



OFFICERS

James M. Tierney
CHAIR

Kara Buckley
VICE CHAIR

Kimberly Sherman Stampler
VICE CHAIR

Jeanne Pinado
TREASURER

Elizabeth Grob
CLERK

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Robert Biggio
Michael Cantalupa*
Joseph Carroll
Donald Chiofaro
Andrew J. Dankwerth
Lawrence S. DiCara, Esq.*
John E. Drew*
Ronald M. Druker
Rita (Nikuru) Edozie, PhD
Kristen Hoffman
Jessica Hughes
Thomas J. Hynes, Jr.
Mark R. Johnson
Allan Juwonoputro
William F.X. Kane
James G. Keefe
Edward Ladd
Kevin M. Lemire
Christopher W. Maher
Michael E. Mooney, Esq.*
Young K. Park
Thomas Tilas
Yanni Tsipis
Dana E. Warren
David Wilkinson

Kate Dineen
PRESIDENT & CEO

Richard A. Dimino
PRESIDENT EMERITUS

* Former Chair

Arthur Jemison
Chief of Planning and Director of the Boston Planning and Development Agency
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

May 28th, 2024

RE: A Better City’s Recommendations for Zero Net Carbon (ZNC) Zoning Draft Regulations

Chief Jemison:

On behalf of A Better City’s nearly 130 member businesses and institutions, thank you for your efforts to ensure that the City of Boston is on track to meet its climate goal of net zero emissions by 2050. We are grateful to be a part of the Zero Net Carbon (ZNC) zoning process.

A Better City’s recommendations build off our preliminary comments sent for consideration on March 5th, 2024, that include: a suggested timeline for a ZNC building to meet net zero emissions; and the review process not requiring LEED certification.

A Better City’s staff and members would be happy to meet with you and your team to discuss any of these recommendations and to learn how we can best support this effort in the coming weeks and months.

Thank you for your consideration, for your leadership, and for your commitment to Boston’s climate goals. Please reach out to Yve Torrie (ytorrie@abettercity.org) with any comments or questions.

Thank you,

Y. L. Torrie

Yve Torrie
Director of Climate, Energy & Resilience
A Better City

Cc: Aimee Chambers, Director of Planning
Travis Anderson, Senior Infrastructure and Energy Planner
Astrid Walker-Stewart, Urban Planner
Hannah Payne, Director of Carbon Neutrality

1) A Suggested Timeline for a ZNC Building to Meet Net Zero Emissions

We are grateful that hospitals, general manufacturing, and labs have been exempted from the requirement to be ZNC at the time of a building's occupation but remain concerned that all other buildings will continue to be penalized for a dirty grid. ZNC buildings will need to meet the recently adopted Opt-In Specialized Stretch Energy Code (Specialized Code) for Boston, so we expect them to be well within BERDO compliance thresholds. As the Specialized Code only allows a small amount of fossil fuels, we assume any Alternative Compliance Payments for fossil fuel use under BERDO to be small. However, although buildings under the Specialized Code will be super energy efficient (and many will be all-electric), they will still be required to comply with BERDO obligations for electric use by choosing Power Purchase Agreements/Renewable Energy Credits/Community Choice Aggregation, etc., because the grid is not green. In effect, they are being financially penalized for projects once they are complete and start operations, because the electric grid is not green. A Better City, therefore, recommends that ZNC buildings have a different timeline to achieve zero net carbon emissions than at initial operation. Instead, ZNC buildings should be on a 2035 timeline for zero net carbon emissions (as opposed to at completion/initial operation for BERDO buildings), which is tied to electrical grid parity with natural gas as it relates to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Per BERDO's approved policies from December 2023, [Appendix A](#) (page 20) "Projected Grid Emissions Factors," estimates electric grid parity with [natural gas GHG emissions](#) (page 7) in 2035. If grid parity is not reached in 2035, then the actual year of grid parity should be used as the date by which ZNC buildings are required to be zero net carbon emissions.

A Better City recommends that ZNC buildings be on a net zero carbon emissions by 2035 timeline so that ZNC buildings are not penalized for a dirty grid. If grid parity takes longer than the projected goal of 2035, then the date by which ZNC buildings are obligated to reach zero net carbon emissions should change accordingly.

2) The Review Process Not Requiring LEED Certification

The current ZNC Zoning draft regulations require LEED certification under the most appropriate LEED building rating system. A Better City members continue to agree that a LEED framework for review is unnecessary if the project is already meeting the Specialized Code, as LEED is going to have items that aren't relevant to carbon or energy, and it seems out of place for ZNC zoning. We therefore suggest that LEED certification is redundant and could add confusion to the design process because LEED updates and Stretch Codes won't always update concurrently, and the review process could be slowed down if LEED is required.

A Better City recommends that LEED certification is not required as part of ZNC Zoning.