



# CITY OF SPRINGFIELD

## Exhibit A: Executive Summary

ExhibitA\_ExecSum\_Springfield\_MA.pdf

Springfield, Massachusetts, located at the crossroads of New England at the confluence of four rivers, is creating an **Urban Watershed Resilience Zone** ([see Attachment E – Resilience Zone](#)) made up of its most economically distressed neighborhoods. With National Disaster Resilience funding and leveraged resources, the City will carry out a portfolio of projects throughout this 6.8 square mile Zone that will: provide flood protection; introduce two clean redundant energy sources; create and enhance business, employment, and job training opportunities; provide safe and healthy housing; and continue to engage residents regarding climate change and environmental stewardship. The Zone’s projects have significant co-benefits, including recreation opportunities, local and regional health benefits, decreased heat island effect, disaster preparedness, and climate change mitigation. The City’s comprehensive approach in a focused target area will support neighborhood revitalization. Springfield is piloting these projects in the region’s lowest-income neighborhoods, with the long-term plan of expanding key interventions city-wide and providing a model for other towns in the Pioneer Valley. In addition, the Urban Watershed Resilience Zone is intended to serve as a model for Springfield’s peer cities - waterfront urban communities in the northeast and mid-Atlantic - to respond to flood and energy interruption risks expected as a result of climate change, as well as to the challenges of urban poverty ([see Attachment E – Replicability](#)).

The City and its partners request \$57,843,167 in National Disaster Resilience funds to support this resilience initiative, which will leverage \$82,331,122 in other investments. The proposed projects draw on strategies identified in region’s 2012-2014 HUD-funded Sustainable Communities Regional Planning initiative, and will significantly enhance the long-term commitment that Springfield has already made to climate change adaptation and mitigation through long-term planning, and legislative and policy change.

The impacts of climate change and recognition of the need to find ways to live with water and the changing environment became strikingly apparent for Springfield during the period 2011 through 2013, when the city experienced five presidentially-declared disasters, the most of any municipality in the country during that time period. The most severe was an EF3 tornado—very unusual in New England—which tore a ½ mile wide, 6.2-mile long swath of destruction through the heart of the City’s downtown and residential neighborhoods. Tornado damage to structures, including leaking roofs, was exacerbated by wind and rains of Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011. Another freak storm, the October 2011 record early snowstorm, decimated the City’s tree canopy which was vulnerable because trees were still fully-leafed out. Springfield’s other disasters were a 2011 blizzard and 2013 Superstorm Nemo.

Springfield is located in western Massachusetts and is the fourth largest city in New England, with a population of roughly 150,000, in a metropolitan area of almost 700,000. While the City is unique in experiencing so many disasters in such a short time, it is otherwise a prototypical northeast post-industrial city. Following loss of manufacturing jobs, white flight, foreclosures and housing abandonment, the City’s economic distress has become geographically concentrated in the neighborhoods designated as the Urban Watershed Resilience Zone. These neighborhoods abut the downtown area, are closest to the Connecticut River, have a 41% poverty rate, and are made up predominantly of people of color. The target neighborhoods are home to 10% of the region’s total population but include 32% of all Latinos and 31% of all blacks in the metropolitan area.

Springfield as a whole has a 32% poverty rate, which compares to the statewide Massachusetts rate of 11%. Widespread and deep poverty in the City negatively impacts the tax base, making it difficult for the City to contend with aged infrastructure and vulnerable residents.

The City functions as a gateway city for migrant Puerto Ricans and immigrants and refugees from Central America, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, and African nations. While the City is the employment and economic center for the region, most high paid workers live outside of Springfield, while City residents are more likely to be undereducated, and in low-paying positions or unemployed.

Poverty, unemployment, and high rates of health problems are chronic stressors that make Springfield and its residents extremely vulnerable in the face of disaster. Layered onto these stressors, climate change science indicates that Springfield is likely to experience increased extreme weather events, particularly storms which will include increased duration and volume of rainfall. Increased rain combined with environmental degradation from past disasters makes low-lying distressed neighborhoods subject to localized flooding, and overwhelms the City's combined sewer overflow (CSO) outlets. CSO overflow and stormwater runoff pollutes the Connecticut River, a National Blueway that flows through four states from the Canadian border to the Long Island Sound.

Over the past decade, the City has developed very strong administrative and managerial leadership, as well as built partnerships with community anchors and partners in the region and state. The City has successfully led not only disaster recovery, but also major neighborhood revitalization initiatives, ongoing restoration of Urban Station into a multi-model transportation center, and attraction of major businesses to the City. With its partners, the City has brought about collective impact in areas of community health, access to early childhood education, public safety, and ending chronic and veteran homelessness. City residents are extremely active in the conversation about climate change and environmental justice. Springfield is ready to become a resilient city.