



Massachusetts Municipal Association

MMA BEST PRACTICES SERIES

Recommendations for Effective Local Government Administration and Management from MMA Policy Committees

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MMA Policy Committee on Energy and the Environment **Best Practice Recommendation: Municipal Climate Adaptation Plans**

BEST PRACTICE: Adopt a municipal climate adaptation plan that focuses on community resiliency in order to prepare for the effects of climate change.

Climate change presents a serious long-term threat to the cities and towns of the Commonwealth. It will have impacts not only on the environment but on all aspects of local government, including economic development, planning, zoning and housing, public health and safety.

As the climate changes, municipalities will need to focus on adaptation and resiliency planning, as well as thinking about mitigating the effects of climate change. Adaptation refers to actions that can be taken to help reduce the impacts of climate change. It is one part of an overall strategy to combat climate change. Cities and towns will become more resilient by developing strategies to withstand the stress and impacts of climate change. In 2016, Gov. Charlie Baker signed Executive Order 569, Establishing an Integrated Climate Change Strategy for the Commonwealth, which calls for collaboration between state and local government to combat climate change and to assist communities in assessing their vulnerabilities.

Here are the first steps that cities and towns can take to develop a municipal climate adaptation plan:

- Bring in all stakeholders for internal meetings with all municipal departments, particularly public safety, public works, energy managers, and municipal utilities. Hold public meetings for residents, environmental advocates, utility companies and other stakeholders. Initial meetings can be used to gather ideas and information, while later meetings can be held to develop an adaptation plan. Consider assembling a task force to assist in developing the plan.
- Consult state officials to gather climate data for your community and to gather information about state grants that could help your community. Take advantage of grants and programs that aid municipalities in resiliency planning. These include the state Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program, Coastal Resiliency Grant Program, and Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance grant program, and grants from nonprofit groups.
- Inventory and map infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, culverts and coastal infrastructure, so that your community can assess vulnerabilities and hazards to sea-level rise, flooding, storms, erosion, extreme temperatures and related effects.

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- Make sure you have an emergency management plan, in coordination with public safety, MEMA, FEMA, regional partners, public works, etc.
- Increase awareness in your community by posting resources and information on climate change, potential impacts on your community, and progress on developing an adaptation plan online so residents can stay updated.

Municipalities that already have a climate adaptation plan can take these additional steps to build on their progress:

- Consider amending local zoning bylaws and ordinances to encourage climate-adaptable development and protect vulnerable areas; consider adding green infrastructure and low-impact development.
- Develop a long-term plan to upgrade infrastructure over time and create more resilient infrastructure, such as culverts, drainage improvements, coastal infrastructure, local roads and electrical infrastructure.
- Provide additional outreach and resources to residents, especially vulnerable populations, such as elderly and low-income residents, non-English speakers, and individuals with special health care needs.
- Integrate your municipality's climate adaptation plan with your climate mitigation plan and your municipal energy plan to take into account reducing greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy conservation programs for municipal buildings and for residents.
- Consider hiring a sustainability manager, identify an employee to serve as the point person in your community, or form a sustainability committee to work on implementation of your climate adaptation and mitigation plans.
- Work with utility companies and local stakeholders on a policy to repair gas leaks, which are harmful to the environment.

Resources:

- Executive Order No. 569: Establishing an Integrated Climate Change Strategy for the Commonwealth: www.mass.gov/governor/legislationexecorder/execorders/executive-order-no-569.html
- Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs: www.mass.gov/eea/air-water-climate-change/climate-change
- Massachusetts State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan: resilientma.com
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program: www.mass.gov/municipal-vulnerability-preparedness-program
- National League of Cities and EcoAmerica, resources on communications and messaging on climate change: nlc.org/program-initiative/nlc-ecoamerica-elevating-local-climate-action
- Climate Adaptation Guidebook for Municipalities in the Chicago Region: www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/14193/FY13-0119+Climate+Adaptation+toolkit+lowres.pdf
- Climate Ready Boston: www.boston.gov/departments/environment/climate-ready-boston
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: US Climate Resilience Toolkit: toolkit.climate.gov