

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

www.bostonpreservation.org

March 27, 2026

Brian Swett
Chief Climate Officer, Environment, Energy and Open Space Cabinet
1 City Hall Plaza, Boston, MA 02108
Re: Boston's 2030 Climate Action Plan Draft, Spring 2026

Dear Chief Swett,

The Boston Preservation Alliance is the city's primary nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and promoting Boston's historic buildings, places, and landscapes. Through our advocacy, we address pressing issues including climate resiliency, housing and small business affordability, and equity in preservation.

With 40 Organizational Members, 134 Corporate Members, and a reach of over 100,000 friends and supporters we represent a diverse constituency advocating for the thoughtful evolution of the city and celebration of its unique character. We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on projects and initiatives that impact the historic character of the city.

Today, we are submitting comments on Boston's 2030 Climate Action Plan (CAP) Spring 2026. We have continued our conversation with stakeholders from across the city about the most recent draft.

The Alliance was pleased to see many of our recommendations included, particularly the inclusion of adaptive reuse, the naming of preservation tools like Historic Tax Credits, and a commitment to develop a toolkit for buildings to navigate the deconstruction process. We commend the City for making these updates and acknowledge the wide range of priorities that must be addressed in any citywide document.

According to data available through the National Trust for Historic Preservation's ReUrbanism initiative, well over 75% of Boston's buildings are more than 50 years old. The average age of Boston's buildings is an asset. We all recognize the unique nature of Boston's historic character and its contribution to our quality of life. These buildings are also vital to reaching our city's climate and sustainability goals in a cost-effective way.

Given the CAP's role in informing future City policies and programs, it is imperative that historic buildings and preservation tools be explicitly named in the Plan. Many of the strategies in the updated draft implicitly apply to our older building stock; however, following conversations with stakeholders and members of the public, we believe that additional, more direct language specific to existing buildings is needed.

We respectfully suggest the City includes the following additions to the next draft of the Climate Action Plan to strengthen the document and speak to a broader group of stakeholders:

- The inclusion of “historic preservation” in the list of Key Terms and in relevant strategies throughout the plan.
- The inclusion of “historic properties” in the list of assets on page 12 in the Executive Summary of the plan, reading “Resilience strategies are designed to protect people, infrastructure, open space, and neighborhoods from the growing impacts of climate change...”
- Expand the strategy “Advance Adaptive Reuse” to “Advance Adaptive Reuse and Rehabilitation”. While adaptive reuse is an excellent tool, rehabilitation of existing buildings that require upgrades to improve sustainability without a change of use is a critical part of using this strategy to its fullest potential.
- In line with the establishment of a restaurant decarbonization task force, commit to the establishment of a task force for the decarbonization of historic (including non-designated but aged) properties. We are happy to serve as a resource for the development and scoping of this task force.

We appreciate the significant updates reflected in this latest draft and look forward to promoting the CAP as aligning with our own work. Together, we can promote Boston as a place that excels both in climate leadership and historic stewardship. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Katherine Davis-Wheeler
Executive Director
Boston Preservation Alliance

Molly Donahue
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Boston Preservation Alliance