

# BANKER & TRADESMAN

THE REAL ESTATE, BANKING AND COMMERCIAL WEEKLY FOR MASSACHUSETTS

A PUBLICATION OF THE WARREN GROUP

## GOING GREEN

# Businesses Helping Cities Achieve Climate Goals

## Urban Areas Are Increasingly Looking To Private Enterprise In Green Goals

BY RICK DIMINO

SPECIAL TO BANKER & TRADESMAN

Cities across the country are looking to the private sector to help them achieve their climate goals. In response to this challenge, green business engagement programs have been developed to provide leadership, guidance, and technical assistance to businesses and property owners in a number of major U.S. cities, including Boston. These programs empower the private sector to reduce energy use and adopt sustainable practices, are a valuable tool for local governments and utilities in their efforts to increase energy efficiency. With 45 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions originating from commercial and industrial buildings, comprehensive and successful green business engagement programs can have a substantial impact on greenhouse gas emissions nationally and help mitigate the risk of sea level rise and extreme weather events.



RICK DIMINO

Many cities have adopted aggressive near-term greenhouse gas emission goals. Boston's target is 25 percent by 2020. Given these aggressive targets, there is a need for significant and sustained energy reduction efforts in the private sector, and local governments are empowering green business engagement programs to help them achieve their climate goals.

A Better City recently launched the fifth annual Challenge for Sustainability, a voluntary program that engages buildings and businesses in Greater Boston with a holistic approach to implementing sustainability and energy efficiency programs. The Challenge

for Sustainability provides participants with a concierge level of service that leads them through a benchmarking of their facility, the development of a comprehensive sustainability action plan, and offers them valuable technical assistance and peer networking to share best practices in an effort to reduce energy use. The Challenge for Sustainability is working with over 100 building owners, property managers, and employers; representing over 34 million square feet of commercial space.

Participants in the Challenge for Sustainability, including Boston Properties, Equity Office, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, John Hancock, Nixon Peabody, Nutter McClennen & Fish, and Putnam Investments, have achieved impressive reductions in energy use. Over three years, participants have realized an aggregated 4 percent annual reduction in kWh, totaling more than 14 million kWh in 2012 alone, enough to power 1,300 homes for a year. These reductions are reached through the implementation of over 1,000 sustainability actions within energy, waste, water, and transportation.

### Getting Greener

Nationally, the Challenge for Sustainability is one of over 50 green business engagement programs. In Seattle, Wash., through the Seattle 2030 District, 133 buildings totaling 38 million square feet have committed to undertaking audits or retrofits to achieve a 50 percent reduction in energy use by 2030. In Houston, the Green Office Challenge includes 375 buildings with 75 million square feet and collectively reduced energy use by 28 million kWh. In California, 2,700 small to medium-sized business are working with the California Green Business Network, and together reduced more than 38 million kWh. Collectively, these programs work with thou-

sands of properties totaling over 250 million square feet, including small neighborhood shops, large national corporations, and iconic skyscrapers.

Businesses and buildings in Boston and throughout Massachusetts have an advantage when it comes to making investments in energy efficiency; as utility, city, and state policy makers have implemented a course of action that has resulted in making Boston the number one city in America for energy efficiency programs and Massachusetts the number one state. Passage of the Green Communities Act in 2008, has enabled Massachusetts to establish nation leading energy efficiency goals in partnership with its investor-owned utilities. This successful partnership being led by the utilities has resulted in \$2 billion being dedicated for residential, low-income, and commercial/industrial energy efficiency programs for 2013-15; with an estimated benefit of over \$8 billion in direct energy savings, capacity savings, reduced wholesale energy prices, and other non-energy benefits.

In May, Boston's Building Energy Reporting and Disclosure Ordinance will go into effect. This ordinance will require owners with buildings of 50,000 square feet or greater, to submit annual energy use data to the city. The program aims to boost investments in energy efficiency and cut energy costs, and will educate and inform the public about the benefits of energy efficiency. This ordinance will increase the efforts of the private sector to invest in energy efficiency; and with the combined resources of the city, our utility partners, and the Challenge for Sustainability, systems are in place for all to succeed. ■

*Rick Dimino is the president and CEO of A Better City. He is also a member of Boston Mayor Marty Walsh's transition team.*

Reprinted with permission of Banker & Tradesman.

This document may constitute advertising under the rules of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts.