Expand the current Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) to a fourth option which would set aside IDP funds for community-based affordable housing organizations.
- Implement a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase or a Right of First Refusal law for rental units so tenants have a chance to buy when a landlord wants to sell.
- Adopt an assessment of fair housing that is grounded in fair housing law and policy, and provide a timeline for how and when all goals will be implemented.

08 | Renters' Right to Counsel

Establishing legal representation for renters would protect against unwarranted or potentially illegal evictions. Such programs have been shown to double the number of families who retain occupancy⁵⁸ while saving public dollars overall—for every dollar invested in a full Right to Counsel, Massachusetts would save \$2.40 in shelter, healthcare and foster care costs for residents facing homelessness.⁵⁹ Boston can support state legislation for a Right to Counsel or advocate through a Home Rule Petition for local authority to pass a Right to Counsel ordinance. In addition to a free Right to Counsel during eviction proceedings, companion programs could provide other forms of housing assistance such as anti-harassment legal services and help educate tenants on their rights. Six cities across the country have instituted Right to Counsel legislation so far in 2020. It is a more just way to address post-pandemic predictions of greater housing instability, as well as a mechanism for addressing one facet of systemic racism by better protecting the right to housing.

Why Take Action

After nearly a century of structural racism and segregation perpetuated through redlining, urban renewal, land speculation and foreclosures, cities are now the frontlines of the housing affordability crisis. In less than ten years, rents across the U.S. have risen 150 percent.⁶⁰ Boston is among the priciest places to rent nationwide and the third-most gentrified city.⁶¹ The pandemic has exacerbated our city's housing crisis, and when the statewide eviction moratorium lifts, housing advocates predict over 20,000 evictions will be filed immediately.⁶² Evictions from market-rate housing trend closely with neighborhood racial composition and lower property values.⁶³ Every week, roughly 750 tenants are taken to Housing Court in Massachusetts, and fewer than nine percent have legal representation.⁶⁴ For too many residents, eviction results in long-term housing instability or even homelessness. These effects ripple through families as children are uprooted from their schools, eviction records haunt affected residents, and families grapple with the psychological trauma of losing their home.

Cities Taking Action

New York City: was the first city to pass universal access to legal services, serving over 87,000 residents and keeping 84 percent in their homes within the first year. The City saw evictions drop by nearly a quarter over four years after instituting legal services for tenants.⁶⁵

San Francisco: passed a Right to Counsel by ballot measure in 2019. Since then, eviction rates have declined and over 700 residents facing eviction retained housing. The program overwhelmingly benefits extremely low and low-income residents.

Newark: enacted a right to counsel ordinance in 2018 for tenants earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The program is projected to help 5,000-7,000 renters annually.

Companion Policies

- Advocate for state legislation to allow municipalities to implement rent stabilization policies.
- Institute an Empty Homes tax like Vancouver's for units left vacant more than six months.
- Revisit Just Cause Eviction legislation to curb no-fault evictions.
- Advocate for a Tenant's Bill of Rights at the state level.

09 | Just and Resilient Development

Aligning private development with goals for equity and resiliency is one of the most powerful roles of city government. Boston has tremendous potential to act on this front. Currently, in the absence of comprehensive planning and responsive zoning, development takes place in a patchwork manner and community benefits are often negotiated through a complex and opaque public engagement process. The result of a system based on special approvals is the perception or reality of insider influence, while exacerbating inequitable access to civic amenities and resources across the city. Designated zoning overlay districts for affordability and resiliency with anti-displacement protections, can support the sustainable development of healthy and accessible housing. By planning with community members to identify transit corridors or economic empowerment areas appropriate for greater density and civic spaces, the city can codify development requirements for affordability and civic resources with transparency and predictability. Updating our zoning code can concentrate sustainability through practices such as resilient construction, smart infrastructure, renewable energy, access to public services, affordable live/work spaces, community health, vibrant public places and environmental justice. These changes must be grounded in equity and affordability to prevent the environmental gentrification that can occur when a neighborhood is redeveloped and remediated without deep affordability for residents.⁶⁶ For example, an affordable green overlay district might require 50% affordable units onsite, transportation infrastructure improvements, and net-zero buildings in exchange for streamlined approvals for increased density. Such districts should also prohibit or limit the siting of industrial facilities and cumulative health hazards.

Boston should also require clear, standard Community Benefits Agreements for development projects over a certain size or impact, in order to guarantee transparency, predictability, and public benefit at the scale to match community impacts. These agreements between developers and community members—codified through the development approvals process—provide transparent and equitable ways for affected residents to share in the benefits of major developments. These can include requirements regarding affordability, resiliency, open space, public amenities such as meeting spaces or schools, local hiring targets, and support for social services. Baseline requirements in a Community Benefits Agreement should derive from a comprehensive citywide plan focused specifically on addressing urban injustices and the threat of climate change through the built environment and public services.

Why Take Action

Environmental racism and class-based inequities are largely by design. With development happening through one-off exceptions to the zoning code and variances granted by the Zoning Board of Appeal or through Planned Development Areas approved by the BPDA, Boston has seen a surge in luxury real estate development, unaffordability, traffic congestion, and climate vulnerability. The City often points to its linkage program and Inclusionary Development Policy as a way to support affordability, but the requirement that developers must provide between 13 and 18 percent affordable housing in larger construction projects is a lower threshold than surrounding cities require. These affordable units can be separately located in another neighborhood entirely, and the lack of transparency and accountability means it is difficult to tell how many developers are following

through on commitments.⁶⁷ The development boom has also exacerbated disparities in exposure to pollutants and toxic chemicals for residents of color and low-income families. Working class families in Massachusetts face a cumulative exposure to environmentally hazardous facilities and sites that is four times greater than higher-income communities,⁶⁸ and communities of color face twenty times greater exposure than predominantly white communities.⁶⁹ Of the ten most densely polluted census tracts in the state, three are in Boston: parts of Mattapan, Dorchester, and East Boston (the section of East Boston where an electrical substation is moving forward despite widespread resident opposition).⁷⁰ Boston's Chinatown, which is adjacent to a major highway, has the worst air quality of any census tract in the state.⁷¹ These same neighborhoods are also on the frontlines of climate change impacts and in greatest need of the protections afforded by climate-just mitigation and adaptation measures. The current process for negotiating community benefits—through Impact Advisory Groups (IAG) convened by the BPDA—is opaque and arbitrary, too often reflecting the specific interests of individuals or community organizations represented on the IAG rather than greatest public need.

Cities Taking Action

Minneapolis: developed data-driven recommendations in 2016 to seek environmental justice in overburdened communities through the creation of two Green Zones, each with a detailed work plan for achieving climate change, environmental justice and racial justice goals.

Austin: developed a district-scale master plan with the impacted community to transform a brownfield into an EcoDistrict focusing on green building, living infrastructure, resource efficiency, mobility and connectivity, habitat creation, health and well-being, prosperity and public spaces.

Los Angeles County: aims to enhance public health and land use compatibility in some of the county's most disproportionately impacted communities with the Green Zones program. The County is creating land use policies and zoning regulations while documenting existing pollution and health risks through a new environmental justice screening method.

Companion Policies

- Implement structural changes to the Zoning Board of Appeals to require expertise in climate change and environmental protection, and urban planning.
- Replace the Boston Planning & Development Agency with an independent planning board and accountable city departments subject to oversight and accountability, charging the new city planning department with undertaking a true citywide master planning process to update the zoning code to match community needs.
- Mandate that any private development receiving tax breaks or other public incentives detail the environmental and climate justice costs and benefits of the proposed project, including pollution, affordability and transit impacts.⁷²



10 | Resilient Stormwater Infrastructure: Equitable Fees & District Planning

Boston should replace the water and sewer fee structure from the Boston Water & Sewer Commission (BWSC) currently based on metering water usage to a more equitable stormwater fee based on land use and the extent of a property's impervious surfaces. This fee would apply to tax-exempt entities as well, incentivizing all property owners to reduce their runoff. The funds would be stored in an enterprise fund that must be completely disbursed every year, creating a mechanism to rapidly invest in green infrastructure such as Urban Climate Corps projects, grants for residential upgrades, and district-level stormwater planning initiatives. This fee structure would also incentivize redevelopment to prioritize on-site stormwater management to reduce fees, which in turn would reduce stormwater infrastructure burden citywide. Shifting the rate structure may reduce the cost for residential households, but should still be accompanied by a form of credit relief for residents and discounts or payment assistance plans for low-income families and residents with disabilities. This new equitable fee structure can complement district planning for large-scale stormwater and resilience projects. To achieve the scale of stormwater capture necessary to meet Boston's growing climate vulnerability with more frequent and intense rain, the city must coordinate beyond individual parcels. This district-level planning should include limits on impervious surfaces and require the use porous materials, green infrastructure, and specific strategies for resilience. Boston can look to other jurisdictions creating "Sponge City" districts where all stormwater is managed on-site.

Why Take Action

The design and management of stormwater and sewer infrastructure not only affects public health and resilience, but also has profound equity implications, as high water bills have put a financial strain on millions of Americans,⁷³ and thousands of Boston's residents are threatened with water shutoffs annually, disproportionately residents of color.⁷⁴ Many of the buildings in the Boston area were built before older leaded pipes were phased out, and some 20,000 still have lead service lines.⁷⁵ About 80 percent of Boston buildings have separate infrastructure for stormwater. The vast majority of the remaining drains combine stormwater runoff and sewers, known as combined sewer overflows (CSOs), which causes a problem during intense rain events as these systems reach flow capacity and untreated sewage is dumped into local rivers and the bay. In 2017, ten outfall pipes along the Charles River dumped more than 29 million gallons of raw sewage into the river.⁷⁶ BWSC responded to more than 200 system overflow events in 2019, including inside residential buildings.⁷⁷ Nuisance flooding from stormwater systems on private property can aggravate asthma and negatively affect indoor air quality.⁷⁸ Cities are full of impervious surfaces that cannot absorb water, such as concrete, asphalt, and brick. When it rains, water cannot seep through into the ground and instead picks up a host of toxic pollutants from our roadways on its way into the stormwater infrastructure and out into waterways. Boston's drainage system is already easily overwhelmed, and climate change is predicted to bring intensifying rain and subsequent stormwater flooding that will engross seven percent of the city's land area.⁷⁹ Incentivizing the capture and filtering of water runoff onsite is critical for climate adaptation, public health, and equity.

Cities Taking Action

Philadelphia: phased out a fee structure based on potable water usage in favor of one based on impervious area, to better reflect properties contributing runoff. The City offers income-based payment plans or bill forgiveness for residents as well as grants for stormwater retrofits to non-residential property owners.

Washington, D.C.: lowered its base sewer fee and added a new Impervious Area Charge with a tiered system

or calculating rates. Residential customers have seen little difference in their bills, whereas commercial properties with large impervious surfaces are now contributing equitably. The City has instituted a Stormwater Retention Credit Program where property owners can reduce their stormwater fees and even sell credits. Cincinnati: charges a flat fee based on property size and a variable fee based on land use and property area. One and two-unit residences just pay the flat fee, while commercial, industrial, institutional and other types have utility costs calculated using an Intensity Development Factor.

Companion Policies

- Collaborate with the US Green City Bonds Coalition to pursue green municipal bonds for large-scale climate resilient infrastructure investments.
- Institute a local excess waste fee to fund a municipal reuse and recycling center where construction materials, office items, electronics and some household materials can be repurposed.
- Hire resilience liaisons to propose and coordinate climate-resilient infrastructure and development upgrades across relevant municipal departments.
- Begin planning for future managed retreat and waterfront buyouts with state legislative campaigns for flood disclosure and program funding.

11 | Transportation Justice: Multimodal Infrastructure & Fare-Free Transit

Expanding sustainable transportation is the foundation for reducing emissions, creating shared prosperity, and protecting public health. City government holds tremendous power to improve the accessibility and reliability of multimodal transportation options through decisions on how to regulate street infrastructure and how to allocate the public space of roadways and sidewalks. Boston must accelerate the design and implementation of: safe cycling infrastructure that is protected from vehicular traffic and connected across major corridors and residential neighborhoods; dedicated lanes for public buses and cyclists, which speed up transit routes and improve safety for all; traffic-calming measures to protect and prioritize pedestrians and other active transportation modes; signal timing that ensures pedestrians have walk priority; and transit signal priority that speeds traffic flow for public buses and trolleys. In other words, city government's infrastructure design choices directly shape the multimodal transportation options that commuters can rely on, and we need to make it not only possible but preferable for residents to leave traffic- and pollution-inducing fossil fuel-powered vehicles behind. The City should also push the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) and state government for operational and capital improvements in public transportation that are outside direct municipal control—more frequent buses and trains (including commuter rail), real-time information, sheltered bus stops, more accessible vehicles and stops for people of all abilities, and platform-level boarding. Most of all, expanding transit access and reliability must go with fare-free service, so that residents have full access to improved services. Public transportation is a public good. Everyone benefits when more commuters shift from personal vehicles to transit—not just the riders on the train or bus, but also the drivers on the road who experience less traffic congestion and breathe cleaner air. And we should fund transit as we fund other public goods—schools, parks, libraries—with free access for all. Removing financial barriers to public transit also boosts ridership at a time when public transit ridership is declining nationally; cities such as Lawrence, Massachusetts, and Salt Lake City, Utah, have seen immediate, double-digit increases in ridership following a shift to fare-free transit routes, with greater access for low-income riders and riders of color.⁸⁰ In Boston, the MBTA is a state agency outside of city control, but city government can advocate for transit justice and intermediate steps to drive progress. It would cost as little as \$36 million per year to fully fund fare-free bus service in Greater Boston, and \$60 million total for free local buses statewide,

including the MBTA and all Regional Transit Authorities—which could be funded by a 2-cent increase per gallon on the gas tax.⁸¹ Removing barriers and improving reliability for bus service is the fastest way to improve equity across transit systems, as bus riders are disproportionately commuters of color and low-income riders, including many essential workers with no other affordable transportation options. Some of Boston’s busiest bus routes have retained high ridership throughout the pandemic, including the 23 and 28 bus routes and the Silver Line 5, which run through communities of color.

Why Take Action

Nearly one in six residents of Greater Boston have considered leaving the area to get away from the overwhelming traffic.⁸² MBTA commuters have been contending with infrequent service, numerous derailments, overcrowding, and crumbling infrastructure. Because of service inequities in reliability and frequency, low-income neighborhoods and neighborhoods of color in the city have longer transit commutes than average,⁸³ and the cost of transit eats up to 16 percent of household income in certain Boston neighborhoods that are predominantly residents of color.⁸⁴ This is a reality made worse by a 41 percent increase in public transit fares since 2012.⁸⁵ To achieve a climate-just future, shifting more resources and residents towards public transit, cycling, and walking instead of gas-burning cars is crucial. Nearly one-third of all air pollution emissions in Boston are caused by transportation, boosting disproportionate cases of asthma among children and adults in environmental justice communities.⁸⁶ Boston is the country’s eighth-most challenging place to live with asthma, because of the City’s poor air quality, poverty, and other social factors that exacerbate asthma.⁸⁷

Cities Taking Action

Lawrence, MA: launched fare-free service on bus routes throughout the city, with immediate increases in ridership and documented greater access to transportation for those who would otherwise not be able to afford it.

Park City, UT: has provided fare-free transit for over 40 years and is now converting to an all-electric bus fleet with state and federal funding.

Kansas City, MO: proposed a long-term initiative for fare-free transit citywide. This year, the transit system moved to free fares for students and seniors system-wide and for all riders on one pilot bus route—accounting for 25 percent of total ridership.

Companion Policies

- Institute transit impact fees for new development that are collected in a citywide fund and used to finance equitable, multi-modal transportation improvements across the city.
- Improve existing bike lanes with protective infrastructure and link up unconnected lanes.
- Plan for car-free districts and days to promote biking and walking in cultural districts and smaller commercial areas.
- Determine if congestion pricing can address local and regional transit inequities.
- Regulate the time of day that delivery trucks can operate to reduce congestion and emissions.
- Implement vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fees for ride-hailing services to curb empty ride-hail driving and idling.
- Expand transit service to include late-night hours, which disproportionately benefits service workers, students, low-income residents and residents of color.
- Advocate at the state level for rapid electrification of public transit vehicles and sustainable financing mechanisms.

12 | Equitable Small Business Recovery

In a moment of economic distress, city governments can shape the conditions for recovery and influence the types of opportunities available for small business owners and workers in an uncertain economy. The Coronavirus has devastated small businesses that were already struggling with the forces of commercial gentrification in an increasingly expensive city, especially businesses owned by entrepreneurs of color. Cities should leverage municipal contracting to anchor local wealth-building by committing to equity and diversity contracting goals supported by technical assistance grants and city staffing. Boston lags far behind other major cities in the share of public contracting with minority-owned business enterprises (MBEs) at single-digit representation. To ensure a just recovery, the City should set targets over a three-year period to triple the share of MBEs represented in city contracting. The City should also prioritize opportunities for worker cooperatives, or employee-owned businesses, which more equitably distribute the profits from employee labor and give workers a stake and say in the management of the business. Boston could also launch a technical assistance space and virtual resource hub to integrate sustainability into local small business operations. This can be achieved through technical and regulatory assistance on available renewable energy and energy efficiency programs, as well as workshops and partnership opportunities for place-based sustainable practices. Virtual services could include certification assistance for women, veteran and minority-owned small businesses, telephonic regulatory and technical assistance in Boston's spoken languages, and streamlined access to financial resources. The city can engage area credit unions and larger banking corporations to increase access to business capital and startup financing backed by the city and other incubator partners.

Why Take Action

A full two-thirds of the city's small businesses closed during the spring pandemic peak, and businesses owned by entrepreneurs of color were especially devastated. Minority-owned and women-owned small businesses face greater economic risk during uncertain times due to structural inequities such as disparate access to startup capital, municipal procurement opportunities, technical assistance, linguistically inclusive resources, and professional business networks. Just over five percent of the city's procurement contracts have gone to local veteran, minority or women-owned small businesses, while less than two percent of city contracts for Coronavirus-related services went to local small businesses of color. The Black Economic Council of Massachusetts⁸⁸ reported that 90 percent of members surveyed were experiencing negative financial impacts of the pandemic, while half did not have the financial reserves to stay in business more than another three months.⁸⁹ Energy efficiency and sustainability measures improve business resiliency and profitability, but businesses struggle with the cost, unfamiliarity with program benefits, and lack of access to resources.⁹⁰

Cities Taking Action

Detroit: created Detroit Means Business to help small businesses achieve success in the city. Two key offerings include free introductory coaching and bilingual webinars in financing, operations, strategy, human resources and marketing.

Chicago: maintains the Industrial Council of Nearwest Chicago, one of the nation's oldest and largest city-supported small business incubators, with a manufacturing focus.

San Diego: provides a host of small business resources through the city's website, financing incentives, and expedited permitting for businesses that meet certain local economic development criteria.

Los Angeles: provides area startups with access to tools, space, and exposure to people and initiatives to kickstart a number of clean energy initiatives that align with the city's growth priorities and the city's broader Green New Deal plan.

Seattle: provides a comprehensive guide to opening, orientation workshops, permitting and licensing; tools to help restaurateurs easily navigate the process; and phone interpretation in over 200 languages.

Companion Policies

- Introduce a formula retail ordinance to regulate chain stores in commercial districts.
- Partner with commercial property owners and community land trusts to facilitate the reuse of vacant buildings and business spaces.
- Identify barriers to local procurement and implement a small-business equity procurement strategy for municipal contracts as well as a procure-local requirement for municipal sub-contractors.
- Craft guidelines for sustainable workplace options including transit passes, flexible hours, work-from-home schedules with area business councils and advocacy organizations.

13 | Food Justice: Good Food Purchasing & Urban Agriculture

Universal access to nutritious food is fundamental for public health, and economic opportunity, as well as social resiliency in the face of climate change and natural disasters. Food supply chains are essential to meeting our basic needs, yet are often rife with the abuse of people and land in production, processing, manufacturing, transportation and distribution. Boston passed a Good Food Purchasing Ordinance in 2019, which requires municipal food procurement to track ingredients along the supply chain and commit to five values: local production, sustainable environmental practices, healthy and nutritious ingredients, humane animal treatment, and fair labor standards for workers. Boston Public Schools is the largest source of municipal food procurement among city agencies, spending about \$18 million per year on food for school meals. The purchasing power of Boston city agencies—especially with the potential for partnership with area universities and hospitals that are also serving thousands of meals each day—could shape and support local food producers in cultivating healthy foods and creating local jobs.

Boston can build an alternative to exploitative national food systems by expanding the spaces and distribution networks for local food cultivation. Every dollar invested in a community garden yields around \$6 in produce, or between \$500 and \$2,000 worth of fresh produce per family annually. Boston can look to other successful models around the country by enabling the use of underutilized or vacant public lands to grow fresh foods, including through long-term leases or more permanent easements with the city's existing agricultural land trusts, or with a local land trust. Boston can also strengthen partnerships with existing non-profits that teach regenerative agricultural methods and drive community participation in food planting decisions to provide culturally-relevant produce across all Boston neighborhoods. The City can support food cooperatives to expand food access and focus on local wealth-building, as well as coordinate partnerships with corner stores, convenience stores, food cooperatives, food banks, and farmers' markets so that excess produce can be sold to local stores. The Urban Climate Corps can also provide wraparound services for the program, including ecological resiliency trainings, additional labor and talent necessary to transform the land, and assistance with soil testing or remediation. The City can also commit increased funding for seed libraries through the Boston Public Library for access to seeds—particularly for culturally appropriate food crops—and resources for growing and saving seeds.

Why Take Action:

The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated severe food insecurity among low income residents, immigrants and Black and brown communities. Even before the pandemic, one in seven families struggled to access food.⁹⁴ During the crisis, roughly four in ten Black and Latinx households have struggled to feed their families—double the rate of white families. Project Bread, a statewide anti-hunger organization, has reported a 300 percent increase in food insecurity, suggesting that about 38 percent of Massachusetts residents are having trouble affording food. Federal nutrition programs are critical, but monthly SNAP benefits are insufficient for people to afford healthy diets,⁹⁵ and unjust eligibility restrictions exclude undocumented families from participation. Although Boston has numerous grocery stores, underserved communities continue to experience food apartheid—geographically and economically isolated from healthy food options. Our current food distribution system is highly vulnerable to climate risks—about 94 percent of the city’s food arrives by truck⁹⁶ from vast distribution centers such as the New England Produce Center in Chelsea that are vulnerable to sea level rise and severe storms. Local food production through urban agriculture and community-based distribution networks can help Boston residents access nutritious, affordable foods year-round, while also facilitating community engagement and ownership over our food systems.

Cities Taking Action:

Seattle: has run the P-Patch Program for nearly 40 years, allowing residents to grow food in 34 acres of public gardens and other city spaces. In 2019 alone community gardeners provided over 38,000 pounds of organic produce from P-Patches to local food banks, senior centers and other partners through the city’s Giving Gardens program.

Cleveland: formed 45 urban farms by partnering with nonprofits and individual farmers to renovate vacant land. After the 5-year pilot leases expire, the city intends to transfer titles to community groups or individual farmers. The City’s economic development department also provides up to \$3,000 to urban farmers for improvements such as greenhouses, irrigation and rain barrels.

Detroit: adopted a comprehensive city food security policy developed by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, laying the groundwork for the Detroit Food Commons, a community development that will include the People’s Food Co-op grocery store, an incubator kitchen, and cafe and community space.

Chicago: co-founded and funded a nonprofit land trust in response to an increasing lack of open space and local desire for community gardens, stewarding 109 community gardens in the city and permanently protecting land from development. It also provides liability insurance for gardeners, technical assistance, and supports community control of the land.

Philadelphia: acquired thousands of vacant lots over years of disinvestment and returning land to productive open space and agricultural use. Lots can be leased or bought for permanent preservation for a nominal fee and the support of local civic organizations or neighbors.

Companion Policies:

- Incentivize the creation of urban agriculture and public activation spaces on privately owned land through tax incentives for temporary uses or zoning incentives for permanent uses.
- Contract out to nonprofit organizations that are skilled in connecting local farmers with markets to help growers within the city find outlets at local convenience and corner stores to provide an accessible first stop for fresh, local food.
- Expand the infrastructure for composting and anaerobic digestion of organic waste.

- Expand zoning permissions and approvals to allow for easier creation of both private and community gardens as well as the farming of chickens, goats and bees, with a focus on native food and pollinator species. This should be coupled with an education campaign on farming techniques and legal compliance.
- Conduct outreach and enrollment assistance for SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs at community centers and health centers to increase uptake by residents who may not know they are eligible.

14 | Urban Tree Canopy

Trees are beautiful, calming, air-cleansing, shade-providing, affordable, and efficient carbon sinks. A single mature tree sequesters approximately 50 pounds of carbon on average each year;⁹⁷ Boston's 300,000 trees translate to about 680 metric tons of sequestered carbon per year. Although Boston set initial urban canopy goals over a decade ago, the city has lost canopy coverage. As of 2017, a full 41 percent of the city's land area could be modified to accommodate tree canopy coverage, in addition to the current 27 percent coverage.⁹⁸ We need a comprehensive urban forest strategy to coordinate the complex factors affecting tree retention, growth, management and health. The City can use existing tree canopy and urban heat island maps to establish priority planting zones that can focus Parks and Recreation Department planting efforts on the areas of highest need while continuing to maintain and care for existing trees citywide. Any private development or reconstruction occurring within the priority planting zones would need to contribute either to the growth and maintenance of the area's tree canopy and heat island reduction through tree planting, rooftop planting, permeable pavement or other suitable adaptations. The City's Parks and Recreation Department can also collaborate with arts organizations in the vicinity of each priority planting zone to envision ways to activate these new green spaces using culturally appropriate public art and interactive features to draw in existing neighbors. Delineating specific areas for planting will help ensure tree survival until full implementation and funding of a comprehensive urban forest master plan. The City can partner with community organizations to ensure full engagement for public education on tree planting and community visioning around what to plant. The City and partners should also be clear on the delineation of responsibilities for tree maintenance over the long-term, with the City providing technical assistance for as long as needed. There should be a designated point of contact in City Hall for each priority zone to coordinate with the community and relevant municipal departments. Boston can explore additional funding for its priority planting zones through the state's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program since program funds can be applied to urban forestry initiatives. Some of the funding could be earmarked to fund education and maintenance programs run by community partners.

Why Take Action:

The history of America's public lands and spaces has deep roots in the violent dispossession of nature from indigenous tribes and the systematic exclusion of communities of color from green spaces through racist policies like redlining.⁹⁹ A national study found that low income communities in Massachusetts are 60 percent more likely to live in nature-deprived areas; nature deprivation affects 85 percent of Black residents and 90 percent of Latinx residents—over six-fold that of white residents.¹⁰⁰ Worse, children have far less access to nature than the average American.¹⁰¹ While parks and greenspace are often within walking distance for residents, Boston ranks in the bottom of major U.S. cities in the amount of greenspace per resident—the city has twice as much roadway per resident as greenspace.¹⁰² Despite multiple plans and initiatives to increase our urban forest, only 27 percent of land in Boston was covered with tree canopy as recently as 2017—Charlestown, East Boston, and South Boston all have less than ten percent tree canopy.¹⁰³ The areas most lacking tree canopy suffer

extreme heat during summer, where surface temperatures on asphalt and roofs can reach 140 degrees on a typical summer day, causing a host of health risks.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, living in proximity to trees and greenspace has been shown to enhance physical activity, reduce obesity rates, mitigate exposure to air pollutants, improve pregnancy outcomes, reduce cardiovascular disease prevalence, decrease mortality, and have a positive impact on mental health.¹⁰⁵ Shade trees on average reduce urban air temperatures between 2 and 4 degrees Fahrenheit, though the cooling benefits of trees are felt well beyond where they are planted.¹⁰⁶ Urban areas with dense tree cover also benefit from lower levels of air pollution.¹⁰⁷ Boston already saves up to \$352,000 in avoided health costs and missed work days annually from tree planting and maintenance, even though the City spends comparably less on maintaining our urban forest.¹⁰⁸ The national economic value provided by air quality improvements and carbon sequestration of urban trees and shrubs alone is \$3.8 billion,¹⁰⁹ not to mention the stormwater mitigation, heat and noise abatement, public health and aesthetic value of urban nature.

Cities Taking Action:

Portland, OR: commits to distributional and recognition equity in a tree planting strategy. After a year of research and outreach to identify barriers to tree planting for communities of color, immigrants, refugees, and low-income residents, the City has identified priority planting areas and defined strategies for culturally-specific outreach.

Augusta, GA: passed a tree ordinance in 2017 that sets minimum canopy coverage requirements (of at least 30 percent) for all land undergoing development. This can be achieved by preserving existing trees onsite and calculating the anticipated coverage of newly planted trees ten years from the time of planting.

Houston: increasing access to natural areas, trails and forested spaces for 1.5 million residents, in particular historically underinvested communities through a major public-private investment partnership called Bayou Greenways 2020, connecting the city's neighborhoods through multiple green ribbons totaling 150 miles.

Los Angeles: funding urban greening in historically underserved communities of Los Angeles since 2008 with California's Coastal Conservancy. In addition, the city's Green New Deal has set a goal to increase urban canopy coverage by 50 percent in low-income and heat-impacted areas by 2028.

Companion Policies:

- Link tree planting to methane gas leak repairs. As leaking underground pipes are repaired, ensure utilities are also replacing any trees that have been killed by the leak, whether planting a new tree in the same location or a more suitable spot nearby.
- Pass a Heritage Tree ordinance that protects trees above a certain diameter and age. Removal of a Heritage Tree on public or private land can either be subject to a public hearing or, in certain cases, banned outright with commensurate fines for violations.
- Bring together the city's electric utility providers and local nonprofits focused on urban greening to scope out the viability of a utility-sponsored planting program on private property to reduce energy (see Sacramento's partnership program).
- Explore mechanisms for incentivizing tree planting and protection on existing business, commercial and industrial properties through programs like City Forest Credits.
- Partner with state agencies and local horticultural and landscaping employers to support creation of a "Roots to Re-Entry" training program for residents transitioning back into their communities from incarceration to gain greenspace management and horticultural skills. Philadelphia's Roots to - Re-Entry program has reduced recidivism rates by over 50 percent.
- Consider the benefits and liabilities of planting fruit trees in public spaces, including the increased management such trees would need.

15 | Local Blue New Deal

Coastal cities were founded in proximity to and in relationship with the ocean. Today residents must find a sustainable way to live near rapidly rising waters, and policy discussions often focus on guarding against the harms of sea level rise through major projects such as coastline buffers and natural barriers, or through managed retreat. While planning for these efforts is necessary and timely, stopping there falls short of the potential for transformative change—coastal cities can manage ocean and coastal resources to reduce emissions and draw down carbon from the atmosphere while creating good jobs, sustainable food systems, and restoring clean water and access to our waterfronts. The Center for the Blue Economy recently released an Ocean Climate Action Plan, or Blue New Deal, that cities can support and complement. A local Blue New Deal would focus on the ocean’s tremendous potential to draw carbon down from the atmosphere with regenerative ocean farming, to generate renewable energy through offshore wind turbines, to nurture living shorelines that support marine biodiversity, to create jobs that support those efforts, and to promote community health and recreation. At a baseline, the health of marine life and range of biodiversity is directly related to municipal management of stormwater runoff—the more water is absorbed into the ground through porous surfaces, the less water flows along impervious surfaces and delivers pollutants into the ocean. But cities should also work to cultivate and benefit from the regenerative ocean agriculture that clean water makes possible. Boston can spark sustainable aquaculture, sustainable fishing, and alternative seafood startups through small business technical assistance and partnerships, including connecting good food purchasing to local ocean agriculture. Boston can also support the development of wind energy and other offshore renewable energy by directly connecting citywide decarbonization with local jobs—working toward a municipally owned wind farm. Cities can expand these industries in consultation with local fishing and conservation groups and connect local residents to these clean “blue jobs.” Boston can prioritize the cultivation of living shorelines to increase climate resiliency while also restoring ocean habitats. The City can also commit to ensuring that existing and new waterfront developments create free and accessible public spaces along the water’s edge, as required by state law. The city should monitor and enforce these commitments, as well as spread public awareness of available amenities guaranteed in the Public Waterfront Act through outreach and partnerships.

Why Take Action:

Coastal cities are already absorbing the destructive impacts of sea level rise, with more frequent flooding, displacement, and harm to property and people. Boston is especially vulnerable. Most of Boston’s downtown area was created through extensive landfill projects throughout the 1800’s, so the city is particularly susceptible to flooding as the ocean takes back this low-lying man-made land area. Coastal neighborhoods such as Dorchester and East Boston will see significant and frequent coastal flooding by 2070, with the potential need for managed retreat in the next decades. And many of our neighborhoods have already seen significant flooding threaten the safety of residents and cause economic damage, including in East Boston and the Seaport as flood water makes roads impassable and subway stations unsafe. Development along the waterfront is highly sought after, but there is a pressing need to balance flood resiliency and public access with development interest to ensure the benefits of the waterfront are not concentrated among a privileged few.

Cities Taking Action

Richmond, CA: placing living infrastructure, including oyster reefs and eelgrass, in nearshore areas off the coast of Richmond, California to create both natural habitat for native sea life as well as shoreline buffers to reduce erosion.

Marina, CA: embracing managed retreat as an official strategy and promoting conservation and passive restoration in retreat areas after decades of coastal concerns made worse by climate change.

New York: restoring oyster reefs to New York Harbor through the Billion Oyster Project in order to protect against waves, reduce flooding, and prevent erosion along the shorelines.

Bridgeport, CT: creating a resiliency prototype for the region's coastal cities by developing strategies and pilot projects focused on protecting homes, businesses and infrastructure in the South End of Bridgeport from flooding.

Companion Policies

- Create district-level stormwater planning districts with limitations on impervious surfaces and requirements to recapture stormwater.
- Advocate to decarbonize port industries and prioritize green infrastructure at ports.
- Advocate for expansion of offshore wind energy.
- Finance living shorelines.
- Connect Community Choice Aggregation to local wind energy production and jobs.

Conclusion



Each community must come together to plan, organize, and define what a Green New Deal and Just Recovery looks like in order to move forward. Above all, we must recognize this moment in time as a call to action. It is a call for the critical transformative changes that have been put off for far too long. We must act swiftly and boldly to address the interlinked crises of climate change, racial injustice, and income inequality. With the powers we hold as residents of America's largest cities and smallest communities, we can channel our collective energy towards solutions that reflect the values of a diverse public and set us on a path towards creating a more just and sustainable future.

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