

Boston Businesses Cut Electricity Use 7% Through Challenge for Sustainability

Annual awards recognize city's leading businesses and properties.

BOSTON, March 11, 2013 – Boston businesses participating in the Challenge for Sustainability have reduced their electricity consumption by seven percent in just three years, the program announced today. The [Challenge for Sustainability](#), which includes more than 30 million square feet of commercial space and 80,000 employees, released its 2012 figures for reductions in electricity, gas, water, waste, steam and greenhouse gases.

Since its inception in 2009, the Challenge for Sustainability has incentivized energy and waste audits and coordinated the exchange of best practices, helping participants reduce their combined electricity consumption from 400 gigawatt hours (GWh) annually to 372 GWh. In 2012 alone, participants saved \$5.7 million in electricity costs, 178 tons of waste, 22 million pounds of steam and enough water to fill 15 Olympic swimming pools (1.2 million cubic feet). Due to the drop in natural gas prices, gas consumption increased 6.73 percent. However, overall greenhouse gas emissions fell 4 percent (7,000 lbs) from [2011 figures](#).

The Challenge for Sustainability is run by the non-profit A Better City and includes member organizations such as the New England Aquarium, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Citizens Bank and the headquarters of AuBon Pan and Blue Cross-Blue Shield. The program's services also are available to small businesses in the City of Boston's Main Streets program.

The Challenge for Sustainability added 25 new [participants for 2013](#), including the Dana-Farber Cancer Center, Hancock Tower and Seaport World Trade Center, bringing the total number to 100.

“A Better City's Challenge for Sustainability works with the commercial real estate sector to facilitate reductions in energy use and the sector's impact on the environment,” said Richard Dimino, President and CEO of A Better City. “The program has proven to be a win-win—good business and economics, while positioning Boston and its commercial real estate as sustainability leaders.”

In addition to sharing best practices via regular meetings and workshops, A Better City's sustainability coordinators help Challenge participants develop Sustainability Action Plans using an online scorecard system for benchmarking and tracking initiatives and resources. In 2012, participants adopted a total of 560 new practices. The top five adoptions for building owners were electric vehicle charging stations, energy audits, single stream recycling, water management plans and sleep features on computers.

The Challenge for Sustainability also maintains a free and publicly available [Online Sustainability Toolkit](#) with practical information on everything from cleaning supplies and green purchasing, to renewable energy and water efficiency.

“The Challenge for Sustainability is an incredible resource benefiting not only the businesses and institutions of Boston, but also the residents who value cleaner air and pro-active climate leadership,” said Michael Mooney, Chairman of Nutter, McClennen & Fish and Vice Chairman of the Boston Green Ribbon Commission. “The program is a model for how cities nationwide can assist property owners in reducing their environmental impacts and operating costs.”

Mooney is one of four Boston business leaders featured in a [newly released micro-documentary](#) about The Challenge for Sustainability. Other videos in the series feature [small business participation](#), the [scorecarding process](#), and [green buildings](#).

The ‘Stanley Cup of Sustainability’

The Challenge for Sustainability also announced its 2012 [award winners](#). The names of awardees have been added to a series of trophies that—like the Stanley Cup—are passed from winner to winner. Unlike the Stanley Cup, the trophies are made from sustainably harvested bamboo. This year’s awards went to the following members of A Better City:

- Boston Convention & Exhibition Center – Highest Score
- Hines’ Office – Greatest Energy Reduction
- Turner Construction – Most Improved
- Kathleen McCarthy (John Hancock) – Peer Award

Main Streets award winners include:

- Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance – Highest Score
- Tropical Foods – Greatest Energy Reduction
- Community Servings – Most Improved

About the Challenge for Sustainability

The Challenge for Sustainability has four simple goals for commercial real estate and business in Boston: 1) two percent annual greenhouse gas reduction; 2) foster a community of best practice sharing; 3) support, engage and equip people to instill a culture of sustainability in their daily jobs and workplaces; 4) support Boston Climate Action Plan goals. The program is funded by the Boston Foundation and the Barr Foundation—a private foundation backing initiatives to lower Boston’s greenhouse gas emissions.

About A Better City

Founded in 1989, [A Better City](#) initially worked with state and local partners to reduce the impacts of the Central Artery tunnel (a.k.a. The Big Dig) on surrounding businesses. Today the organization is focused on enhancing the viability of Boston’s existing infrastructure while identifying and advancing the next set of priority investments that will benefit the public realm through economic growth and increased sustainability.

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