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Boston's commercial real estate sector leading the charge in achieving region's climate change goals

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Boston is establishing itself as a national leader in energy efficiency and climate change. Recently Boston joined a global group of leading cities called the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and in 2013 was named the most energy efficient city in the U.S. by the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy. To help meet its goals, the city has officially endorsed A Better City's "Challenge for Sustainability" program, which was established in 2009 to help businesses and property owners meet a broad range of sustainability objectives.

A Better City (ABC) has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Boston, whereby the city will assist with the expansion and framework of the Challenge for Sustainability (The Challenge) in order to achieve targeted greenhouse gas reduction goals and energy efficiency programs throughout the business and commercial real estate sectors. The Challenge will continue to align efforts with Boston's Climate Action Plan to decrease the city's greenhouse gas emissions 25% by 2020 and 80% by 2050.

The Challenge encourages building owners and businesses to adopt best practices in energy efficiency and sustainability through a platform of benchmarking and a peer support network.

Since the program's launch, Challenge participants have achieved an 18% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and \$7 million in energy savings. Participants currently occupy or manage 35 million sq. ft. of real estate in Boston; the goal is 50 million s/f by 2015.

"Building owners, businesses, and local policy makers are working together to positively impact the environment, economic competitiveness and quality of life of Boston," said Rick Dimino, president and CEO of A Better City. "This endorsement from the City of Boston allows our sustainability engagement program to make an even larger impact to help the city meet its goals while helping the commercial real estate sector achieve significant energy savings."

Challenge participants receive hands-on technical assistance to benchmark their facilities, and develop and execute annual Sustainability Action Plans. They are invited to attend monthly educational workshops and industry networking events, and may also take advantage of free energy audits and customized access to utility rebates and incentives.

Challenge participants utilize a web based benchmarking toolkit with a Sustainability Scorecard, which allows participants to track and measure their use of electricity, gas, oil, steam, water, waste, and vehicle miles traveled. The Scorecard allows direct upload of the EPA's Portfolio Manager utility data for ease of reporting to the City of Boston's BERDO (Building Energy Reporting and Disclosure Ordinance). The Scorecard also integrates NSTAR's Green Button, allowing participants to import data directly from their utility account. A new scoring algorithm calculates each participant's annual metric tons of CO2 reduction.

Coinciding with the program's growth, the Challenge for Sustainability is launching a new website

where participants and the public can access online benchmarking tools and resources including case studies and technical toolkits, at www.challengeforsustainability.org.

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