

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Action Grant Case Study

Municipality: City of Beverly, MA and City of Salem, MA

Project Title: Beverly and Salem Climate Action and Resilience Plan

Award Year (FY): 2020

Grant Award: \$187,500

Match: \$62,500

Match Source: Cash match, shared 50/50 by Cities of Beverly and Salem

One or Two Year Project: Two year project

Municipal Department Leading Project: Beverly Planning Department (grant manager; project management co-led by Beverly Planning/Sustainability and Salem Sustainability Departments)

Project Website URL: <https://resilient-together.org/action-plan>

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW:

Beverly and Salem are both coastal Cities located on the North Shore of Massachusetts on the Salem Sound and separated by the Danvers River. Connected by an iconic bridge, these two communities are roughly similar in population size, approximately 43,000 residents (Beverly with 42,174 and Salem with 43,226) and similar in land area with 22.6 miles and 18.3 miles for Beverly and Salem, respectively. Both Cities have Environmental Justice communities within their borders, and both Cities have Climate Vulnerable populations, with Beverly having communities with residents over 65 and Salem having communities with majority non-white residents.

With a rich colonial and maritime history, both Cities have an abundance of preserved historical buildings and Salem, in particular, has a flourishing tourist economy founded on the City's unique history. Both Beverly and Salem have thriving downtowns, ample well-maintained parks and open space, a rich arts culture, and are regional destinations for dining, shopping, and other entertainment. These reasons and more make these two Cities ideal candidates for tackling the urgent issue of climate change, together.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:

Description of Climate Impact:

Like other Massachusetts communities, Beverly and Salem are already experiencing the impacts of a changing climate. Residents currently face, and will continue to endure, increased frequency and severity of intense storms, sea-level rise, flooding, heat waves, and drought. More frequent and heavier rainfall events, which have increased in the Northeast 71% in the past half-century, will bring stress to stormwater infrastructure and cause flooding and property damage. Beverly and Salem are also at risk for sea-level rise and impacts on property, infrastructure, and natural ecosystems that are located along the extensive shoreline of the Salem sound and Danvers and Crane Rivers, where three feet of sea-level rise is projected by

2050. In summer months, heat waves are a concern for Beverly and Salem, with a projected increase of 31 days of 90 degrees when compared to the 1971-2001 baseline average, leading to potential heat-related illness, especially for vulnerable residents.

The Cities recognize the threats to both human and natural systems from the impacts of a volatile climate and sought funding to create a plan to prepare their communities for a thriving, healthy, and safe future. *Resilient Together*, the joint Climate Action and Resilience Plan, will guide the Cities' actions to mitigate their contributions to climate change while adapting to its impacts and creating a resilient future for all.

Project Goals and Tasks:

The primary goal of this project was to develop a joint Climate Action and Resilience Plan to be a shared vision and guiding roadmap for both communities to address climate change.

Evaluating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and establishing actionable strategies to reduce energy consumption, divert waste, and ensure equitable outcomes were among the goals that guided this project. This project was also shaped by key emissions reduction goals for Beverly and Salem: to reduce GHGs by 50% by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 compared to a 2018 baseline. Furthermore, unique goals were established during the planning process for each of the seven Focus Areas: Buildings & Development, Energy, Infrastructure, Mobility, Natural Resources, Public Health & Safety, and Solid Waste. These Focus Area-specific goals were developed with input from the community and Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC).

Another goal of this project was to facilitate broad community education around climate change and encourage community engagement in the planning process, particularly among vulnerable populations including seniors, youth, non-English speakers, and low-income community members. Community engagement goals for this project were to build local capacity, create an equitable engagement process, and to directly inform the planning process.

Approach and Result:

Resilient Together is the result of a collaborative approach between City officials, volunteers, residents, local partner organizations, and technical experts of Beverly and Salem, as well as the consultant teams. Project leaders included:

- **Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC):** Thirty-six-member Committee of municipal representatives from both Cities, key stakeholders from state and regional agencies, utilities, local colleges and universities, non-profits, businesses and environmental groups. The CAAC provided input on goals, actions, and implementation strategies for the Plan.

- **Core Project Team:** Mayors of both Cities, as well as key staff from each City, and the consultant team all oversaw and directed the planning process and collected and incorporated public feedback to develop the final Plan.
- **Engagement Partners:** Equity partners, volunteers and a team of resident ambassadors promoted engagement opportunities for the public and hosted events to inform community members of the Plan.

The project team took the following steps to develop *Resilient Together*:

Baselines Assessment, GHG Inventory & Goal Setting

- Reviewed existing plans and policies and baseline performance data and key metrics in Beverly and Salem
- Completed a GHG inventory for both Cities
- Established a vision statement and specific goals with input from the CAAC that express what both Cities hope to achieve and outline their priorities for action

Action Identification

- Developed a list of best practices and created lists of potential actions for each of the seven Plan Elements
- Compiled action ideas from CAAC meetings, public surveys, and community focus groups

Action Prioritization

- Developed six Guiding Principles to evaluate actions
- Created an Evaluation Framework through which to examine potential actions
- Conducted interviews with key City staff

Implementation Blueprint Development

- Created blueprints to implement 20 actions with information on key implementation steps, planning considerations like timeframe, cost estimate, key partners, funding resources, technical resources, and equity considerations

Final Plan Development

- Compiled all deliverable elements from the planning process and summarized process outcomes in the final Plan document

Communication Support

- Created the *Resilient Together* brand
- Created a project website
- Produced a promotional video with 373 views
- Built a social media following with posts on City, partner, and ambassador accounts
- Developed engagement material for Plan launch
- Developed a [Dashboard](#) website

Community engagement was essential to the success of the *Resilient Together* planning process. Highlights of the project engagement efforts include:

- 50,000 community members reached through various engagement tactics
- Over 1,000 survey responses
- Conducted focus groups for businesses, faith and neighborhood leaders, and City leadership
- Virtual engagement with renters and commuters
- 6 presentations to community groups by ambassadors and volunteers
- 19 personal testimonials gathered
- 2 Climate Action Toolkits published, for [residents](#) and [businesses](#)

Resilient Together met Beverly and Salem's goals of creating a data-driven and community-focused plan that will serve as a roadmap to bring both communities to carbon neutrality by 2050. The plan established numerous goals and actions that will ensure the cities accomplish carbon neutrality, including nature-based solutions wherever feasible, and collaborative efforts to ensure a regional impact. *Resilient Together* also emphasizes equitable solutions, which the Cities intend to pursue throughout action implementation.

RESULTS AND DELIVERABLES:

The process of developing *Resilient Together*, Beverly and Salem's joint Climate Action and Resilience Plan, resulted in a comprehensive plan that, as previously stated, will serve as a shared vision and roadmap to enable the Cities to accomplish carbon neutrality by 2050. The plan includes seventy-one actions to mitigate the cities' impacts on climate change and increase resilience from climate impacts. Additionally, the process resulted in GHG emissions inventories for both cities (base year 2018, with each assessing municipal and community-wide emissions), fact sheets for each Focus Area, climate action toolkits for residents and for businesses, and an [online dashboard](#) where the plan, GHG inventories, toolkits, and additional supporting information can be found to help residents, businesses, and other stakeholders reduce their impact, increase resilience, and join the Cities' efforts to combat climate change.

LESSONS LEARNED:

Tight schedule for regional collaboration

The *Resilient Together* project was launched in Spring 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic was taking hold. The pandemic expanded the Project Team's understanding of what community resilience looks like and emphasized the power of collaboration in the face of crisis. Although the Cities consider the project a success, both communities recognize that the process had too short a timeframe to go as far into depth and include as much engagement as desired. After

completing coordination with the State for the grant award, issuing an RFP, and selecting a consultant, the Cities and consultant team had under one year to complete the plan. This in addition to COVID-19 conditions significantly impacted engagement strategies and other project components.

A unique challenge, coordinating two Cities necessitated setting clear expectations for review processes and timeframes both on the side of the Cities and Consultant team. The one-year timeframe for the project during the global pandemic and the highly collaborative nature of a joint Plan presented a scheduling challenge with tight internal review periods (first within each City then among the Cities) during a period when municipal governments had new pressing priorities related to COVID-19. Setting a detailed work plan calendar halfway through the process significantly improved the team's flow, incorporating time for each municipality's review then time for the two Cities to find consensus in any response to the Consultant team. However, regional collaboration, particularly when working to engage a diverse range of residents and stakeholders from both communities, takes additional time and staff support, and should be considering when developing a timeframe for such a project.

Time restrictions that come with MVP grant reporting and compliance also impacted the project's development, and meant that a project extension to enable additional engagement in the final phases of the plan was infeasible. An amendment to the grant contract, following the selection of a consultant, required significant time and effort from both the Cities and the EEA; and it was determined that extending the timeline for completion would have taken an even more significant process. The Cities are both confident in the project and process that was followed; however, additional flexibility on timing by the state would have enabled even greater engagement and outreach.

Limitations of virtual engagement

Community engagement during the pandemic was particularly challenging, as in-person and public events were prohibited for public safety and did not resume until the final stage of plan development, after the bulk of public input and engagement had occurred. The project team adapted to provide ambassadors with tools to engage community members in remote, socially distant ways and encourage diverse, representative engagement with the project. For example, project ambassadors were given tools such as social media guides, virtual climate trivia, and guidance to support hosting online events. Ambassadors pivoted to engage folks virtually, with positive outcomes such as a well-attended webinar. Yet, some virtual tools, including the experimental virtual focus groups, had low participation. As can be expected, the project team would have had deeper and broader reach if staff and consultants were able to meet community members where they would go in a typical year (e.g., community events, public

institutions) and hold in-person events. 1,000 responses to an online multilingual survey out of over 85,000 combined residents was successful in the context of the pandemic but not ideal in a typical planning process.

The Cities and consultant team had to respond rapidly to changing situations due to COVID-19. The engagement processes that were utilized demonstrated how virtual engagement can reach members of the community who are not typically part of the planning process. However, not having in-person engagement also limited opportunities to reach populations who are not typically part of the planning process but who may not have regular access to the internet or technology. The project team was consistently reviewing engagement strategies, and modified approaches to virtual engagement throughout the planning process. The Cities recognize the opportunities that are now present with the ability to use both virtual and in-person engagement, and encourage other communities to use a mix of both, and be ready to be flexible if certain strategies don't have the desired impact.

General and Recommendations for the MVP Program:

Beverly and Salem are two medium-sized cities with residents with a broad range of needs and concerns. Developing a regional plan that would enable the Cities to collaborate in the future and expand their impact within their communities and beyond was and continues to be a priority. However, such collaboration, particularly when working to engage a diverse range of residents and stakeholders from both communities, takes additional time and staff support. The Cities recommend that other communities looking to follow the same regional plan format build in that additional time into each phase for engagement, internal coordination and draft review, final plan review and public feedback, and grant reporting and general project management. Due to requirements in many grant programs, this may involve separating a plan into phases to facilitate additional funding and time.

The Cities recommend that the State's MVP grant program allow and encourage that flexibility for regional plans. The Cities also recommend that, when considering grant applications for planning documents, the State should consider accepting applications with significantly less financial and sub-task detail. This would permit municipalities to submit applications without the extensive assistance of consultants. As planning documents require being put out to bid, creating a more flexible grant application for such projects would subsequently permit greater flexibility for municipalities in working with consultants, creating a successful process and product, and reporting.

PARTNERS AND OTHER SUPPORT:

Full List:

City of Beverly:

- Michael P. Cahill, Mayor
- Stephanie Bilotti, Chief of Staff
- Erina Keefe, Sustainability Director
- Eric Barber, City Engineer
- Darlene Wynne, Director of Planning & Community Development
- Emily Hutchings, Assistant Planning Director

City of Salem:

- Kimberly Driscoll, Mayor
- Dominick Pangallo, Chief of Staff
- Jenna Ide, Director of Capital Projects & Municipal Operations
- Esmeralda Bisono, Sustainability & Resiliency Coordinator
- Laura Assade, Constituent Services Director & Latino Affairs Coordinator
- Brittany Dolan, Planner/Conservation Agent (former)
- Seth Lattrell, Planner/ Port Authority Deputy
- Victoria Desclos, Community Engagement Intern (former)

Climate Action Advisory Committee (CAAC):

- Tobey Archibald, Beverly High School (Class President, 2020-2021)
- Laura Assade, Salem Mayor's Office
- Bonnie Bain, Salem Recycling Committee
- Patrick Belmonte, Change is Simple
- Kyla Bradbury, Salem High School
- John Burke, Shetland Park
- Tracy Corley, Conservation Law Foundation
- Nicholas Downing, Salem Traffic & Parking Department
- Sue Gabriel, Beverly Bootstraps
- Tara Gallagher, Salem State University
- Leslie Gould, Beverly Chamber of Commerce
- Paul Guanci, Beverly City Council President
- Ty Hapworth, Salem City Council
- John Hayes, Salem Sustainability, Energy, & Resiliency Committee (SERC)
- Rhaea Heffner, Sunrise Movement SSU
- Cathy Hoog, Salem Housing Authority
- Betsy Isenstein, DCAMM
- Cindy Keegan, SAFE
- Chris Koeplin, Beverly Crossing
- Carl Kooyoomjian, Beverly Bicycle Committee
- Julia Long, Beverly Clean Energy Advisory Committee
- Ed Lydon, Beverly Hospital
- Anthony Michetti, Endicott College
- Wayne Miller, Beverly Planning Board

- Brian Murrhly, Cummings Properties
- Rinus Oosthoek, Salem Chamber of Commerce
- Avery Palardy, BILH Sustainability Manager
- Cammy Peterson, MAPC
- Patrick Schmidt, Avison Young
- Naisha Tatis, Salem State University student and Beverly resident
- Lori Timmermann, National Grid
- Kate Twombly, Beverly Middle School
- Emily Ullman, Salem School District
- Lorinda Visnick, Beverly School Committee
- Lisa Willwerth, Beverly Solid Waste Reduction Committee
- John Wathne, Salem Bicycle Advisory Committee

Equity Partners:

- Beverly Main Streets
- Harborlight Community Partners
- Beverly Bootstraps
- Welcoming Immigrants Network (WIN)

Ambassadors:

- Tobey Archibald
- Lizabeth Davis
- Marissa Gabriel
- Fred Hopps
- Carly Mandell
- Meddy Smith
- Joey Wolongevicz

Focus Group Hosts:

- Rinus Oosthoek, Salem Chamber of Commerce
- Leslie Gould, Greater Beverly Chamber of Commerce
- Rev. Julie Flowers, Beverly Multifaith Coalition/ Beverly First Baptist Church

Consultant Team:

Kim Lundgren Associates:

- Kim Lundgren
- Kari Hewitt
- Talia Fox
- Julia Masters (former)
- Therese Dorau
- Mike Steinhoff
- Xico Manarolla (former)
- Sophie Green (former)
- Annie Suttle
- Karen Kao

Utile:

- Jeff Geisinger
- Matthew Littel

- Elizabeth van der Els
- Jessica Robertson (former)

Nitsch Engineering:

- Michelle Callahan
- Kelly Main
- Sandra Brock
- Bryan Zimolka
- Isabel Kaubisch (former)

Core Team (City of Beverly, City of Salem, Consultant Team):

The City of Beverly, City of Salem, and Consultant Team led project development, with the full team meeting every two weeks (and smaller group meetings and/or email and phone communication multiple times per week) to review materials, evaluate and facilitate engagement, and provide general coordination. This core team dedicated hundreds of hours to the development of *Resilient Together*, and the Cities anticipate continued time to be dedicated toward action items, plan updates, and continued engagement surrounding the plan.

CAAC:

The CAAC met virtually three times during the development of *Resilient Together*, and providing consistent review and recommendations for draft materials, including goals, action items, and the draft plan. The CAAC was made up of a diverse group of community members, including experts in environmental, energy, and related fields; community leaders from Beverly and Salem's schools (including student representatives) and nonprofits; board and commission representatives and City Council representatives; and neighborhood leaders. The Cities anticipate that the majority of CAAC members will remain engaged as community leaders as *Resilient Together* is put into action.

Equity Partners and Ambassadors:

Equity partners and ambassadors played a critical part of community engagement throughout the project, helping communicate with typically difficult to reach members of the community and holding smaller activities to encourage participation in the plan. The Cities anticipate continuing to collaborate with equity partners throughout the execution of the *Resilient Together*, to ensure actions have just and equitable outcomes.

PROJECT PHOTOS:

Attached.