

August 1, 2026

Ben Matusow
Senior Climate and Coastal Resilience Infrastructure Delivery Project Manager
Boston Planning Department
Boston City Hall
1 City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Resilient Fort Point Channel Near-Term Project

Dear Ben:

Please accept this brief comment letter regarding the proposed “Resilient Fort Point Channel Near-Term Project.” Herein, I refer to the flood protection component of this project as the “Wall.”

I recall our community asking City of Boston climate team representatives (specifically, Chris Osgood) in an FPNA meeting in late 2025 if the City could put enough funds together to build a concrete wall along the Harborwalk as an interim measure. Looking back, the City was not only responsive to our proposal, its response was considerable.

While I don’t have the expertise necessary to assess the efficacy of the “Near-Term Project,” I assume it has been professionally engineered to withstand combined forces of wind and water to meet stated projections, within accepted limits for its stated purpose. My comments below are predicated on the Wall itself meeting or exceeding stated objectives.

With that assumption regarding efficacy in mind, I want to commend the City of Boston’s climate team for its timely work moving this interim project forward following the loss of grant funding for the “berm.” Ideally, we would’ve been able to replace the lost federal funds — perhaps with Commonwealth funds or perhaps additional City funding, but again, the fact that the City of Boston stepped with an interim solution is appreciated.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Phasing: Given the limited budget, funding and construction should be expedited in at least two (2) phases to ensure that the top priority objective (e.g. flood protection) is completed to the highest possible standard. In Phase 1, only the Wall and components necessary to complete the Wall in order to protect the District should be funded and fully designed/engineered.

No aesthetic adornments, or ancillary improvements other than those required to provide basic, practical flood protection functionality, should be funded or completed until Phase 1 is complete. I would argue that even costly design work on ancillary items

such as plantings, artwork, etc. should be postponed until the Wall has been completed. There may be unforeseen costs that the Wall requires for completion.

*Consulting fees alone on plantings, artwork and other less critical refinements could be substantial. These costs should not be allowed to jeopardize completion of the Wall and components identified for Phase 1. In Fort Point, we have examples in which entire Projects were lost to design and engineering consulting fees, most notably the Congress Street Lighting Project circa 2000, a two-decade long sink-hole of BPDA and consultant funding totaling upwards of \$1 million. **Stakeholders expect the City of Boston to get this job completed within its modest budget to the highest standard necessary to protect inland assets.***

2. Wall Design: While I argue against ancillary “adornments” above, the aesthetics of the Wall are of value to stakeholders given its expected lifespan, and should be considered in Phase 1. Aesthetics includes the finish material (concrete? steel framework?) and finish surface (smooth? textured?) as well as railing materials and design.
3. Railing. While the Wall may vary in height above grade to meet a specific NAVD88 elevation, The railing above the Wall, if any, should be designed and built to be aesthetically pleasing and minimally obtrusive. The railing should extend above the wall no higher above the grade at its respective location than the height of the Gillette Harborwalk railing as it exists today (estimated at 4’ above grade). Railing materials and color should be as good or better than the Gillette Harborwalk railing, as it exists today.

Any additional height or alternative material (security fencing, etc) should be a responsibility of each respective landowner, to be installed inland of the Wall, after completion of the Wall. The Wall must be built to meet a long-term need, not a temporary one.

4. Necco Court: A barrier at Necco Court must be designed and funded **immediately** to meet or exceed flood protection standards of the Wall. The existing crosswalk along Necco Street, at Necco Court, has an elevation that is approximately 6” below the proposed NAVD88 height of the Wall, identifying the Necco Court flood pathway as the first entry point of Fort Point Channel floodwater into the District after the Wall has been completed. The crosswalk must be elevated to a higher standard than exists today.

Furthermore, a longer-term solution for Necco Court must be engineered to meet projected flood levels in decades ahead. I have been requesting that such a design be in place for many years, to no avail.

5. Prohibited Uses: No enclosed (roofed) structures such as a shed or enclosed pavilion should be planned on any remnant spaces envisioned to accompany the Wall. Enclosed structures reduce available, hard-won open space licensed under Chapter 91, and may set a detrimental precedent with respect to the construction of permanent buildings on

public parks. Secondly, BPDA has a troubling history of allowing landowners to not only convert temporary enclosed structures sited on land zoned as park space into semi-permanent buildings (District Hall, originally permitted as temporary), BPDA also has a history of allowing landowners to rezone small pavilions on public parks into significant larger buildings (see history of amendments on Seaport Common, including BPDA approval of a 30,000sf retail building based on earlier approval of a 9,000sf pavilion, later eliminated). The Wall of this project runs along hard-won park space and open space, and should not provide BPDA or landowners with an opening for further marginalization of any type of open space.

6. Unresolved Concerns:

- a) Legal Agreements with Landowners.
- b) Scope of responsibility by City agencies (i.e. ownership, maintenance, deployment)
- c) Additional potential flood pathways into the District, east, north and south of site.
- d) Stormwater flooding, including combined impacts of increased frequency/volume and sea level rise must be considered. Planning of locations for future pump stations, necessary to address an expected “bathtub” effect caused by walling in stormwater unable to drain, must be considered. Backflow prevents on private outflows must be considered. And more.
- e) Emergency plan in the event of project delays due to budget shortfalls.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance with respect to the comments in this letter.
Thanks again for the work.

Regards,
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