



July 31, 2026

Via electronic mail: benjamin.matusow@boston.gov

Benjamin Matusow
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City of Boston Planning Department
1 City Hall Square, 9th Floor
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RE: Written Comments on Resilient Fort Point Infrastructure Project

Dear Benjamin:

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Resilient Fort Point Infrastructure Project. The undersigned organizations (Boston Harbor Now, Conservation Law Foundation, Harborfront Neighborhood Alliance, Piers Park Sailing Center, and The American City Coalition) are waterfront stakeholders who currently live, work, recreate, and/or program in and around the Boston Harbor. Together, we bring local, statewide, and regional expertise on waterfront planning and development issues as well as community engagement, equity, and climate resilience. Our work seeks to strengthen and improve access to our waterfronts and improve the character and sustainability of our working waterfronts.

We have been following the project and attending all public meetings since its inception with the Fort Point 100 Acres Open Space Concept Plan in 2021, including the two recent project meetings (6/24/26, Resilient Fort Point Channel Virtual Information Session; 6/29/26, Resilient Fort Point Channel Open House + Site Walks).

Overall, we support the City of Boston's plan to advance flood infrastructure that provides protection to nearby residents, businesses, buildings, and infrastructure, including roads and utilities. We also commend the City of Boston for its effort to expedite delivery of this near-term (2030) resilient infrastructure to address the immediate gap created by FEMA's denial of a pre-disaster grant for flood protection infrastructure along the Fort Point Channel in September 2025.

Our comments below reflect substantive considerations pertaining to the project's stated goals. They are further shaped by the Boston Waterfront Partners' Equity Rubric for Waterfront Development ("Equity Rubric"), a framework to better evaluate the ways existing and proposed plans and projects along the Greater Boston waterfront are or are not furthering racial and socioeconomic equity.

A. Coastal Flood Protection System

The following comments relate to the stated project goal of building a coastal flood protection system along the inland edge of the Harborwalk, consisting of a permanent concrete barrier and temporary aluminum flood protection panels ("deployables") that are installed during a flood event:

1. Deployables:

- a. **Additional Deployables:** We request that the project scope include a deployable between 5 Necco and 253 Summer Street where flood water went into the basements of adjacent buildings in 2018.
- b. **Floodwall Opening Width:** We support the proposed 20' to 25' opening in the floodwall perpendicular to Binford Street to allow for emergency water rescue, non-motorized recreational watercraft, and floating art access to the channel during non-storm conditions.
- c. **Maintenance/Operations:** At the June 29 meeting, we learned that the City of Boston Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is committed to deployables operation and maintenance; while we understand that OEM was unavailable to attend the meeting on June 29, we request that the City of Boston coordinate a public meeting to allow the public to hear directly from the OEM team regarding their role in maintenance and operations.

2. Fence:

- a. We prefer that the project not include the incorporation of a fence atop the newly constructed concrete barrier. The new concrete barrier already provides a more substantial physical separation from the Fort Point Channel than existing conditions; adding a replacement fence on top of it increases project costs that could be allocated to flood protection and public amenities and would also be a missed opportunity to preserve sight lines to the channel. We encourage the project team to continue to engage with property owners as to whether reconstruction of the fence is necessary and to consider alternatives that minimize visual impacts and reduce costs.

B. Public Amenities

We recognize that the primary objective of the project is flood protection and the proposed public amenities are secondary features providing resiliency dollars are available. The importance of spending resiliency dollars on resiliency is paramount. The following comments relate to the stated project goal of providing public amenities like new landscaping and open

space, if and where feasible, while minimizing disruption to Harborwalk access and existing industrial use:

1. Existing Harborwalk: We request that project documents include clear confirmation that the Harborwalk width is maintained or expanded throughout the project site.
2. Expanded Planting Area: We support the planting of trees and other greenery where feasible in the expanded planting area between the Harborwalk and the new flood projection system. While we understand that some property owners may express concerns regarding the inclusion of trees, we encourage the project team to maximize opportunities for meaningful greening of this space. Where appropriate, the project should consider using potted or movable plantings that can be relocated and repurposed in other areas of the City as development projects are completed. This approach would provide flexibility, while contributing to the public realm and supporting City of Boston's long-term urban greening goals. As noted in Section 5.F. of the Equity Rubric: "The plantings should be adapted to the environment, allowing them to recover even in the event of coastal flooding and minimizing the resources required to maintain them."
3. Passive Open Space: Many of the undersigned organizations collaborate on public programming in and around Fort Point Channel and have heard directly from program participants about the amenities needed to support longer visits by people who do not live in the immediate neighborhood. During development of the Fort Point 100 Acres Open Space Concept Plan, The American City Coalition partnered with the Boston Planning & Development Agency and Sasaki to conduct a focus group and family engagement activities with Roxbury and Dorchester residents who had previously participated in public waterfront programming in Fort Point. These engagement efforts identified priorities for creating welcoming, accessible, and comfortable public spaces for all Bostonians and visitors.

As discussed in Section 5.C. of the Equity Rubric, we believe that "Flood infrastructure should incorporate multiple benefits, such as ecological benefits, additional open space, public seating, or public art." Although the passive open space associated with this project is limited in size and available funding should remain focused on achieving the project's climate resilience objectives on the projected timeline, we encourage the project team to review the recommendations of the Fort Point 100 Acres Open Space Concept Plan and current community input as the landscape design is refined. Even within a modest footprint, the new open space presents an opportunity to incorporate amenities such as additional shade and seating, that support longer visits and a more welcoming public realm for residents and visitors alike.

4. Maintenance/Operations: The final project approval should include a clear written agreement identifying the entity responsible for the maintenance, operation, and upkeep of all of the project's open spaces and amenities. This agreement should also identify City funding dollars to monitor and maintain the wall. At the June 29 meeting, we heard from Boston Planning staff that responsibility for maintaining the project's public amenities is still under discussion. Establishing this responsibility before project

approval will help ensure the floodwall and these spaces remain safe, clean, accessible, and well-maintained over time, while providing transparency and accountability.

5. Signage: While not a priority project deliverable, the project should consider incorporating multi-lingual and universally accessible signage on the project site. Signage is an opportunity to explain the goals, design, and construction phasing of the project itself and present current City of Boston flood projections and sea-level rise timelines so the public understands the broader coastal risk context and other flood infrastructure projects. Signage could also communicate how coastal flooding and storm surge at this site connect to and can exacerbate inland flooding risks (e.g., stormwater backup, combined sewer overflow, and street flooding) in neighborhoods beyond the immediate waterfront. Section 3.E of the Equity Rubric provides some general guiding questions and guidance: “Does this project provide signage that allows a diverse group of people to navigate the site easily? Does this project provide interpretive signage that enriches the space and is reflective of the diverse lived experiences and inclusive history of Greater Boston Harbor residents? Is the signage accessible to non-English speaking people and people with limited sight? Signage should use icons where possible and, when not, offer multilingual translation of the most commonly spoken language outside of English within a one-mile radius of the site, with QR codes offering additional translations. Signage should also have accommodations for people with limited sight.”

C. Coordinated Integration

The following comments relate to coordinated integration with other resilience projects along the Fort Point Channel:

1. We know that this project is a temporary solution to address near-term flooding, with the understanding that the planned redevelopments at 244-284 A Street (Related Beal), 232 A Street (formerly Tishman Speyer), and the current Gillette site will include longer-term flood protection elements that will build off of or replace this floodwall. With this planning horizon in mind, we believe that the City should prioritize trees and native plantings in this project that can be moved and replanted as each of these projects enhance neighborhood-level coastal protection measures on their project sites.
2. We see this project as an impressive case study on how the City of Boston can partner with multiple private property owners simultaneously to create continuous lines of defense on a neighborhood level. Moving forward, the City should expand this model throughout the implementation of coastal adaptation projects, including those described in the recent USACE CSRMS Draft Plan.
3. In closing, as the City finalizes the budget for this project, it is important that the coastal flood protection system remains the funding priority. As noted above, the importance of spending resiliency dollars on resiliency is paramount, and funding should remain focused on achieving the project's climate resilience objectives on the current near-term (2030) timeline. At the same time, we recognize that the proposed public amenities add real value to access and a welcoming public realm along the waterfront, and while they

should not take priority over resilience investments, we hope to see them included in the project.

Thank you for allowing us to comment on this project and for your work to protect Fort Point Channel. Should you have any questions or if we can provide additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to Charlotte Rice at charlotte_rice@tamcc.org.

Sincerely,

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Boston Harbor Now

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