

Investing in a Better Massachusetts

Conversations with Frontline Organizations on Connecting Climate and Community Priorities

Over the course of January to March 2021, Climate XChange and Fairmount-Indigo CDC Collaborative engaged in conversations with frontline community leaders across Massachusetts. These discussions sought to understand the challenges they see in their communities, comprehend their long-term vision for solutions, gather their priorities for how investments should be spent, and identify ways to make the benefits of investments accessible to all. The researchers

talked with individuals from organizations working in communities of color and low-income communities, labor unions, women-led organizations, local colleges, and organizations representing communities affected by sea level rise. Below are key recommendations drawn from each section of the report that represent the qualities and values that every investment package moving forward should exhibit. Interviewees stressed that the stakes are too high to repeat the same mistakes again.

INVESTMENTS MUST:

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|  <p>Job Creation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include policies that require local hiring to the maximum extent possible • Include policies that require a greater amount of minority hires • Provide scholarships to two-year colleges for vocational training and certificate programs • Make it easier for small businesses and contracting firms to bid on government contracts, such as by parsing into smaller projects that local businesses can fulfill • Guarantee that minority contractors receive an equitable proportion of contracts |
|  <p>Housing</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster community-municipality-state partnerships to ensure new investments in housing address the needs of the community, rather than just developers • Lower the capital barriers that prevent low-income families and renters from taking advantage of Mass Save and other homeowner services • Prioritize older, dilapidated housing to reduce utility costs and indoor health hazards • Expand financial assistance measures such as rent relief, rent forgiveness, tax credits, and LIHEAP in the short to medium-term • Create new financial programs to increase homeownership access, such as community land trusts and co-ownership programs • Further expand Mass Save and increase the subsidies offered for low-income households to retrofit homes • Leverage a combination of city, state, and federal funding to accelerate the development of new, deeply affordable housing near transportation access |
|  <p>Infrastructure</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand affordable public transportation routes to serve and connect frontline communities to places of work • Install electric vehicle infrastructure throughout the Commonwealth • Address equity concerns by implementing electric vehicle ride share programs in frontline communities • Expand broadband infrastructure to connect communities to quality jobs and education • Expand infrastructure projects that increase demand for quality jobs in frontline communities |
|  <p>Design and Process</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to family care in order to allow all caregivers to benefit from job creation benefits • Make information about accessing the benefits of investments widely available in languages other than English and leverage community organizations to ensure broad and equitable access • Increase ease of access to investments by ensuring that methods for distributing funds are as easy as possible with designated personnel to assist with applications • Increase access to higher education to ensure that all Massachusetts residents have the opportunity to obtain quality careers created through new jobs programs • Expand on programs that are already proven to be effective for frontline communities • Leverage community expertise and trust to create programs that best solve compounding problems in neighborhoods |