

Resilient Food Systems, Resilient Cities: Recommendations for the City of Boston

Implementation Roadmap

With the recent assessment of the resilience of its food system, the City of Boston took a significant step toward ensuring food access and availability for all residents in the aftermath of a disaster. Insights from the study, coupled with public and private sector support from engaged steering committee members, form a solid foundation for additional planning and implementation. The following set of next steps, organized by lead agency or organization, will help the City maintain the momentum built during the past year.

Office of Food Initiatives

- The new Director of the Office of Food Initiatives should establish a food system resilience committee that includes representatives from public and private sector food organizations. It should be co-chaired by representatives from Health and Human Services, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the Office of Environment, Energy and Open Space.
- The committee will be charged with: (1) coordinating local food system initiatives and resilience planning efforts; (2) assessing and mitigating the risk of Boston's milk supply; (3) identifying key risks to the food system associated with natural disasters; (4) developing a strategic plan to protect local food infrastructure, businesses and organizations; (5) ensuring proper planning and communication mechanisms are in place to handle major disruptions to the food system; (6) developing a food availability action plan for Dorchester, East Boston and Roxbury; (7) developing a food security action plan for Charlestown, Dorchester, East Boston, Mattapan, Mission Hill and Roxbury; and (8) commissioning research and data collection related to the food system.

Boston Redevelopment Authority and Office of Business Development

- Incorporate findings from the study into the development and implementation of the City's Small Business Plan.
- Develop a "playbook" of contingency planning best practices and provide technical assistance to support food resilience planning for corner stores.
- Review resilience plans of major organizations in Boston's food system.
- Launch a Rebuild by Design competition or leverage the existing Living with Water design competition to mitigate flood risks for food distributors.
- Develop a process to guide and target private-sector food distributors' expansion and relocation plans.
- Inventory available industrial warehouse space that could be used for additional food storage capacity.
- Review future development plans for Boston to assess potential impact on food distribution and food retail.
- Evaluate policies to incentivize the increase of private-sector food storage in Boston.

Boston Transportation Department

- Present findings from the study to the Go Boston 2030 Advisory Committee.
- Add a representative from the food system resilience committee to the Go Boston 2030 team.
- Add a representative from the Boston Transportation Department to the food system resilience committee.
- Incorporate insights from the study into the Go Boston 2030 transportation plan, including identifying alternative transportation methods and routes in the event of road closures.

The Greater Boston Food Bank

- Commission an in-depth evaluation of the food safety net in Boston to gauge total capacity and develop strategies to improve efficiency and expand capacity.
- Support the development of "storm action plan" guidelines for food safety net organizations.
- Initiate dialogue on expanding the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP).

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