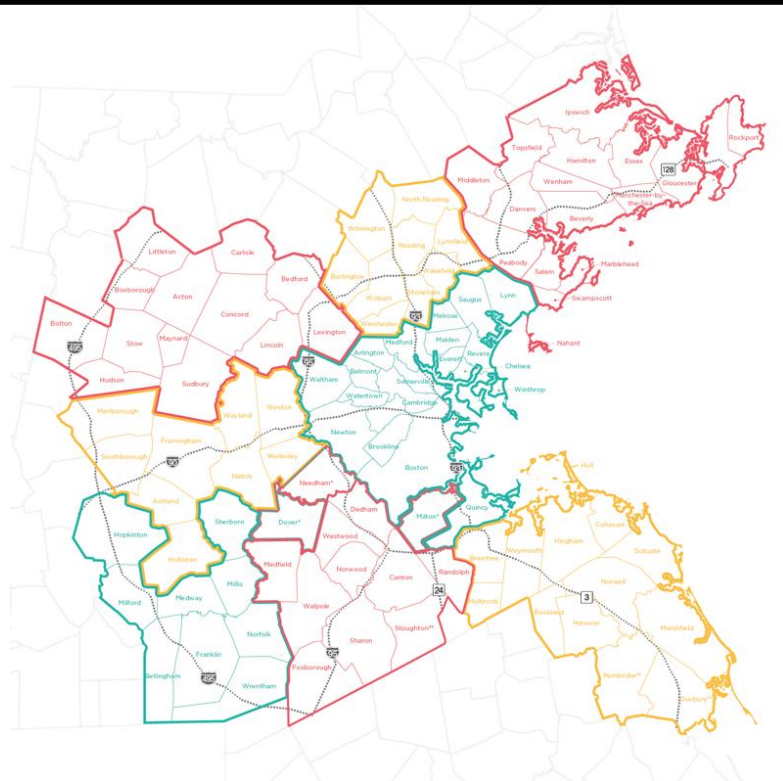


# 2025-2030 Metropolitan Area Planning Council Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Land Parcel Database, FY2022

Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Economic Development Team  
Adopted: June 18, 2025

# 2025-2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

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This initiative has been made possible with generous financial support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), whose investment has been instrumental in advancing regional resilience and economic growth. In parallel, MAPC's Technical Assistance Program (TAP), funded primarily through the Commonwealth's District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program and other state and local sources, continues to support municipalities in implementing projects that align with *MetroCommon 2050* and this CEDS. Together, these resources empower the region to plan collaboratively, address gaps in outcomes, and build a more competitive economy.

### Community Input

The development of the 2025–2030 CEDS would not have been possible without the insights, experiences, and vision shared by residents, business owners, nonprofit leaders, workers, students, and community organizations across Greater Boston.

We are deeply grateful to all who contributed their time, ideas, and lived expertise to ensure that this CEDS reflects the hopes and needs of the different communities it is designed to serve.

## Executive Summary

The **2025–2030 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** charts a bold course for the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) region’s future. Anchored in extensive data analysis, stakeholder input, and regional collaboration, the CEDS addresses the critical economic, housing, infrastructure, fairness, and disaster preparedness challenges facing Greater Boston.

At its core, the CEDS fulfills the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s (EDA) requirement for regions to maintain a dynamic, data-driven roadmap for economic prosperity and resilience. It positions the MAPC region to qualify for federal funding opportunities by demonstrating a clear strategic vision, stakeholder engagement, and actionable steps to strengthen the regional economy. Beyond compliance, the CEDS reflects a shared commitment to sustainable development, economic fairness, hazard preparedness, and innovation — ensuring that Greater Boston is prepared not only to compete but also to thrive in a rapidly changing economic landscape.

The 2025–2030 CEDS prioritizes building an economy where opportunity is accessible to all, closing wealth gaps and strengthening pathways to good jobs through education, training, and childcare support. It focuses on nurturing people and small businesses, encouraging innovation in emerging sectors like life sciences and advanced infrastructure technology, and revitalizing local commercial centers. At the same time, it emphasizes investing in housing, transit, broadband, and disaster-ready infrastructure, while advancing an economy that protects communities most vulnerable to disruption from extreme weather events.

### Strategic Goals and Strategies:

#### **Goal 1: Make the region affordable and accessible for workers and employers.**

##### *Invest in Workforce Development and Remove Challenges to Employment:*

1. Expand access to higher education for incumbent and underemployed workers through subsidized tuition.
2. Expand certificate and credentialing programs aligned with workforce needs and priority industries, including integrated English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction to eliminate language challenges and support multilingual workers in accessing quality employment.
3. Expand coordination of workforce development at state/municipal levels, with a focus on people of different backgrounds and hard-to-serve populations.
4. Increase funding for childcare providers to sustain operations and ensure good pay.

##### *Expand Housing Affordability Near Jobs and Transit, and Strengthen Transportation Access for Workers:*

5. Increase state and local funding for affordable housing production, community land trusts (CLTs), lower total development costs (TDCs), and advance housing initiatives that help to lower energy costs for residents.
6. Expand housing policies to grow the overall supply of affordable housing for homeowners and renters alike.
7. Incentivize high-density housing and expand housing options near transit to support affordability and job accessibility.

8. Support access to housing for family childcare providers through zoning and regulatory reforms.
9. Establish and expand low-income transit fare (T-Fare) rates to reduce transportation costs for workers and improve off-hour transit service reliability.

**Goal 2: Foster the resilience, retention, and growth of businesses owned by people of different backgrounds.**

10. Expand municipal procurement programs to ensure that contracts are fairly awarded across all types of business owners.
11. Facilitate the acquisition of businesses from retiring owners by people of different backgrounds to retain wealth within under-resourced communities.
12. Leverage the Commonwealth's Business Front Door Initiative to expand access to real estate and ownership opportunities. Additionally, deepen collaboration with regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to strengthen pathways between small business development and workforce training systems, particularly for communities that where jobseekers and employers are not aligned.
13. Establish peer-to-peer mentorship programs between established firms and small and emerging firms.

**Goal 3: Invest in infrastructure that is disaster-ready and supports new industries.**

14. Establish a framework to identify high impact infrastructure projects in target locations, with a pipeline of shovel-ready projects for 2027 and beyond. Investing in disaster-ready infrastructure is critical for hazard preparedness.
15. Establish a state-led incentive program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) planning and infrastructure investment, aligned with state growth management policies with the goal of reducing household, transportation, and energy costs.
16. Establish a program to support small and moderate size new businesses to be successful in construction-adjacent industries and unbundle large public works projects into smaller contract opportunities. This will help create a pipeline for workforce development among businesses that have not yet had access to these fields.
17. Provide municipalities with a toolkit of policy recommendations and best practices for project conceptualization and selection, planning, and implementing disaster-ready physical and non-physical infrastructure, focusing on preparedness in economically distressed communities.

**Vision**

*By 2030, Greater Boston will be a thriving, welcoming, and disaster-ready regional economy—where all residents, regardless of background, income, or geography, have access to quality jobs, stable and affordable housing, and opportunities to build wealth and shape their communities. The region will lead not only in innovation, but also in resource efficiency, and shared prosperity.*

## **Call to Action**

Achieving the vision outlined in this CEDS will require commitment, collaboration, and leadership across all sectors.

**We invite municipalities, businesses, institutions, community organizations, and residents across the MAPC region to work together to turn this strategy into reality.**

Whether by building affordable housing, supporting small businesses, making our region disaster-ready, or expanding opportunities for all workers, every partner has a role to play.

Federal support remains important. State, local, and regional actions are critical to leveraging resources that may be available from federal partners.

By aligning our efforts and investing boldly in our future, we can ensure that Greater Boston not only grows — but thrives — for generations to come.

**The work begins now. Let's move forward — together.**

## Introduction

### Purpose of the CEDS

The CEDS for the MAPC region serves as a roadmap for achieving welcoming, dynamic, disaster-ready, and sustained economic growth across Greater Boston. It is designed to align local, regional, and federal resources around a shared vision for economic prosperity. As required by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), a CEDS ensures that regions are eligible for critical federal funding, including EDA grants for infrastructure, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Beyond compliance, this document provides a collaborative framework for guiding investments in housing, transportation, workforce development, disaster preparedness, advanced infrastructure technology and other emerging industries, and small business growth.

The 2025–2030 CEDS builds upon MAPC’s prior regional plans, including *MetroCommon 2050* and the agency’s Strategic Plan, both of which emphasize resource efficiency, affordability, health, and resilience.<sup>2</sup> This CEDS includes a broad set of flexible strategies and sub-strategies so that we can meet the moment when funding and policy opportunities arise.

### Development of the CEDS

The development of this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was led by MAPC’s Economic Development Division, with strategic direction and feedback from a regional **CEDS Advisory Committee** composed of cross-sector leaders representing the economic, civic, and municipal fabric of the MAPC region.

The Committee includes:

- **Municipal planning and economic development officials** from urban and suburban communities, who provided on-the-ground insights into local development trends, infrastructure needs, and policy implementation challenges.
- **Workforce development experts and labor representatives** with experience in employment pipelines, energy and healthcare workforce training, and organized labor. Their perspectives ensured that labor market dynamics and job and worker mobility were embedded in strategy discussions.
- **Business and economic policy leaders** representing statewide and regional business networks, including small business organizations. These members helped ensure that strategies addressed commercial displacement, capital access, and long-term business resilience.
- **Nonprofit and philanthropic professionals** working on affordable economic development, community-based outcomes, and accessible grantmaking, who contributed expertise on place-based strategies, social impact investment, and local leadership development.
- **Cultural leaders** focused on affordable housing outcomes, changing demographics, and arts and culture ecosystems. They emphasized the importance of protecting community assets and uplifting community voices.
- **State economic development and strategy officials** responsible for aligning regional planning efforts with broader Commonwealth priorities, funding mechanisms, and interagency coordination.



This mix of cross-disciplinary experts ensured that the strategy was informed by a broad set of economic development priorities and organizational knowledge. The breadth and depth of expertise represented on the Advisory Committee provided a robust foundation to surface regionally grounded, data-informed priorities and to elevate community concerns. Their perspectives cut across housing, workforce, transportation, and preparedness considerations.

The process included:

- A series of virtual and in-person workshops to gather feedback from our multi-sector CEDS Advisory Committee throughout 2024 and 2025.
- Sectoral and geographic analyses using regional economic datasets and community profiles.
- Data analysis to understand and identify key trends and characteristics of the region, including evidence-based data from the years after the COVID-19 pandemic. The data showed that people living in the post-pandemic era continue to struggle with affordability and economic resiliency. Persistent income and employment disparities, a lack of a full recovery in the small business sector, and some of the country's highest costs of living were deliberated by the Committee.
- Post-Advisory Committee meeting surveys with targeted queries to identify core themes, refine priorities, and lift the most promising strategies.
- Consultations with state and federal partners to ensure alignment with larger-scale initiatives and funding streams.
- A public comment period with targeted outreach to reach low-visibility voices.

### Regional Context

The MAPC region encompasses 101 cities and towns in Greater Boston, home to nearly half the Commonwealth's population and the majority of its economic activity. The area is globally recognized for its life sciences and tech innovation, but it also faces critical challenges: high housing costs, disparities in intergenerational wealth, infrastructure risks, and a labor force constrained by demographic shifts and skill mismatches.<sup>3</sup>

The economic geography of the MAPC region is defined by a dense urban core surrounded by suburban and exurban communities. While economic output and productivity remain high, unequal access to opportunity persists. The CEDS prioritizes strategies that address these local and regional challenges.

### The Region's Affordable Housing Imperative

MAPC acknowledges that housing affordability and availability are at a crisis point across the region and the Commonwealth. The rising cost of living, coupled with housing shortages, directly impacts workforce development, business retention, and economic resilience. We must make housing more affordable for residents in our region. MAPC and its partners are actively advancing a suite of strategic initiatives to tackle the region's housing crisis—efforts that span planning, policy, and cross-sector collaboration. These efforts are rooted in *MetroCommon 2050* and reaffirmed in the MAPC Strategic Plan 2025–2030, which calls for sustainable development that centers **affordable housing, job access, and mobility** as pillars of regional prosperity.<sup>4</sup>

Building on this agency-wide momentum, the MAPC Economic Development Team (EDT), and particularly this CEDS, contributes a distinct lens: one that integrates the economic stakes of housing into planning for a strong economic future. EDT's role in this effort includes:

- **Tracking housing's impact on economic development**, including how small business closures and workforce shortages are impacted by the high cost of housing and commercial rent pressures.
- **Advocating for business resilience** in housing-focused strategies, including tools like mixed-use zoning, commercial land trusts, and small business rental stabilization programs.
- **Informing workforce retention** by aligning economic development initiatives with housing security for workers in priority industries.
- **Advancing multidisciplinary long-range plans**, especially with the MAPC Housing Team, to promote strategies that mutually benefit businesses and residents.

MAPC hopes to see the adoption of a state-level housing policy that supports the region's workers and economic prosperity. In 2024, the legislature passed the Affordable Homes Act, which helped relieve some affordability pressure for tenants and homeowners alike.<sup>5</sup> MAPC continues to support housing policy reforms that will ensure Massachusetts remains viable for workers and attractive to employers, now and into the future. MAPC collaborates with multiple organizations to advance housing production and affordability goals across the region. MAPC's public, private, and non-profit partners, work together to ensure that economic development planning reinforces the region's efforts to build housing that is affordable for residents across our region.

#### **Metro Mayors Coalition Housing Task Force**

MAPC convenes the Metro Mayors Coalition, which established a Housing Task Force in 2017. The Task Force committed to working together to combat the housing challenges experienced by the seventeen member communities. The Task Force adopted a housing production goal to create 185,000 new housing units by 2030. To date, over 70,000 new homes have been permitted.

MAPC's Housing Team facilitates regular meetings of the Housing Task Force, tracks annual permit data, and provides technical assistance to member cities and towns, through housing projects at the regional and local scale.

For more information about the MMC Housing Task Force, visit <https://housingtaskforce.mapc.org/>.

## **Challenges Shaping the Regional Economy**

### **Demographic and Labor Force Trends**

The Greater Boston (MAPC) region has experienced modest population growth and increasing demographic differences in recent years. Massachusetts' total population grew from about 7.0 million in 2020 to 7.14 million in 2024, the largest annual growth in decades.<sup>6</sup> The MAPC region remains majority white (71%), but residents from diverse backgrounds account for nearly 30% of the population.<sup>7</sup> An aging population is reshaping the labor force: the share of residents over 65 is projected to double from around 11% in 1970 to 22% by 2030, while the under-20 population has declined from 37% to ~22% over the same period.<sup>8</sup> This shift, coupled with the large Baby Boomer cohort reaching retirement, has led to a shrinking labor force despite population gains.

Massachusetts' labor force participation rate remains around the mid-60% range, but the state shed roughly 130,000 workers from 2019–2022 due to retirements and early exits, exacerbated by the pandemic.<sup>9</sup> Prime working-age participation (ages 25–54) remains relatively high (over 75%),<sup>10</sup> yet the influx of retirees is expected to slow future labor force growth. The region's workforce is also highly educated – over 50% of adults hold a bachelor's degree or higher in many inner-core communities – which supports innovation but presents challenges in recruiting workers for trades and vocational occupations.

### **Employment and Unemployment**

After the workforce upheavals of the COVID-19 pandemic, the regional job market has rebounded strongly. Unemployment in Massachusetts fell to historic lows in late 2022 and 2023 – the statewide rate was just 3.2% in December 2023.<sup>11</sup> Metro Boston's unemployment has similarly hovered around 3–4% through 2024, below the U.S. average, indicating a return to near full employment. Total employment in the state reached about 3.7 million in early 2023, surpassing pre-pandemic highs.

Job growth has been led by health care, biotech, and professional services sectors, which have more than recovered jobs lost in 2020. By contrast, hospitality and retail have seen slower recovery but were nearing pre-pandemic levels by 2024. Notably, labor force growth has lagged job creation – a trend evident in the ratio of job openings to job seekers. By late 2024, Massachusetts had approximately 198,000 job openings,<sup>12</sup> with only about 0.8 unemployed persons per opening,<sup>13</sup> indicating a tight labor market across industries.

However, the recovery is tempered by macro-level threats, particularly ongoing inflation, and a reduction in discretionary funding. Small businesses and nonprofit organizations have reported strain from inflationary pressure, especially rising costs for utilities, insurance, and basic supplies. These rising costs are outpacing wage gains for many workers, eroding real earnings and contributing to household instability. At the same time, the expiration of several pandemic-era federal supports—such as ARPA funds, enhanced unemployment benefits, and direct grants to municipalities—has left significant fiscal gaps. These trends risk stifling public investment in workforce development, infrastructure, and small business supports at a time when many communities are still recovering.

### **Workforce Skill Gaps**

Despite high educational attainment in the region, employers consistently cite skill gaps across multiple sectors. The rapid expansion of the tech and life sciences industries has created strong demand for workers with advanced STEM skills and real-world experience. Hiring remains especially difficult for roles such as data analysts, engineers, and software developers. Meanwhile, middle-skill occupations in health care (e.g., lab technicians, medical assistants) and construction trades are also chronically underfilled.

Massachusetts is projected to face a shortfall of thousands of nurses and home health aides by the end of the decade due to demographic shifts and rising demand.<sup>14</sup> As recently as early 2025, the number of job openings in healthcare support and mechanical trades exceeded the number of job seekers by a ratio of around two or three to one. Employers also cite persistent gaps in soft skills—such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability—among job candidates.

These trends underscore the need for robust workforce development programs to train and retain local talent. Expanding training in high-demand sectors (like energy savings technology, information technology (including cybersecurity and advanced manufacturing) and providing supportive services

(e.g., affordable childcare, retraining for older workers) can help fill jobs and improve access to well-paying careers.

### **Income, Opportunity, and Economic Disparities**

Economic growth in the MAPC region has not translated into broadly shared prosperity and we see wide disparities in incomes, as shown by the Gini index, an international measure of income. The regional Gini index stands around 0.49, higher than the national average of 0.48.<sup>15</sup> And in Boston alone, the index exceeds 0.54—among the highest for any major U.S. city.<sup>16</sup> Wealthier suburbs and enclaves show wide disparities alongside working-class municipalities that, while more equal internally, have lower overall incomes.

In Metro Boston, significant household income disparities persist, with some demographic groups earning nearly twice as much as others. A significant disparity in generational wealth—rooted in historic gaps in outcomes in education, homeownership, and employment—continues to shape economic outcomes. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, median household net worth in Greater Boston varies dramatically, with some groups reporting over \$240,000 in assets while others report median net worths as low as \$0 to \$8. These disparities underscore long-standing embedded challenges to asset building and intergenerational wealth transfer.<sup>17</sup>

### **Growth Capital and Resource Gaps Encountered by Small Business**

Despite public, private, and nonprofit efforts to support small business development, a persistent and widening capital access gap continues to limit growth opportunities across the MAPC region. Small businesses face embedded challenges to securing the financing needed for survival and growth.

Many entrepreneurs rely heavily on personal credit or family loans, often overextending themselves financially and becoming vulnerable to predatory lending. Nationally, businesses owned by underrepresented individuals also start with significantly less capital and receive less than 2% of all venture capital funding, which exacerbates demographic characteristics-based economic disparities.<sup>18</sup>

These funding gaps are exacerbated by operational challenges that cut across the entire small business sector. A recent statewide survey found that 91% of small businesses in Massachusetts reported increased operational costs, with 76% noting that those costs are rising faster than revenues. Despite steady or increased sales, nearly half of all businesses reported reduced profitability. Cost burdens such as electricity, payroll taxes, and health insurance have pushed many to the brink: 51% of surveyed owners indicated they were likely to sell or close their businesses within five years.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to capital constraints, small businesses often struggle with misaligned or inaccessible support programs, including:

- Rigid eligibility requirements that exclude sole proprietors and microenterprises.
- Insufficient outreach.
- Programmatic funding caps are too small to fully cover key business expenses—such as relocation or build-out costs—and often explicitly exclude occupancy expenses like rent.
- A lack of coordinated wraparound support (e.g., legal aid, financial planning, or succession guidance).

Addressing these issues will require region-wide collaboration to expand access to flexible, low-barrier capital and better integrated technical assistance with funding delivery. Several networks and

coalitions of community development financial institutions, nonprofit institutions, and lenders with the expertise in small business financing exist in Massachusetts. Without shifts in lending practices and public policies to better support them, the region risks a hollowing-out of its small business base.

### **Housing Affordability and Development**

As noted above, housing affordability is one of the most pressing economic issues facing the MAPC region. Greater Boston ranks among the nation's most expensive markets. As of 2024, the median home listing price in Massachusetts was approximately \$782,000, compared to a median household income of \$96,500.<sup>20</sup> Yet, only about 23% of households in Massachusetts earn that amount or more, underscoring the widening affordability gap.<sup>21</sup> In early 2024, 35 Greater Boston municipalities had median single-family home prices exceeding \$1 million.<sup>22</sup> Rents have also risen dramatically, with the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment reaching approximately \$2,600. More than half of renter households are now considered cost burdened.

Over the past decade, housing production has significantly lagged behind population and job growth. Metro Boston is estimated to have underproduced housing by tens of thousands of units.<sup>23</sup>

### **Transportation Access and Burden**

Transportation costs and access gaps remain substantial challenges. A 2024 survey found that 57% of Massachusetts residents view their transportation costs as a financial burden, and 71% feel the same about housing.<sup>24</sup> Low-income households are disproportionately affected, spending a higher share of income on commuting. Commute times in Metro Boston average 31 minutes—among the longest in the U.S.—and are significantly longer for those in Gateway Cities or suburbs. Ongoing MBTA service disruptions and slow zones undermine transit reliability and limit workforce access. Environmental burdens from transportation, including air and noise pollution, also disproportionately affect lower-income neighborhoods located near major roadways.

### **Weather Vulnerability and Infrastructure Resilience**

Massachusetts' 2023 *State Hazard Mitigation Plan* identified intensifying weather risks across the region—including coastal and inland flooding, extreme heat, and severe storms.<sup>25</sup> The Boston area is projected to experience 23–29 days annually over 90° F by 2050. Sea levels in Boston Harbor have already risen approximately one foot since 1920 and could rise an additional 2.5 feet by mid-century.<sup>26</sup> Recent flooding events have underscored the need for urgent investment in stormwater infrastructure, public transit resilience, and emergency preparedness.

## **Regional Economic Analysis**

A clear understanding of the region's economic conditions underpins the MAPC 2025–2030 CEDS goals and strategies. This section examines recent MAPC research (primarily from 2022–2025) across demographics, workforce, key industries, housing, fairness, and disaster preparedness. It highlights strengths to build on and challenges to address.

### **Demographic and Workforce Trends**

#### **Population and Labor Force**

Greater Boston, home to roughly 3.4 million people (nearly half of the state's total population), remains the Commonwealth's economic engine. However, population growth has slowed in recent years. Massachusetts experienced net domestic out-migration, particularly during the pandemic, with

younger residents and families leaving due to housing costs and remote work flexibility. The population stabilized in 2023 with slight gains due to rebounding international immigration and declining pandemic-era disruptions.<sup>27</sup>

Low birth rates and an aging population are long-term structural challenges. Massachusetts has one of the highest median ages nationally, and many industries are seeing accelerated retirements. According to the *Greater Boston Regional Blueprint*, the labor force participation rate remains below pre-pandemic levels for key populations such as mothers with young children and older adults, pointing to persistent structural gaps.<sup>28</sup> These trends validate the CEDS strategies that focus on workforce readiness, supportive services, and labor force expansion.

### **Employment and Unemployment**

As of early 2025, unemployment in the region sits between 4.0% and 4.5%, comparable to state and national averages.<sup>29</sup> This marks a dramatic recovery from the 16% unemployment peak in 2020, one of the nation's highest during the COVID-19 recession.<sup>30</sup> While high-wage sectors like professional and technical services rebounded rapidly, service-sector jobs such as retail and hospitality only regained 2019 levels by late 2022.

A tight labor market remains a hallmark of the current economic reality. As of 2024, over 200,000 job openings are posted monthly across the state, consistently outpacing the number of job seekers.<sup>31</sup> This imbalance is both an opportunity and a constraint: businesses struggle to fill positions, especially in skilled trades, healthcare, biotech, and advanced manufacturing, while workers face access challenges to training, housing, and childcare.<sup>32</sup>

### **Workforce Skill Gaps**

The mismatch between available jobs and available skills is a top concern for employers across industries. Shortages are acute for software engineers, biotech lab technicians, registered nurses, and modern energy sector technicians. The region's colleges and training programs have not fully met industry demand, and geographic mismatches further complicate access: many job hubs are in the inner core, while housing affordability pushes residents to outlying areas.<sup>33</sup> Boston's high cost of living also deters talent retention: younger workers often leave after college, and even high-paying sectors report difficulty recruiting from out-of-state.<sup>34</sup>

### **Income Distribution**

The MAPC region includes some of the wealthiest municipalities in Massachusetts, but the distribution of income within these communities varies widely. As noted above, one way to assess this variation is through the Gini Coefficient, a statistical measure that reflects income access. A value of 0 indicates perfect parity (everyone earns the same income), while a value of 1 indicates complete disparity (one person earns all the income).

Gini scores above 0.45 are typically considered high. According to data from the 2014–2018 American Community Survey, several MAPC municipalities exceed this threshold, indicating substantial income disparities.<sup>35</sup>

The region's income disparity is among the highest in the U.S. Massachusetts has a Gini coefficient of 0.4877, slightly higher than the national average of 0.4827. Suffolk County's Gini coefficient stands at 0.5266, indicating significantly higher income disparities compared to the rest of the state.<sup>36</sup> The Gini Coefficient, as explained in an Advisory Committee briefing memo, offers a standardized method of understanding income disparity by assessing whether income is concentrated among a few or more



broadly distributed.<sup>37</sup> Below are the ten MAPC municipalities with the highest Gini scores, alongside comparisons to familiar cities and countries to provide context:

MAPC Municipality	Gini Coefficient	Comparable Area
<b>Boston</b>	0.5437	Comparable to New Orleans, LA <sup>38</sup>
<b>Weston</b>	0.5385	Comparable to Washington, DC <sup>39</sup>
<b>Cohasset</b>	0.5307	Similar to Colombia (national level) <sup>40</sup>
<b>Brookline</b>	0.5156	Comparable to Atlanta, GA <sup>41</sup>
<b>Hingham</b>	0.5154	Similar to Chicago, IL <sup>42</sup>
<b>Marblehead</b>	0.5116	Comparable to New York City <sup>43</sup>
<b>Wenham</b>	0.5110	Comparable to Panama <sup>44</sup>
<b>Cambridge</b>	0.5039	Similar to Philadelphia, PA <sup>45</sup>
<b>Wellesley</b>	0.5010	Comparable to Miami, FL <sup>46</sup>
<b>Lincoln</b>	0.4953	Near Boston Metro average <sup>47</sup>

These Gini scores exceed not only the Massachusetts state average but also that of the United States as a whole, which was approximately 0.4827 during this period.<sup>48</sup> For global comparison, countries such as Canada and Denmark — often cited for more fair income distributions — report Gini scores closer to 0.32 and 0.28, respectively.<sup>49</sup>

In municipalities such as Weston and Brookline, access to resources—such as municipal services, public education, and infrastructure— is often driven by the coexistence of extremely high-income households and others with more modest means, such as renters, graduate students, or service workers. In Boston and Cambridge, the pattern is shaped by broader urban dynamics — concentrations of wealth in some neighborhoods are located near areas experiencing high poverty and housing instability.<sup>50;51</sup>

Municipalities with high Gini scores tend to experience more acute housing stress, strained local services, and social fragmentation. Households with lower incomes may face higher risks of displacement, transportation challenges leading to high commuting costs and limited access to job centers, and lower financial resilience — dynamics that constrain economic growth.

The 2025–2030 CEDS incorporates these findings into its core strategies, including those that expand access to affordable housing near job centers and affordable transit (Strategies 5–7), support the childcare and workforce infrastructure needed for greater labor force participation (Goal 1, Strategies 1–4), and nurture businesses owned by people of different backgrounds to improve small business resilience (Goal 2, Strategies 10–13 and Goal 3, Strategies).

## Strategic Direction

### Strategic Direction

Building on the insights from the Regional Economic Analysis, the Strategic Direction begins to answer the core questions: *Where do we want to go?* and *How will we get there?* This section introduces a vision statement that articulates the region's long-term aspirations, followed by a set of goals and objectives that respond directly to identified challenges and opportunities. Each goal is supported by targeted strategies, aligned with the vision, and grounded in evidence to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

#### Vision Statement:

Greater Boston's economy in 2030 is thriving, welcoming, and sustainable. Our region's prosperity is shared broadly: all residents have opportunities to work in quality jobs, build wealth, and live in healthy communities. We have deliberately removed challenges that held families back resulting in a fairer economy. At the same time, the region has fostered innovation and competitiveness, maintaining its leadership in key industries while cultivating new enterprises from local talent.

We envision lively downtowns and commercial districts across the region, strengthened by creative placemaking and thriving small businesses. Housing is more affordable and abundant, allowing workers to live close to jobs. An expanded, efficient transit network and safe biking/walking options connect our cities and towns, reducing commute times and increasing safety. Our communities and infrastructure are prepared for weather-related impacts, ensuring the economy can withstand storms, floods, and other shocks.

Underpinning this vision is a spirit of regional collaboration and civic innovation: public, private, and nonprofit partners work together across municipal boundaries to solve problems. Guided by *MetroCommon 2050's* values, we aspire to a Greater Boston that is welcoming and prosperous for all, with a high quality of life and opportunity in every community.

#### Goals of the 2025–2030 CEDS

The 2025–2030 CEDS is anchored by three overarching goals. These goals are derived from extensive stakeholder engagement, data analysis, and regional trends discussed throughout the CEDS development process. Each goal reflects the region's commitment to shared prosperity, long-term resilience, and strategic coordination across sectors. Together, they define the economic vision for Greater Boston over the next five years and guide targeted interventions and investments.

#### **Goal 1: Make the region affordable and accessible for workers and employers.**

This goal responds to the interrelated challenges of housing unaffordability, unreliable or costly transportation, and workforce shortages. Without immediate action, Greater Boston risks pricing out its workforce and diminishing its economic competitiveness. Workers, particularly in lower- and moderate-wage sectors, face increasing difficulty living near job centers, and employers struggle to recruit and retain talent in a high-cost region.

A competitive regional economy must enable all residents to access living-wage jobs, quality housing, and efficient transportation. The CEDS reinforces this goal by elevating housing production and affordability, expanding access to job training and childcare, and supporting more accessible transportation options.<sup>52</sup>



While housing must remain a priority, we must also recognize that without thriving small businesses and stable employment opportunities, communities will continue to face economic challenges even if housing is addressed. Through the strategies outlined at Goal 2 below, the MAPC EDT will help to prevent business displacement, support businesses owned by people of different backgrounds, and ensure that economic resilience remains central to regional growth.

**Goal 2: Foster the resilience, retention, and growth of businesses owned by people of different backgrounds.**

Across Greater Boston, wealth disparities between households of different demographic characteristics remain stark. Business ownership is a proven pathway to building wealth, yet some entrepreneurs face challenges in accessing capital, contracts, and real estate. Addressing these disparities is an economic necessity — ensuring the region benefits from the creativity, innovation, and resilience of all its communities.

This goal builds on MAPC's commitments and the findings from stakeholder interviews and small business engagement efforts. It promotes business development strategies that retain legacy businesses, support creative economy entrepreneurs, and close differences in outcomes by demographic characteristics in business ownership, expansion, and succession planning.<sup>53</sup>

**Goal 3: Invest in infrastructure that is disaster-ready and supports new industries.**

The threats posed by extreme weather events — including flooding, extreme heat, and energy grid disruptions — require proactive investment in disaster-ready infrastructure that protects against disruptions to businesses and livelihoods. At the same time, new industries focused on energy affordability and advanced manufacturing are emerging across the Commonwealth, creating opportunities for sustainable economic growth. Aligning infrastructure investments with preparedness goals and industry readiness is essential for long-term regional stability and competitiveness.

This goal calls for building a pipeline of shovel-ready projects; modernizing regional infrastructure to support development; and preparing our workforce and businesses to participate in the infrastructure and innovation sectors. It reinforces MAPC's role in advancing cross-sector resilience and fair economic transformation.<sup>54</sup> Emerging initiatives focused on accelerating natural infrastructure and regional strategies for Massachusetts' coastal communities align closely with this goal and may offer valuable models and resources for implementation statewide.<sup>55</sup>

**Guiding Principles**

The development and implementation of the CEDS are grounded in core principles that reflect regional values and aspirations. These principles include advancing demographic and economic fairness; supporting hazard preparedness, infrastructure risk reduction and resource efficiency; supporting innovation, entrepreneurship, and local ownership; encouraging housing affordability; and encouraging, multimodal transportation networks that reduce pollution and improve access to opportunity.

**Alignment with Federal and State Priorities**

The CEDS is aligned with the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) investment priorities, including innovation, recovery and resilience, workforce development, manufacturing, and sustainable development. It also supports the goals outlined in the Commonwealth's economic development framework. The CEDS also integrates policy objectives articulated in several state-level hazard preparedness and emerging industries programs.<sup>56</sup>

## Strategy Screening Criteria

To ensure that each strategy proposed under the CEDS is actionable, impactful, and aligned with regional priorities, we apply a structured evaluation process using six criteria. These criteria guide both internal review and stakeholder input, helping to assess how well a strategy fits within MAPC's role, capacity, and the broader economic development ecosystem.

Criteria	Description	Items Considered
<b>1. Alignment with CEDS Goals</b>	Ensure the strategy directly supports at least one of the CEDS goals.	<i>Extent to which strategy clearly advances one of the three CEDS goals.</i>
<b>2. Specificity</b>	Define clear, focused objectives with identified actions and target populations. Strategies should articulate measurable economic development impacts and align with industry best practices, and explicitly define the economic development interventions, specifying what will be done, by whom, and for whom.	<i>The strategy is specific about what will be done, who will do it, and who will benefit. It advances job creation, business growth, investment attraction, workforce development, or infrastructure improvement outcomes. Does the strategy clearly outline the role of economic development professionals, agencies, or partnerships in implementation?</i>
<b>3. Achievability (MAPC or Ecosystem Capacity)</b>	Ensure the strategy is realistic, within MAPC's scope, and connects to EDA's priorities. Ensure no more than 25% of strategies are broad or visionary, with the rest being actionable by MAPC. Include plans for engaging relevant stakeholders, including municipalities, businesses, and residents.	<i>Extent to which required resources, partnerships, and key stakeholders exist who have the capacity to advance the strategy. Do they need us? Have they already been enacted? If we are to lead on it, have we identified and are key stakeholders apparent? Do we have the capacity needed to implement this strategy?</i>
<b>4. Relevance to Regional Needs</b>	Address specific regional priorities like economic resilience, economic growth, disaster preparedness, infrastructure risk reduction, etc.	<i>The strategy addresses a pressing need in the region, and advances firms, governmental entities, and ecosystem actors' ability to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from, shocks, disruptions, or stressors, particularly, as it regards jobs created and/or retained.</i>
<b>5. Innovation and Adaptability</b>	Encourage creative, forward-thinking solutions while remaining flexible to adjust as needed.	<i>The strategy provides disaster-ready approaches to weather conditions or responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.</i>
<b>6. Risk Assessment</b>	Identify potential risks or challenges to success and mitigation strategies.	<i>The potential risks can be mitigated with currently available resources or resources that can readily be accessed.</i>

## Strategies and Action Plan

### Strategies

The MAPC 2025–2030 CEDS outlines **seventeen targeted strategies** designed to move the region toward a stronger, more disaster-ready, and fair economy. Each strategy responds to a clearly identified challenge or opportunity, using supporting evidence from economic trends, best practices, policy innovations, and stakeholder feedback gathered throughout the CEDS planning process.

Together, the strategies reflect an integrated approach that prioritizes action across three pillars of regional development:

- **Expanding workforce participation and accessibility to housing and transportation.** Strategies focus on increasing access to education and training, improving childcare infrastructure, advancing affordable housing near transit, and reducing transportation cost burdens. The strategies will keep the region competitive for the region's different employers and industries by reversing housing and transit trends that price out and lead to longer and more costly daily commutes for an increasing number of workers and households. Facilitate economic growth by strengthening workforce development to ensure a skilled and ready workforce. Critical industries will be able to grow when everyone in the region is prepared and able to access living wage jobs in growing sectors, get around the region, afford safe and quality housing, and obtain goods and services close to their homes.
- **Advancing the growth and retention of small businesses.** Strategies target the public sector procurement, real estate, and geographic challenges that limit the success of low-visibility entrepreneurs, and pilot business-to-business mentorship. They foster the resilience, retention, and growth of small businesses, especially those owned by people of different backgrounds, legacy businesses, and creative economy entrepreneurs to reduce wealth disparities.
- **Building disaster-ready infrastructure and supporting emerging industries.** Strategies address the urgent need to modernize physical infrastructure, invest in strong infrastructure, and ensure that new economic opportunities are accessible to all residents. They emphasize project pipelines, tech, small business, workforce development, and strategic public infrastructure investment.

Each strategy is supported by research findings, case studies, and pilot programs demonstrating the effectiveness of these approaches in Massachusetts and nationally. The combined impact of these strategies is intended to align public and private resources toward building a more dynamic and sustainable economic future for the MAPC region.

### *Goal 1: Workforce, Housing, and Transportation Accessibility*

#### **Invest in Workforce Development and Remove Challenges to Employment.**

Massachusetts faces a tight labor market and skills shortage, with about 2.4 job openings per unemployed person in 2023 – up from 1.5 in 2019 – indicating a growing labor shortage as many workers have left the labor force.<sup>57</sup> The state has experienced its highest net domestic out-migration in 30 years (especially among young adults), contributing to 150,000 more job openings than unemployed people by late 2022.<sup>58</sup>

Example worker preparedness strategies exist, though more are needed. Massachusetts's 10-year, \$1 billion Life Sciences Initiative devoted \$250 million to workforce programs and R&D, which helped

create a pipeline of skilled workers and drove growth in the biotech sector is an example of a strategy that is currently underway and working.<sup>59</sup>

**Strategy 1: Expand access to higher education for incumbent and underemployed workers.** Massachusetts continues to grapple with a labor shortage and a mismatch between workforce skills and employer needs—challenges that limit both economic mobility and business growth. Expanding access to higher education, particularly for *incumbent workers* already employed in lower-compensated roles within priority industries, is a key lever to address this gap.

The strategy seeks to ensure that MassReconnect and MassEducate, the Commonwealth's programs making community college tuition-free for eligible students, are accessible and useful for individuals who are working but at the starting rungs of the career ladder in their chosen field. Subsidized tuition and tuition free programs for the lowest paid workers already within jobs in their field of interest (sometimes referred to as incumbent workers) help make higher education accessible to those who desire to advance to higher paid jobs in that sector, increasing their economic security. Examples include individuals employed as certified nurse assistants desiring to advance to other health care roles, and early educators employed as assistant teachers who want to advance to childcare center lead teacher positions.<sup>60</sup>

**Strategy 2: Expand certificate and credentialing programs aligned with workforce needs and priority industries, including integrated English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) instruction to eliminate language challenges and support multilingual workers in accessing quality employment.** This strategy emphasizes the expansion of short-term certificate and credentialing programs designed to support both career transitions and advancement for incumbent workers. These programs—offered through community colleges, vocational schools, and technical institutions—should align with the Greater Boston Regional Workforce Blueprint, which identifies priority sectors such as healthcare, life sciences, information technology (IT) - including the cybersecurity cluster within the industry, and advanced manufacturing.

Together with a focus on entry-level training, this strategy includes support for credentialing pathways that allow lower-income workers already employed in these industries to gain skills and qualify for higher-wage roles. The strategy calls for integration of paid on-the-job training and employer partnerships that ensure program relevance and job placement. Furthermore, it supports the development of state-level certification pathways for individuals with international training and experience that often goes unrecognized. By reducing financial and embedded challenges, this strategy seeks to create a more agile workforce development system that responds to real-time labor demands.<sup>61</sup>

Programs should incorporate integrated ESOL models that combine workforce training with language development, enabling limited-English-proficient adults to obtain industry-recognized credentials and succeed in the labor market. Research shows that integrated education and training (IET) models—like those supported by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's ESOL Career Pathways programs—are particularly effective in improving employment outcomes for immigrant learners.<sup>62</sup>

**Strategy 3: Expand coordination of workforce development at state/municipal levels, with a focus on people of different backgrounds and hard-to-serve populations.** Massachusetts continues to face stark disparities in employment and job access, which limit economic mobility across the region. To address these gaps, this strategy calls for expanded coordination among state agencies, municipal governments, workforce boards, and training institutions to ensure that everyone can be served by

these programs. Improving alignment across these entities is essential to build workforce systems that respond to real-time employer needs and regional economic priorities.

The strategy explicitly integrates job development alongside workforce coordination. Workforce development initiatives should include increased employer engagement, integrated with training programs, to expand participant access to job opportunities, identify job openings, and embed wraparound supports such as childcare and transportation that help job seekers succeed. Partnerships with Workforce Investment Boards are essential to aligning skills training with available and high-quality job opportunities. It is important to begin job readiness efforts earlier—particularly through K–12 exposure and pipeline programs—while also ensuring that jobs accessed are not only available, but sustainable, offering adequate wages, benefits, and long-term advancement.

Research on Per Scholas, a national employment program for the information technology sector with a satellite operating in Metro Boston, revealed that its graduates benefited from an average of \$6,000 per year in an annual earnings differential compared with their peers. Per Scholas and other exemplars show that workforce development programs that couple a well-thought-out training curriculum with assistance in placing participants in target-sector jobs and other supports experience positive outcomes. The MDRC research brief showed Per Scholas, and similar programs had sustained earnings gains by completers over multiple years.<sup>63</sup> (See also [WorkAdvance | MDRC](#)<sup>64</sup>)

While similar efforts are already underway through community colleges and state initiatives, this strategy includes increased coordination to fill programmatic gaps and advance policy innovations including new and reformed funding structures, which often exclude key supports. The strategy therefore calls for state and local policy reforms and public-private partnerships that expand the scope and reach of wraparound services. Taken together, these efforts seek to create a more responsive workforce development system across the MAPC region.<sup>65,66</sup>

**Strategy 4: Increase funding for childcare providers to sustain operations and ensure good pay.** The strategy includes strengthening and retaining features of the Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grants to provide funding for childcare providers that both sustain operations and ensure good pay for early educators. According to the MA Department of Early Education and Care's (EEC) 2023 survey, about one-third of respondents from center-based programs reported being unable to serve their full license capacity. The most common reason cited was educator turnover. In 2023, teacher and assistant teacher openings comprised 81% of all childcare center openings statewide; 46% of all childcare programs reported at least one vacant position, averaging 3.4 openings per center. Policy advancement discussions will include partner organizations, program facilitators and participants, as well as elected leaders as we look to better sustain childcare infrastructure within the Commonwealth through improved teacher training, retention, and opportunities for advancement.

Over the past 3 years, MAPC and its partners facilitated the Good Jobs Metro Boston Childcare Sectoral Partnership that has prepared and placed 850 new and upskilled current educators to meet the recruitment, compensation, education, and retention needs of the region's childcare workforce. These efforts were facilitated through a competitive Good Jobs Challenge grant awarded by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to the Metro Boston region. The UMass Donahue Institute's 2024 analysis on childcare and economic development found that increased state funding and stabilization grants helped maintain childcare capacity, but future investments are needed to ensure provider wage fairness.<sup>67</sup>



***Expand Affordable Housing Options Near Job Centers and Transit.***

A lack of affordable housing near employment hubs and transit limits access to jobs. In a 2024 Massachusetts poll, 71% of residents said their monthly housing costs are a burden, and 57% said the same of transportation costs.<sup>68</sup> Transportation and housing were described as “combined, intersecting crises” impacting quality of life. One key solution is transit-oriented development (TOD) – building housing in walkable areas with reliable public transportation. The poll found broad public support for this approach: over two-thirds of residents support building mixed-use, transit-oriented developments to ease housing and commuting burdens.<sup>69</sup>

Metro Boston’s regional plan - *MetroCommon 2050* likewise envisions that new housing be built primarily in walkable neighborhoods with easy access to goods, services, public transportation, and daily amenities, so that residents of all incomes can live near jobs and reduce combined costs.<sup>70</sup> One of the *MetroCommon* Goals is ensuring enough new units are created in all communities (including affordable and “naturally affordable” units) to help moderate housing prices while improving access to employment.

***Improve Transportation Connectivity for Workers.***

Reliable and accessible transportation is critical for linking residents to jobs and educational opportunities. The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) notes that land use and development patterns must be coordinated with transportation options, as the locations of housing relative to jobs directly affect mobility and commute times.<sup>71</sup>

Currently, many lower-income workers, renters, and transit riders feel the squeeze of inadequate transportation – those who experience “very big” housing and transportation burdens are disproportionately renters, and low-income residents who depend on transit.<sup>72</sup> To address this, the region should invest in transit service enhancements, last-mile connections, and other mobility programs that improve access to employment centers.

The strategy includes elevating transit infrastructure, particularly strategic investments in the MBTA and regional transit systems—as a core component of regional economic development, workforce access, and mobility. CEDS Advisory Committee members emphasized the importance of linking housing, jobs, and transit to support economic opportunity.

*Emerging Practice: The Boston Region MPO emphasizes coordinating land use with transportation investments for affordability – its goals include minimizing the burden of housing and transportation costs and responding to the mobility needs of the workforce.*<sup>73</sup>

**Strategy 5: Increase state and local funding for affordable housing production, community land trusts (CLTs), lower total development costs (TDCs), and advance housing initiatives that help to lower energy costs for residents.** The FY2025 Affordable Homes Act and MAPC’s policy brief both emphasize the importance of state and local investments in affordable housing and CLTs to address the supply gap. These strategies help ensure housing affordability while advancing energy modernization and affordability.<sup>74,75</sup>

**Strategy 6: Expand housing policies to grow the overall supply of affordable housing for homeowners and renters alike.** Requiring new developments to include income-restricted affordable housing units is a proven method to increase the region’s affordable housing stock. MAPC’s Housing Team regularly works with municipalities to tailor local affordability requirements to market conditions, to ensure requirements do not negatively impact project feasibility and discourage new development.

*MetroCommon 2050* shows that these policies effectively support housing access when well-designed.<sup>76</sup>

**Strategy 7: Incentivize high-density housing and expand housing options near transit to support affordability and job accessibility.** A majority of Massachusetts residents support mixed-use, transit-oriented housing to improve affordability and reduce transportation burdens.<sup>77</sup> TOD strategies are essential to enabling low- and moderate-income workers to live near jobs and services.<sup>78</sup> Under the MBTA Communities Law (Section 3A of MGL Ch. 40A),<sup>79</sup> municipalities in Greater Boston have made some progress in allowing higher density developments in walkable areas, but more work is to be done.

**Strategy 8: Support access to housing for family childcare providers through zoning and regulatory reforms.** Many FCC providers face housing insecurity, which disrupts service availability. Research from the Rappaport Institute recommends integrating housing access into family childcare (FCC) stabilization efforts by revising local zoning laws and providing targeted housing support for providers.<sup>80</sup> UMass Donahue Institute's research recommends integrating housing access into FCC stabilization efforts by revising zoning laws and offering housing support for providers.<sup>81</sup>

**Strategy 9: Establish and expand low-income transit fare (T-Fare) rates to reduce transportation costs for workers.** Making regional transit free or more affordable is widely supported - nearly 75% of residents back fare-free regional bus service,<sup>82</sup> and such policies could increase ridership and job access for those who rely on public transportation. The MPO specifically calls for prioritizing transportation improvements that serve identified "Priority Places" for development and that align with compact-growth strategies.<sup>83</sup>

## *Goal 2: Foster The Resilience, Retention, And Growth Of Businesses Owned By People Of Different Backgrounds*

Achieving parity in business ownership, resource efficiency, and growth across demographic lines is essential for closing longstanding wealth gaps and creating a fairer regional economy. The region's relatively high rate of new business formation and strong network of independently owned small businesses create opportunities to strengthen economic growth and resilience.

**Strategy 10: Expand municipal procurement programs to ensure that contracts are fairly awarded across all types of business owners.** Municipalities need tools and resources to implement procurement reform to expand opportunities for small businesses. Government and organizational contracts are major avenues for business growth, yet are awarded disparately, with small businesses often securing only a small share of these contracts. In Massachusetts, the value of state contracts awarded to historically underrepresented business owners declined by 24% over the past two decades.<sup>84</sup>

In Boston, a citywide audit found that only 1.2% of \$2.1 billion in municipal contracts over a five-year period went to businesses owned by historically underrepresented groups.<sup>85</sup> Studies by MassINC and Lawyers for Civil Rights have found that entrepreneurs who pursue self-employment significantly increase their income and build wealth, yet they often earn less on average due to limited access to capital, networks, and government contracts.<sup>86</sup>

These disparities are also reflected in state procurement: in FY2020, just 1.4% of school building design and construction contracts went to certified MBE's.<sup>87</sup> The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these gaps in outcomes: 64% of Massachusetts small businesses experienced a revenue drop of 25% or more.<sup>88</sup> Addressing these disparities requires increased

technical assistance, targeted mentorship, and long-term investment in the capacity of low-visibility businesses to compete and grow within the public sector marketplace.

The Massachusetts Gaming Commission has established annual goals requiring that 15% of contracts go to low-visibility businesses, and 2% to veteran-owned businesses, with quarterly reporting and public transparency requirements for all licensees.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, many jurisdictions outside of Massachusetts have adopted targets and conduct regular studies to guide procurement policy.<sup>90</sup> An example best practice is in Pennsylvania, which overhauled its state procurement to be more supportive.<sup>91</sup>

**Strategy 11: Facilitate the acquisition of businesses from retiring owners by people of different backgrounds to retain wealth within under-resourced communities.** Peer-to-peer mentorship can extend into long-term succession planning and wealth-building strategies. While data specific to Massachusetts is limited, national trends show significant opportunity in supporting entrepreneurs to purchase existing businesses as aging owners retire. This strategy helps preserve neighborhood economic anchors and reduce ownership disparities.

**Strategy 12: Leverage the Commonwealth's Business Front Door Initiative to expand access to real estate and ownership opportunities. Additionally, deepen collaboration with regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to strengthen pathways between small business development and workforce training systems, particularly for communities that where jobseekers and employers are not aligned.** Programs like the Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation's "Business Front Door" platform can play a vital role in connecting low-visibility business owners with information, technical assistance, and access to properties and capital. This initiative should also be used to support opportunities for long-term commercial leases, which can ensure affordability and stability when entrepreneurs expand into new geographic markets. By helping businesses secure longer-term leases, the Commonwealth can play a role in preventing displacement and supporting growth.

**Strategy 13: Establish peer-to-peer mentorship programs between established firms and small and emerging firms.** This strategy builds on efforts to address structural challenges—like access to capital and commercial real estate—by offering relational and experiential support through peer mentorship. These relationships can guide business owners through challenges such as succession planning, early-stage growth, or navigating regulatory and financial systems.

Locally, small businesses remain the backbone of the regional economy. In the North Shore region alone, 86.6% of businesses have fewer than twenty employees, and 44.7% have fewer than five employees, up from 84% and 37%, respectively, in 2018. This trend highlights the importance of targeted investments in small business networks and learning platforms to foster growth and reduce failure risk among nascent firms.<sup>92</sup>

By piloting a peer mentorship approach, this strategy addresses the relational and trust-based support systems required to sustain local small businesses, especially in sectors and neighborhoods where challenges to capital access and consulting services exist.

### *Goal 3: Invest In Infrastructure That Is Disaster-Ready And Supports New Industries*

To ensure long-term regional resource efficiency, Greater Boston must proactively invest in strong, disaster-prepared infrastructure and the development of key emerging industries. As hazards and weather-related threats intensify, aging infrastructure in coastal and inland communities is increasingly vulnerable to sea-level rise, flooding, and extreme weather. At the same time, the



transition to a sustainable economy presents an opportunity to create welcoming economic growth—if regional stakeholders act strategically.

Significant models exist: Louisiana’s \$50 billion, 50-year Coastal Master Plan lays out a roadmap for large-scale hazard preparedness, including 77 shovel-ready projects aimed at protecting vulnerable communities and ecosystems.<sup>93</sup> In Massachusetts, the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program has advanced planning and capital investment in local infrastructure, supporting upgrades to dams, seawalls, and stormwater systems, particularly in communities most at risk.<sup>94</sup>

The Commonwealth is also advancing the *Resilient Coasts Initiative*, a statewide effort to accelerate natural infrastructure and regional hazard preparedness strategies for Massachusetts’ coastal communities. Although still under development, this initiative offers a promising framework for integrating habitat restoration with infrastructure planning and could serve as a model for scalable investments across the MAPC region.<sup>95</sup>

Greater Boston possesses many economic, financial, and social assets that are key to the Commonwealth’s position as a national leader in this arena. We are home to world-class innovation around disaster preparedness, generating R&D and startup activity, and serving as the financial center of the disaster preparedness industry.<sup>96</sup>

**Strategy 14: Establish a framework to identify high impact infrastructure projects in target locations, with a pipeline of shovel-ready projects for 2027 and beyond. Investing in disaster-ready infrastructure is critical for hazard preparedness.** Massachusetts’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program has funded improvements to dams, seawalls, and flood defenses.<sup>97</sup> The Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency project shows how resilience and capital planning can integrate at scale.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to hazard mitigation, infrastructure planning can also catalyze industry growth by preparing sites and corridors to support emerging sectors like hazard preparedness, emerging industries, and advanced energy distribution. Helping to tee-up sites, locations, and corridors ready to accept this development - especially in locations with a sufficient workforce pipeline - will help set the conditions for economic growth.

When aligned with industrial and workforce priorities, infrastructure readiness can generate large-scale economic benefits. By opening up developable lands and corridors to such firms, targeted disaster-ready infrastructure investments can contribute to the state’s initiatives, which are envisioned to help scale 1,300 hazard preparedness, advanced infrastructure technology firms, create 35,000 jobs, train 25,000 individuals, and attract seven times additional capital over the next decade.<sup>99</sup>

**Strategy 15: Establish a state-led incentive program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) planning and infrastructure investment, aligned with state growth management policies with the goal of reducing household transportation and energy costs.** Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) plays a critical role in achieving the Commonwealth’s hazard preparedness and economic development goals by enabling growth at the right locations. As the Commonwealth looks to scale sectors like the hazard preparedness, advanced energy infrastructure technology, and emerging industry sectors, TOD must be recognized as not only a housing and transportation tool, but also a strategy for economic competitiveness—ensuring firms and workers can access well-located, transit-connected, and operationally affordable sites. These are planning corridor locations that are best suited for integrated housing, transit, workforce access, and industrial development—especially where existing infrastructure, zoning, and labor markets can be leveraged for rapid deployment.

To support these objectives, the Commonwealth could:

- Establish a dedicated TOD Infrastructure and Planning Fund to help municipalities plan and implement mixed-use, mixed-income, transit-connected developments. This fund would prioritize cities meeting economic distress criteria and regional centers ready for infill and economic reinvestment.
- Offer regulatory streamlining and technical assistance to municipalities that pre-zone or prepare priority TOD corridors, enabling faster project permitting and eligibility for additional funding sources.

This initiative could be coordinated through MassDOT, EOHLC, EOED, and the MBTA Communities program to ensure alignment across transit infrastructure, housing policy, and local land use planning.

TOD planning and policy can ensure that technology firms have access to transit-served, operationally affordable, and move-in ready sites, which will help spur job creation. Public policies that incentivize clean tech and transit-oriented development (TOD) are helpful, as existing state programs do not provide sufficient incentives to meet current hazard preparedness and economic development needs.

**Strategy 16: Establish a program to support small and moderate size new businesses to be successful in construction-adjacent industries and unbundle large public works projects into smaller contract opportunities. This will help create a pipeline for workforce development among businesses that have not yet had access to these fields.** Expanding participation in construction-adjacent industries will allow access to this sector by small and low-visibility businesses. Embedded factors—such as exclusion from traditional business networks, underrepresentation in key STEM fields, and lack of access to capital and procurement opportunities continue to leave small and low-visibility businesses behind and exclude people of different backgrounds. These gaps constrain not only growth but also the Commonwealth’s ability to meet its innovation goals. Building a more welcoming pipeline will require intentional program design—such as unbundling large contracts on both state and local levels, targeting technical assistance and capital to MWBEs, and creating wraparound workforce pathways—that ensures all businesses can scale and participate in the energy economy from installation to innovation.

**Strategy 17: Provide municipalities with a toolkit of policy recommendations and best practices for project conceptualization and selection, planning, and implementing disaster-ready physical and non-physical infrastructure, focusing on preparedness in economically distressed communities.** These toolkits can standardize best practices and build local capacity for long-term resilience planning, while making resilience work more accessible and replicable across different municipal contexts.

The toolkit should function as a written playbook that includes guidance on emergency response planning, nature-based and other infrastructure, and siting development on higher ground, particularly at locations and corridors well suited to advancing emerging industries. It should be designed for broad applicability, offering scalable, adaptable steps that municipalities can follow regardless of size or capacity. Having emergency response systems and municipal plans in place, especially ones that intersect with job creation, workforce development, and economic resilience—is essential for the implementation of good hazard preparedness strategies.

The toolkit would help communities overcome implementation challenges by clearly outlining what to do, how to do it, and how to connect resilience investments to broader goals in economic competitiveness and employment access.

Models such as *Resilient MA*, MAPC's *Local Leader* initiative, and the *Resilience Playbook* offer precedents for this work, emphasizing technical support, scenario planning, and access to implementation funds tailored to community-identified priorities. By integrating these models into a unified and practical toolkit, the region can equip municipalities with the resources to proactively plan for and implement resilience strategies that benefit both people and the economy.

### Strategy Lead Designation Explainer

The 2025–2030 CEDS Action Plan will translate the region's strategic goals into targeted areas of work over the next five years. The CEDS is designed as an integrated framework, with strategies reinforcing and supporting one another across regional quality of life and workforce competitiveness goals, goals for business growth and retention, and preparedness goals. The strategies outlined are ambitious, but they reflect realistic assessments of what may be achievable with the leadership of MAPC, with the support of CEDS Advisory Committee members.

Implementation will depend on a combination of local action, state and federal funding, private investment, and collaboration across multiple sectors. While MAPC and its partners are committed to advancing this agenda, resource limitations, government-related realities, and the existence or absence of key partners will inevitably shape how and when each strategy is realized. Some strategies are ones receiving leadership from MAPC or an identified economic development institution or unit of government, while others do not. Some strategies will begin as pilots, with lessons learned informing broader regional or state-level adoption, and others will receive attention primarily through policy action. Still others will require laying the groundwork for future progress beyond the five-year CEDS horizon.

To guide coordination and implementation of the CEDS, each strategy will be categorized based on the primary type of entity expected to lead or co-lead its execution. The categories are:

- **MAPC-Led or Facilitated (with Partners):** MAPC has a clear role in implementation, whether through direct leadership, regional convening, technical assistance, or policy engagement.
- **Led by Other Identified Systems Leaders:** Another agency or entity (e.g., state department, municipal body, or nonprofit partner) is the logical or designated lead, and MAPC's role is secondary or supportive.
- **Lead by Entity Not Known or May Not Exist:** The strategy is important but lacks a clearly identified lead; implementation may require the establishment of a new partnership or convening effort.

Implementation of the CEDS will be an ongoing, collaborative effort over the next five years. The next steps include:

- Tracking progress annually using the performance measures outlined, focusing on key outputs, outcomes, and impacts.
- Supporting municipal and partner initiatives that align with CEDS strategies, where capacity and funding allow.
- Identifying opportunities for collaboration across municipalities, agencies, businesses, and nonprofits to advance shared goals.
- Seeking funding opportunities at the state, federal, and philanthropic levels to support implementation activities aligned with the CEDS framework.

## Potential Funding Grid

For each strategy we list examples of (a) players at the table and (b) funding sources that have recently been used for similar work in Massachusetts. The grid below lets municipal staff, community-based organizations, and regional partners scan quickly and say, “Who would we call first?” and “Where might we go for seed or gap funding?”

However, the reader should be aware the following is **not** a funding commitment. Programs such as MassWorks, EDA Public Works, or the FEMA BRIC competition change from year to year and always require competitive applications, cost share, and compliance with detailed rules. Nor is the grid a complete stakeholder list; the table should be considered a starting point, not a finish line.

<b>Goal 1 – Make the region affordable and accessible for workers &amp; employers.</b>		
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Potential Partners</b>	<b>Potential Resources</b>
1 Expand access to higher education through subsidized tuition.	Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE); community colleges & state universities; MassHire Workforce Boards	MassReconnect; MassEducate; Federal Pell & Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG); employer tuition-reimbursement pools.
2 Increase access to credential / certificate programs in priority industries.	Public higher ed & vocational technical schools; sector- -based industry consortia; MassHire- Career Centers	MassReconnect; MassEducate; Massachusetts Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund (WCTF); Workforce Training Fund Program (WTFP); The current administration issued an executive order taking actions to maximize Federal investments in apprenticeships that support US workers to produce world-class products and implement world-leading technologies.
3 Improve coordination of workforce development efforts with people of different backgrounds.	Municipal governments; local employers & chambers; MassHire Workforce Boards; community-based orgs (e.g., SkillWorks-)	WTFP; WCTF; MA Re-entry Workforce Grants; MassAbility (disability employment); Community Compact Cabinet Best Practices Program (CCCBP); industry & philanthropic workforce funds. The current administration issued an executive order to enhance federal investment in apprenticeships, aiming to support U.S. workers in producing world-class products and advancing leading technologies, signaling potential funding opportunities.
4 Increase funding for childcare providers to sustain operations & ensure good pay.	MA Department of Early Education & Care (EEC); early ed- providers; municipal children & family offices	EEC C3 Stabilization Grants; Early Education and Out-of-School Time (EEOST) capital grants; Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative (CPPI) expansion grants; Early Educators Scholarship & Career Pathways programs; private philanthropies.
5 Increase state/local funding for affordable housing, CLTs,	Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities (EOHLC); MassHousing; municipalities;	MassWorks and HousingWorks Infrastructure Grants; MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund; Low Income- Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC); linkage & in lieu fees.

	TDCs, and lower energy costs.	Community Land Trusts	
6	Expand housing policies to grow affordable stock.	Municipal governments; zoning reform coalitions	Housing Choice Grants; MAPC TAP; CCCBP (TA grants); local Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds; municipal bonding.
7	Incentivize high density / expanded housing choice near transit hubs.	Municipal planning & zoning boards; MBTA & MassDOT; private developers	MAPC TAP; MassWorks & HousingWorks Infrastructure Program; MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund; local value capture / Tax-Increment Financing (TIF).
8	Support housing access for family childcare providers via zoning reforms.	Local zoning boards; childcare networks; MA EEC	MAPC TAP; municipal revolving loan funds.
9	Establish & expand low income “TFare” and improve off-hour transit service.	MBTA; Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs); MassDOT Rail & Transit Division	State operating subsidy; bulk pass partnerships with universities & hospitals; municipal “fair share” contributions; transportation management associations.
<b>Goal 2 – Foster resilience, retention &amp; growth of businesses &amp; entrepreneurs of different backgrounds.</b>			
	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Potential Partners</b>	<b>Potential Resources</b>
10	Expand municipal procurement programs for under-represented firms.	City/Town procurement & supplier offices; BECMA local chambers; anchor institution supplier teams	MAPC TAP; municipal ARPA allocations; MA procurement grants.
11	Facilitate acquisition of retiring owners by people of different backgrounds to retain wealth within under-resourced communities.	Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs); U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) resource partners; Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation (MGCC); local banks	SBA 7(a) & 504 loans; MassDevelopment Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) / Economic Development Incentive Program (EDIP); MGCC Business Fund; CDFI loan pools.
12	Leverage the Commonwealth “Business Front Door” to expand real estate access.	Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) Front Door team; MassDevelopment; small-business lenders;	MassDevelopment Site Readiness Program; SBA 504 loans; Opportunity Zone or New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) fairness; municipal site assembly funds; Business Front Door platform tools and services.
13	Establish peer-to-peer mentorship	BECMA; CWE; Lawyers for Civil Rights; municipalities; local	EOED Inclusive Recovery Grants; private sector sponsorships; MAPC TAP; philanthropy.



	between established & emerging firms.	chambers; anchor institution supplier teams	
<b>Goal 3 – Invest in infrastructure that supports hazard preparedness infrastructure risk reduction &amp; new industries.</b>			
	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Potential Partners</b>	<b>Potential Resources</b>
14	Identify & prioritize high-impact infrastructure / shovel ready projects.	EOED; Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT); Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA); MAPC; municipalities	MassWorks; CCCBP project-prioritization TA.
15	Establish a state-led TOD planning & infrastructure incentives.	MassDOT; EOED; EOHLC; MBTA; regional planning agencies	New State TOD Infrastructure Program; local bonding & value-capture (TIF/parking-benefit districts), MassWorks & HousingWorks Infrastructure Grants; MBTA Catalyst Fund Grants.
16	Establish a program to help small and mid-sized businesses enter construction-adjacent industries by unbundling large public projects and building a workforce development pipeline.	Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC); BECMA; trade unions; vocational schools & community colleges	MassCEC Business and Workforce Development Grants; Workforce Training Fund Program; Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) training provisions; utility-sponsored workforce initiatives; industry contributions.
17	Provide municipalities with a toolkit of policy and planning best practices to implement disaster-ready infrastructure, with a focus on economically distressed communities.	MAPC; Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EEA) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) coordinators; municipal resilience officers; MAPC	EEA MVP Action Grants; FEMA BRIC or Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); CCCBP TA; philanthropic hazard preparedness-resilience funds; MAPC TAP.

## Evaluation Framework

### Key Metrics

Progress toward the CEDS goals will be evaluated through a set of performance metrics as MAPC and the region's ecosystem of economic development institutions and governmental units do their work. The evaluation framework will emphasize both accountability and learning. Each strategy will be

assigned clear indicators of success, and MAPC will collaborate with municipal, nonprofit, and private sector partners to collect and analyze data.

Key metrics are provided for illustrative purposes and could include:

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Database</b>
<b>Number of affordable housing units produced near transit and employment hubs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MAPC Permitting Data</li> <li>- MassHousing annual reports</li> <li>- MBTA Communities compliance reports</li> <li>- Executive Office of Housing &amp; Livable Communities</li> </ul>
<b>Enrollment and completion rates in workforce training and certificate programs (disaggregated)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MassHire Regional Workforce Boards</li> <li>- Public Higher Education Data (DHE Data Center)</li> <li>- MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) annual reports</li> </ul>
<b>Growth in the number of small and low-visibility businesses and access to public procurement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Massachusetts SDO Annual Reports</li> <li>- SBA and CDFI partner reports</li> </ul>
<b>Amount of capital secured for infrastructure and disaster preparedness projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MassWorks Grants and Infrastructure Investment Reporting</li> <li>- MassCEC Program Awards Pages</li> <li>- MVP (Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness) program award lists</li> </ul>
<b>Number of municipalities adopting zoning that leads to TOD development and efficient communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MBTA Communities compliance documentation</li> <li>- DLTA/TAP project reports</li> </ul>
<b>Access improvements for low-income transit users</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MBTA and Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) reports</li> <li>- Transit fairness program announcements (e.g., T-Fare Pilots)</li> </ul>
<b>Employment and wage gains in energy, life sciences, advanced manufacturing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MassCEC Clean Energy Industry Reports</li> <li>- MassHire Workforce Blueprint Updates</li> <li>- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW)</li> </ul>

Metrics will be reviewed periodically to understand progress toward achieving greater shared economic prosperity, resilience, and resource efficiency.

## Potential Future Research Agenda

This section outlines strategy areas designated for research over the long term as the time required to develop the strategy falls outside the CEDS' five-year timeframe. Changes in the social or policy context, organizational/partner ecosystem, and other factors, will be necessary before the conditions support their being enacted.

### **Income Supports and Benefit Integration**

Explore evidence on guaranteed or universal basic income, assessing opportunities for connecting it with a larger state Earned Income Tax Credit, and considering potential alignment with SNAP, childcare subsidies, and MassHealth.

### **Food, Health, and Community Support**

Assess ways to broaden food security and health subsidies—such as medically tailored meals, SNAP/HIP expansions, and other “Food Is Medicine” approaches—and examine community driven capital models (land trusts, cooperatives, community investment funds) for their capacity to narrow wealth gaps.

### **Business Stability and Access to Digital Infrastructure**

Investigate commercial anti-displacement strategies, zoning, or financial tools to stabilize the locations of small businesses that expand opportunities for low-visibility firms and digital fairness investments needed for an increasingly hybrid workforce and to expand small businesses' participation in e-commerce.

### **Advanced Infrastructure Technology Focused Real Estate Reuse**

Analyze scenarios for converting underused commercial, municipal, or other properties into affordable housing or civic space while reducing lifecycle energy impacts.

### **Automation, Gig Work, and Labor Market Shifts**

Explore how automation and the rise of gig and contract-based work are reshaping labor market dynamics, benefits access, and economic security—particularly for lower-wage and low-visibility workers.

### **Higher Education's Economic and Civic Role**

Apart from their role in workforce training, research could examine the broader role of colleges and universities as regional anchors, including their spending, real estate development, and community engagement impacts on local economies.

### **Transportation Innovation Impacts**

Assess how emerging transportation technologies—such as autonomous vehicles and new micromobility systems—may affect fairness, land use, congestion, and infrastructure planning.

### **Hazard Preparedness**

As hazard preparedness-driven displacement becomes more common, explore how Greater Boston and similar regions should prepare for and support incoming populations through planning, infrastructure, housing, and community services.



## Sample Emerging Practices

To complement the strategy framework, this section highlights promising practices and case studies that exemplify how specific strategies or goals have been successfully implemented in Greater Boston and beyond. These examples provide real-world models for the region's communities and stakeholders, illustrating innovative approaches and their outcomes. Each best practice is tied to one of the CEDS goals or strategies, demonstrating how the plan's vision can translate into on-the-ground results.

### Goal 1: Workforce, Housing, and Transportation Accessibility

**Transit-Oriented Development (Greater Boston, MA):** One best practice for supporting affordability and access is transit-oriented development (TOD) – concentrating housing and mixed-use growth near public transportation. In Greater Boston, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has become a leader in facilitating TOD projects by turning underutilized station-area land into sites for new housing and commerce. Over the past decade, the MBTA has partnered with developers and municipalities on more than 50 TOD projects, enabling over 10 million square feet of new development and 5,000+ housing units near MBTA stations.<sup>100</sup>

An example is Assembly Row in Somerville, where a public-private partnership transformed a former industrial brownfield into a vibrant new neighborhood anchored by a transit station. Opened in 2014 on the Orange Line, Assembly Row now features roughly 5 million square feet of residential, office, and retail space, turning a once-blighted area into a thriving, transit-served district.<sup>101</sup>

By co-locating jobs, homes, and amenities with transit, these TOD projects reduce commute times and transportation costs for residents, directly supporting Goal 1 by making it easier and more affordable for workers to live close to employment centers. They also boost ridership and reduce car dependence, creating environmental benefits alongside economic growth. The MBTA's experience shows that aligning transit investments with housing development can significantly expand access to opportunity while keeping the region competitive for employers and talent.

**Workforce & Childcare Partnership (Metro Boston):** An important component of accessibility is reducing challenges to workforce participation. A notable promising practice in the MAPC region is the Good Jobs Challenge Metro Boston Childcare Partnership, a collaborative effort to strengthen the childcare workforce as a strategy for enabling parents to work. Supported by a federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant, this initiative brought together MAPC, education institutions, and childcare providers to train and upskill early educators. Over the past three years, it created a pipeline of 850 new or incumbent childcare workers who received training and improved compensation, helping providers expand capacity.<sup>102</sup>

This initiative addresses a critical need: many parents (especially mothers) cannot join or remain in the workforce due to a lack of affordable childcare. By investing in childcare infrastructure and workforce development, the partnership simultaneously improves job quality and employee retention in the childcare sector and expands childcare access for families – a dual benefit aligned with Goal 1's focus on workforce readiness and removing employment challenges. Early results showed that stabilization grants and workforce training helped dozens of childcare centers serve more families, and ongoing efforts aim to ensure provider wage fairness to sustain the sector.<sup>103</sup>

**Case Study: MassHire Metro North Workforce Board – Work to THRIVE / Resiliency Fund**

**Organization:** MassHire Metro North serves twenty cities north of Boston through workforce programs and career services.

**Initiative:** Work to THRIVE and its Resiliency Fund provide critical wraparound support (e.g., childcare, legal fees, tuition) to job-seekers typically excluded from traditional programs.<sup>104</sup> These supports have enabled immigrant and low-income residents to overcome entry challenges to the workforce.

**Connection to CEDS Goal:** *Goal 1 – Workforce/Housing/Transit.* By addressing practical challenges, this initiative strengthens workforce participation and meets employer needs.

**Goal 2: Retention and Growth of Businesses Owned by People of Different Backgrounds**

**Inclusive Food Business Incubator (Boston, MA):** Fostering entrepreneurs of different backgrounds requires targeted support systems. CommonWealth Kitchen (CWK) in Boston offers a best-practice model of an incubator that propels small businesses in the food industry. As Greater Boston's only nonprofit shared-use commercial kitchen and food business incubator, CWK provides entrepreneurs with affordable kitchen space, training, and access to networks in order to grow their food startups. The impact has been substantial – CWK has helped launch or support hundreds of different food businesses, leading to the creation of hundreds of new jobs and generating tens of millions of dollars in new revenue in the local food economy.<sup>105</sup>

**FBE's Initiative (Massachusetts):** At a broader scale, FBE provides a model for accelerating the growth of businesses owned by people of different backgrounds through assistance with securing larger contracts, expanding employee base, or opening new locations. Launched with support from a local bank in 2017, FBE's BEI offers intensive tailored consulting, executive education, and access to capital for established businesses owned by people of different backgrounds poised for growth. The results to date highlight the power of targeted capacity-building: over ninety local businesses owned by people of different backgrounds have participated, and those companies have collectively generated more than \$120 million in new revenue as a result of the program.<sup>106</sup>

**Case Study: BECMA – Business Support Ecosystem**

**Organization:** BECMA is a statewide chamber of commerce dedicated to advancing the economic well-being of businesses owned by individuals from different backgrounds.

**Initiative:** One of BECMA's flagship efforts is the **Back Office Support Services (B.O.S.S.) Program**, which provides small businesses with critical infrastructure, including digital tools, professional services (e.g., legal, accounting, and marketing support), and direct capital grants to enhance operational capacity. In 2023, BECMA awarded over \$600,000 in grants through this and related programs, supporting 429 businesses across the state.<sup>107</sup> The B.O.S.S. Program is designed to help businesses become more competitive, compliant, and scalable by reducing back-office burdens that often limit small firms' growth.

**Connection to CEDS Goal:** *Goal 2 – Businesses Owned by People of Different Backgrounds.* BECMA's B.O.S.S. Program addresses embedded challenges that hinder entrepreneurs of different backgrounds by delivering tailored resources and financial support. This initiative directly

contributes to a fairer small business ecosystem, expanding opportunities and building capacity in communities of people from different backgrounds.

### Goal 3: Infrastructure for Infrastructure Risk Reduction and Emerging Industries

Resilient Mystic Collaborative (Mystic River Watershed, MA): Confronting hazard preparedness threats often requires thinking and acting across city boundaries. The Resilient Mystic Collaborative (RMC) exemplifies the best practice in regional hazard preparedness infrastructure risk reduction planning. Facilitated by MAPC, this collaboration brings together over twenty municipalities in the Mystic River watershed (north of Boston) to jointly develop and fund projects that protect communities from flooding and other impacts. By pooling efforts and speaking with a unified voice, RMC communities have secured nearly \$57 million in grants and investments for disaster-ready infrastructure projects in recent years.<sup>108</sup>

These projects include stormwater mitigation systems, coastal flood challenges, and cooling centers for heat waves, all designed with a lens to protect the most vulnerable residents. The Collaborative is now aiming for an additional \$100 million to implement a pipeline of shovel-ready resilience projects.<sup>109</sup>

Greentown Labs (Somerville, MA): A leading example is Greentown Labs in Somerville – the largest hazard preparedness, advanced infrastructure technology startup incubator in North America. Greentown Labs provides workspace, testing labs, and an accelerator-like community for startups focused on modern energy, resource efficiency, and hazard preparedness solutions. Since its founding in 2011, Greentown Labs has supported over 575 startups, which have together created more than 13,500 jobs and raised over \$8.2 billion in venture funding.<sup>110</sup>

This astounding growth in hazard preparedness, advanced infrastructure technology innovation has positioned the Greater Boston region as a global hub for emerging industries. The incubator's success shows how aligning infrastructure (in this case, a facility and network for entrepreneurs) with industry development can catalyze an entire sector. The model demonstrates the return on investing in industry clusters and innovation infrastructure. It supports Goal 3 by showing examples of encouraging growth in hazard preparedness, advanced infrastructure technology and advanced manufacturing, creating high-quality jobs while also generating solutions (like air pollutants reductions and grid improvements) that improve infrastructure risk reduction.

#### Case Study: MassCEC Internship Program

**Organization:** MassCEC promotes modern energy job growth.

**Initiative:** This program subsidizes internships at modern energy firms across MA. Over 5,000 students and graduates have been placed since 2011; in FY2023 alone, 5,800 interns were supported. Interns were placed with more than 620 employers. More than 1,030 interns are hired permanently by their employers.<sup>111</sup>

## Key Insights and Conclusion

### Summary of Key Insights

The 2025–2030 CEDS identifies both the remarkable strengths and pressing challenges facing the Greater Boston region. Key insights from the planning process include:

- Regional competitiveness is at risk without urgent action on housing affordability, workforce shortages, transportation access, and economic disparities.
- Economic resilience requires investment not only in physical infrastructure but also in workforce development, small business ecosystems, and disaster preparedness.
- We must ensure that the benefits of growth reach low-visibility entrepreneurs, lower-income workers, and distressed communities.
- Interconnected strategies are essential, with housing, transportation, business growth, disaster preparedness, and workforce participation reinforcing one another.
- Collaboration is critical. No single municipality, institution, or agency can advance the full vision of the CEDS alone.

The region's future economic success will depend on aligning resources, partnerships, and policies to meet these interconnected needs head-on.

### Conclusion

Building on the evidence and perspectives presented, it is clear that Greater Boston stands at an inflection point. The region's deep talent base, innovation ecosystem, and growing commitment to economic and societal fairness give us the ingredients for shared prosperity, yet success will ultimately hinge on execution.

1. **Translate plans into action:** Whether it is the *MetroCommon 2050* vision, local preparedness strategies, or new zoning for multifamily housing, implementation must become the overriding priority. Timelines, funding streams, and accountability metrics should be spelled out and revisited so that good ideas do not languish on paper.
2. **Ensure fairness and preparedness in every investment:** From transportation projects to workforce initiatives, decisionmakers should ask: Who benefits? Who bears the risk? Prioritizing distressed communities and closing wealth gaps is not only a moral imperative—it unlocks productivity, resilience, and social cohesion.
3. **Leverage regional collaboration:** No single city or town can solve the housing shortage, improve energy affordability, or futureproof infrastructure alone. Cross jurisdictional compacts, pooled financing models, and shared data platforms will be essential for tackling problems that transcend municipal borders.
4. **Measure progress and adapt:** Transparent indicators—on housing affordability, energy affordability, small business formation, health outcomes, and more—should guide midcourse corrections. Continuous learning will ensure that policies remain responsive to demographic and economic realities.

If public, private, and civic leaders embrace these principles, Greater Boston can convert today's challenges into durable advantages, expanding opportunities, improving health, and strengthening the region's capacity to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

## Appendices

### A. Glossary of Acronyms

This glossary provides definitions for acronyms used throughout the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document to ensure clarity and accessibility for all readers.

Acronym	Definition
AICP	American Institute of Certified Planners
CEDS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CWK	Commonwealth Kitchen
DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance
EDA	U.S. Economic Development Administration
EDT	MAPC Economic Development Team
EOED	Executive Office of Economic Development
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FCC	Federal Communications Commission
GMP	Good Manufacturing Practice
HR	Human Resources
LIHTC	Low-Income Housing Tax Credit
MAPC	Metropolitan Area Planning Council
MBTA	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MassINC	Massachusetts Institute for a New Commonwealth
R&D	Research and Development
RMC	Resilient Mystic Collaborative
RTAs	Regional Transit Authorities
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TAP	Technical Assistance Program
TDI	Transformative Development Initiative
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
UMass	University of Massachusetts
WBUR	Boston's NPR News Station
WIOA	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

## B. Future Research Agenda

As the regional economy continues to shift, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and its partners recognize the importance of continuing to explore economic trends, gaps, and emerging opportunities. Building on MAPC's long-standing technical assistance and planning work, future research could help inform decision-making and support communities across Greater Boston.

In the coming years, MAPC may prioritize research in the following areas, depending on available capacity, funding, and partner interest:

- **Wealth Gaps and Asset Building:** Further investigate disparities in household wealth. Explore strategies that support financial stability and wealth-building for everyone.
- **Workforce Participation Trends:** Monitor shifts in labor force participation and assess how demographic, geographic, and industry-specific factors influence access to employment opportunities.
- **Extreme Weather Events Investments and Economic Outcomes:** Examine how investments in natural infrastructure, modern energy, and disaster preparedness intersect with local economic development goals—particularly in communities facing environmental and economic vulnerabilities.
- **Housing Affordability and Economic Mobility:** Refine indicators that measure housing affordability in relation to income and cost of living. Evaluate how affordability challenges impact workforce retention and neighborhood stability.
- **Inclusive Procurement and Small Business Retention:** Identify promising practices that strengthen local small business ecosystems. Consider how municipal procurement practices can support growth.
- **Emerging Sector Dynamics:** Track the growth of new and emerging industries such as advanced infrastructure technology, advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and the care economy. Assess their relevance to regional competitiveness and employment.
- **Transportation and Economic Access:** Study how mobility investments affect job access, small business performance, and community well-being, especially in limited access areas.

Insights from this research could inform updates to the CEDS during the five-year cycle and help shape the foundation for the next planning process in 2029–2030. Even if pursued selectively, these areas of inquiry align with MAPC's mission to support communities through data-informed, fair economic development strategies.

C. Public Comments *(to be added following public comment period)*



## D. Endnotes

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