

# New group works toward climate change solutions

The Climate Beacon Project expects to hold its inaugural summit in October



**The Climate Beacon Project intends to bring climate change solutions to the Bay State while addressing academia, government, and business interests.**

**By Jeremy C. Fox** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

A former senior staffer to former Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick is working with state and local leaders to launch an environmental organization that will host annual conferences in Boston, bringing academia, government, and business interests to the table to address climate change.

Alex Richman, 39 — who worked for Patrick from the 2006 race through his final year in office in 2014, ending up as the governor's director of international missions — plans to announce the launch of the Climate Beacon Project on Monday and will serve as the nonprofit's executive director.

US Senator Edward J. Markey, Governor Maura Healey, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, and Gina McCarthy, who served as climate adviser to President Biden, will be honorary co-chairs of the inaugural conference on Oct. 10 and 11, according to Richman.

Richman, who worked at HubWeek and the Alliance for Business Leadership after leaving the State House, said the idea for the Climate Beacon Project came from his work with the alliance and his belief that the Commonwealth is the right place to begin.

“Massachusetts has a global brand that’s based on education and innovation. We need to ensure that we use that brand to continue to lead on climate change,” Richman said in a phone interview last week. “This isn’t a new mentality here, but we need to elevate it to a real forefront of our minds.”

Richman said many projects around the world are addressing local effects of climate change, but they are often small in scale and little publicized. He said he is working with more than a dozen local universities and nonprofits to help bring the best minds together around a table with elected officials and business leaders to identify and implement practices that have worked elsewhere and could help lessen the effects locally of rising temperatures and sea levels.

“We want to focus on the challenges that we have here at home and bring influences in from around the world who can look at those challenges with us and really kind of talk about how they’ve succeeded in implementing their solutions elsewhere,” he said.

Mary Skelton Roberts, a former co-director of the Climate Program at the Barr Foundation who has spent more than two decades working on the response to climate change, will be a senior advisor to the Climate Beacon Project.

“Boston and Massachusetts have a climate action plan; they know what the goals are; they know what the targets are,” Roberts said in a separate phone interview last week. “Now, we need to move from planning to implementation — and you can’t do that without having something like this conference that’s bringing us together and saying, ‘Where are the areas that we can really focus and lean in?’”

Roberts said the project's work to transition to more sustainable practices will center on people who are most likely to be harmed by climate change, including low-income residents and Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

"It's a transition around making sure that, as we're creating more offshore wind or wind power, that we're doing it in a way that's bringing jobs to those communities . . . making sure that the policies are sending the right signals to the market so that the private sector is engaging in the right way, ensuring that our government agencies are accountable to deliver on those climate goals," she said.

Markey said the conference will be an opportunity to "break down barriers, make meaningful progress, and find common ground across the Commonwealth."

"Climate change doesn't affect everyone equally, but it does affect us all — and as a result, if we take action on the climate crisis, those solutions will help every one of us build a more livable future," Markey said in a statement. "Massachusetts is the brain state — the home of the ingenuity and innovation that has and will continue to inspire climate action."

Wu said the new organization "represents a unique opportunity to convene and put theory into action in both the public and private sectors."

"Boston is home to some of the best minds working on climate change," Wu said in a statement, "and I am confident the answers to some of our most complex questions will be answered in our City and put to work across the globe."

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