

Boston GHG Plan Update Process

Preliminary Questions for the Leadership Committee

(to address over the next year)

Review the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP) and make any appropriate recommendations.

1. Mayor Menino has set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 7 percent by 2012 and 80 percent by 2050. The Commonwealth's Global Warming Solutions Act has set the same long-term goal for all of Massachusetts, and the Commonwealth is in the process of determining an interim, 2020 goal. Should the City set an interim goal independent of the Commonwealth's?
2. After reviewing the efforts described in the current CAP to reduce GHG emissions in municipal buildings and fleets as well as practices that have been put in place more recently, do you see any important opportunities that the City is missing to reduce municipal energy use and GHG emissions?
3. What principles and priorities should the City use to guide its investments to reduce GHG emissions (for example., should it pursue measures with the shortest paybacks first, or measures with the largest GHG reduction potential, or some other standard)?
4. The City can reduce its adjusted GHG emissions by buying renewable energy credits (RECs) or other GHG offsets. What role should RECs and offsets have in helping the City meet its short-term and long-term goals?

Update the community-wide greenhouse gas emissions inventory and set goals for community-wide reductions.

1. Should Boston set interim goals for GHG reductions by its residents, businesses, and institutions independent of the Commonwealth's goal? (See above.)

Recommend to the Mayor and the community actions necessary to meet climate action goals and ways to maximize associated opportunities.

1. What barriers are currently inhibiting or preventing residents, businesses, and institutions in Boston from taking actions to reduce GHG emissions, reduce energy use, increase recycling, plant more vegetation, reduce stormwater runoff, and so on?
2. What can the City government do to remove these barriers?
3. Will the removal of these obstacles be sufficient for the community to reach its GHG reduction goals?
4. If not, what else might the City do or where else might we look for reductions?
5. What help, if any, do we need from the Commonwealth and from the federal government? From other potential partners?
6. Article 37 of the City's Zoning Code requires new large projects to meet LEED standards. What other requirements should the City impose on any and all segments of the community to meet the GHG emission goals?
7. What actions should the City take to ensure that no segment of the community is unfairly burdened by or unfairly excluded from climate action?
8. How can we ensure that Boston residents, businesses, and institutions can take the most advantage of Renew Boston and other programs offered by the City, the Commonwealth, and the federal government?

Evaluate the risks to Boston from sea-level rise and other likely consequences of climate change, and recommend actions for the City and the community to take to reduce these risks?

1. Are there particular risks that climate change poses to Boston other than the ones that have been identified in reports you have already seen or heard (for example, sea-level rise, heat waves, more intense storms)?
2. Does climate change pose particular or undue risks to any neighborhoods or communities in Boston? If so, what actions should we take collectively in light of the uneven distribution of risks?
3. To the extent that we can quantify the probability of certain risks, how much risk should we prepare for? For example, if there is a 60 percent risk of a 2-foot rise in sea level by 2050 and a 5 percent risk of a 6-foot rise, what should we prepare for? In particular, how should we think about the small chance of catastrophic change?
4. What actions should Boston take in the next five to ten years to protect itself against climate-change risks? What actions should be deferred?
5. How much of the costs of climate-change adaptation should be borne by potentially impacted property owners, and how much by the broader community (city, state, or nation) as a whole?
6. To what extent should we rely on existing real estate market dynamics to encourage property owners to take adaptation actions, and how much should be required or regulated?
7. What can the City government do to remove the barriers to address adaptation?
8. How can we combine adaptation and mitigation into a comprehensive plan?
9. Given finite resources, how do we allocate resources and attention between adaptation and mitigation?

Prepare educational materials for Boston households and businesses describing global climate change and climate actions that they can take.

1. How well do most Bostonians and Boston businesses understand the causes and consequences of climate change? Are there significant differences in this understanding among different segments of the community?
2. How well do they understand the technical and financial opportunities for reducing energy use in homes and businesses?
3. What do they not understand or misunderstand?
4. How can we most effectively help them learn the causes and consequences of climate change?
5. How can we most effectively motivate them to take action? What are the best messages? What are the most effective media? What are the most appealing mitigation and adaptation strategies?
6. How can we best communicate the opportunities for energy savings and the individual and shared benefits of taking climate action?

Identify economic and workforce development opportunities associated with climate action and the clean technology sector.

1. What are the economic opportunities that climate action will bring to Boston? What does the “green economy” look like for Boston?
2. What does the City and its residents, businesses, and institutions need to do to take maximum advantage of these opportunities?
3. How can we expand the green economy?
4. How can we best prepare Boston residents for green-collar jobs?
5. What segments of the local economy are potentially most adversely affected by climate change and what can the City do to prepare them while striving to reduce the impacts?