



ACEC MA BUILDING ENGINEERING COMMITTEE

*An update from the City of Boston Public Facilities
The Aldrich Center, Boston MA
January 21, 2026*

Carleton W. Jones, Executive Director, Public Facilities Department



Mayor Michelle Wu



City of Boston
Public Facilities



CITY OF BOSTON

Public Facilities Team

DION IRISH *Chief of Operations*

CARLETON JONES *Executive Director*

ROHN MACNULTY *Deputy Director*

ELLEN MCDONOUGH *Chief of Staff*

WHO IS PFD?

- We support City departments in planning, design, construction, and major renovations
- Our portfolio includes:
 - Schools
 - Libraries
 - Community centers
 - Public safety facilities
 - Municipal offices
- FY26 Manage 43% of the City's \$4.7 billion capital plan projects from feasibility through closeout
- FY26 \$11.2M Operating Budget



Engine 17 Fire Station



Adams Street Branch of the Boston Public Library



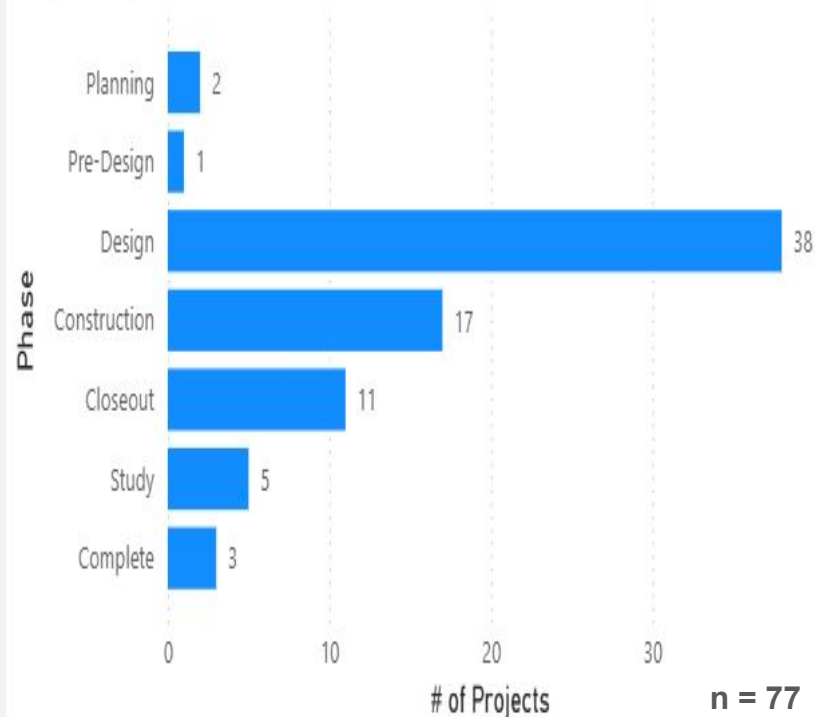


Projects Overview

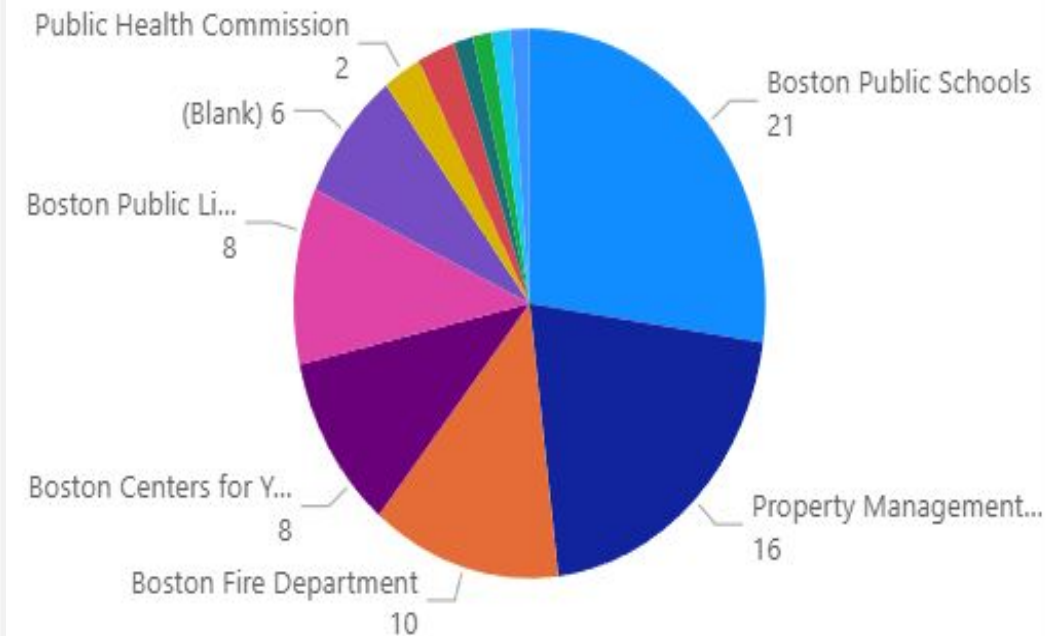
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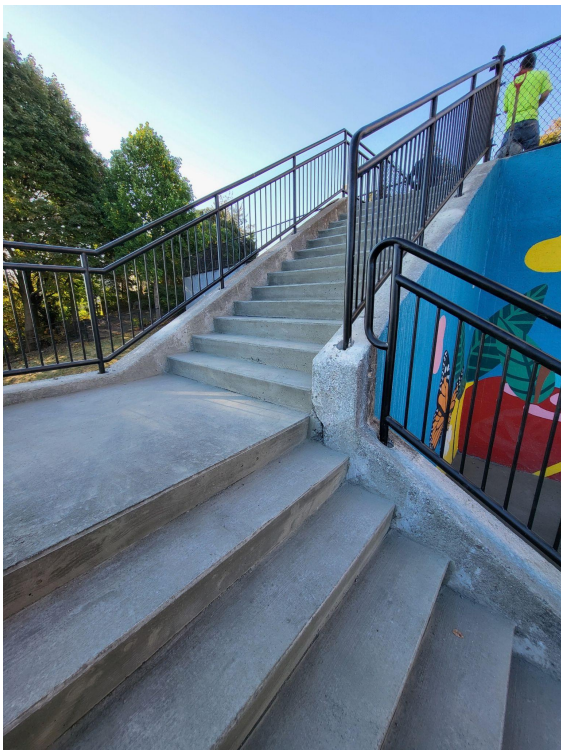
Projects by Phase



Projects by User Agency



WHO IS PFD?



Bradley School stair masonry repairs

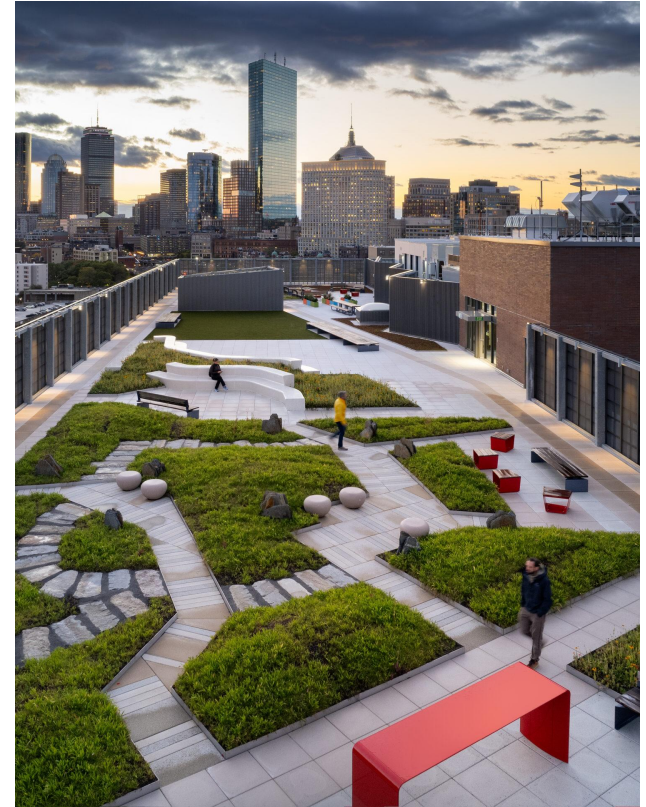
- In addition to large capital projects, we also deliver hundreds of smaller but critical infrastructure projects each year, such as:
 - Roof replacements
 - Window and façade repairs
 - Building envelope upgrades
 - Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing system replacements
 - Accessibility and life-safety improvements

- Together, this work ensures that City buildings are:
 - Safe and code-compliant
 - Energy-efficient and resilient
 - Functional for modern programs
 - Durable assets for long-term public use



PFD PROJECTS & PARTNERSHIPS

- Many projects involve state partners such as the **Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA)** and/or the **Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance (DCAMM)**
- This adds:
 - Additional standards and reviews
 - More documentation and approvals
 - Engineering teams often design to multiple requirements at once
- PFD's role:
 - Coordinate agencies
 - Reduce conflicting guidance
 - Keep decision-making clear for design teams

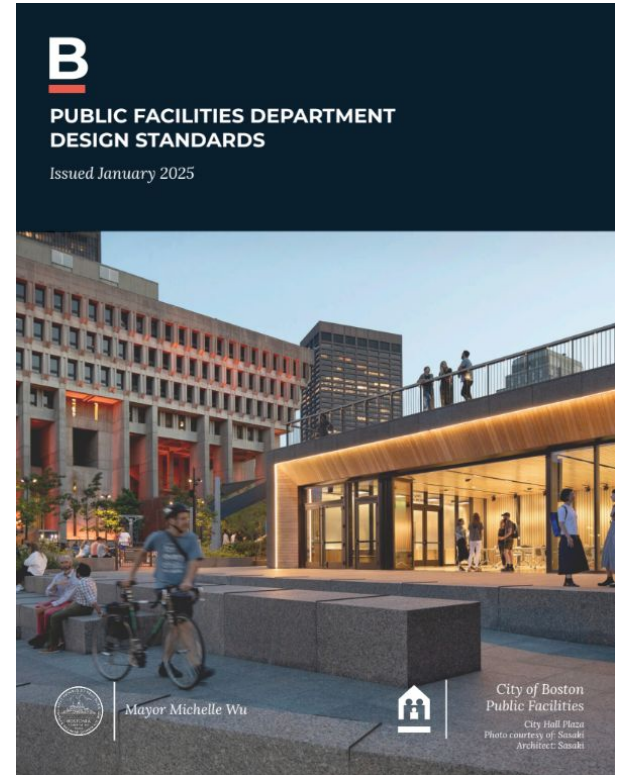


Josiah Quincy Upper School roof, MSBA partnership

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR ENGINEERING TEAMS

- **DESIGNING TO MULTIPLE SETS OF STANDARDS SIMULTANEOUSLY**
 - City of Boston
 - MSBA and/or DCAMM

- **COORDINATING ACROSS AGENCIES WITH:**
 - Different procurement rules
 - Different risk tolerance
 - Different timelines and approval structures



ROLE OF BEC MEMBER FIRMS

- Engineering firms often serve as the technical backbone of these projects

- Key contributions:
 - Coordinating complex requirements
 - Maintaining constructability
 - Supporting cost control
 - Ensuring long-term system performance
 - Your work directly affects schedule stability and project defensibility

BUSINESS CHALLENGES IN PROJECT DELIVERY

DELEGATED DESIGN

- ▶ Often creates unclear responsibility between designers and contractors
- ▶ Leads to construction delays and added cost to resolve scope gaps
- ▶ **PFD preference:**
 - Avoid where possible
 - Keep designers responsible for complete design
 - Use sparingly
 - **Best fit:** Chapter 149A projects using a design-assist approach

ATTRACTING BIDDERS

- ▶ Low turnout in some trades (misc. metals, elevators)
- ▶ In some cases, zero bidders
- ▶ Fewer bidders = price volatility and schedule risk

PROCESS & DOCUMENTATION BURDEN

- ▶ Construction software (Trimble, formerly known as ee-Builder) improved accountability
- ▶ Increased learning curve and administrative effort
- ▶ **Internal focus:** limit unnecessary process and long approval chains, streamline coordination with ISD, BFD, BLC

DESIGN & TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES

MATERIALS & SUPPLY CHAIN

- ▶ Recent issues with Chinese steel:
 - ASTM compliance Certification
 - Added testing and schedule impacts
- ▶ Growing use of new materials:
 - **Mass timber**
Sustainability, biophilic benefits
 - **Low-carbon concrete**
Embodied carbon reduction
 - **Stainless-clad rebar**
Durability

ELECTRIFICATION

- ▶ Required for new buildings and major renovations
- ▶ Often triggered by system replacements
- ▶ **Challenges:**
 - Rapid technology changes
 - Refrigerant phase-outs (early heat-pump systems already becoming obsolete)
 - Electric boilers: high upfront cost, lower efficiency, often only practical retrofit option

RENEWABLES

- ▶ Solar limited downtime by grid constraints and site conditions
- ▶ Geothermal:
 - High cost
 - Small sites push wells under buildings
 - Impacts critical path and schedule

PRIORITIES & CURRENT TRAJECTORY



SUSTAINABILITY

- Core priority
- Regulations and technology evolving quickly
- Focus on practical, code-compliant paths to lower-carbon buildings



COST CONTROL & FINANCIAL REALITY

- Recent escalation from COVID, supply chain disruption, and tariffs
- Costs stabilizing, but at higher baselines
- Commercial property values down; property tax $\approx$ 80% of City revenue
- Cost accuracy and predictability are critical



ASSET MANAGEMENT & AGING BUILDINGS

- Facilities Condition Assessment (FCA) guiding capital planning
- Near term:
 - More small and mid-size projects
 - Repairs, renovations, system replacements
 - Fewer mega-projects
- Many facilities are 50+ years old:
 - Limited flexibility for modern programs
 - Accessibility gaps
 - Structural and system constraints



The image shows the exterior of Boston City Hall at night. The building is a large, classical-style structure with a central entrance featuring a pediment and columns. The entrance is illuminated by warm lights, and the number '26' is visible above the glass doors. Two American flags are mounted on tall poles in front of the building. The scene is framed by dark, leafless trees on either side. In the foreground, there are dark, low walls with the text 'CITY of BOSTON' and '26 COURT STREET' visible. A blue sign on the right side of the foreground mentions 'BUILDING' and 'Mayor Michelle Wu'.

PFD Presents:
A REVITALIZED 26 COURT STREET!



26 COURT STREET



BOSTON CITY HALL

26

CITY OF BOSTON

CITY OF BOSTON

26 COURT STREET

BUILDING
MAYOR MARTHA W.

YOUR TURN...



FOR MORE INFORMATION...

<https://www.boston.gov/departments/public-facilities>



*City of Boston
Public Facilities*

