

XR BOSTON/MA 2021 Strategy

I. Introduction

The Strategy Working Group (WG) proposes the following strategic framework for XR Boston and MA (XR Boston) in 2021. Despite Covid-19, which limited our ability to disrupt the state through in-person actions and execute our [2020 strategic plan](#), we made significant progress in 2020. We organized 44 actions, including many that received large media (e.g., Citgo sign). We launched Emergency Everywhere in 8 communities across Eastern MA. We also raised XR awareness through social and mainstream media and our use of the arts, cultivated new partnerships, and supported our members during the crisis through our regenerative culture. This strategic plan focuses on ways we can continue to make progress towards achieving our demands in 2021 without a reliance on in-person, mass civil disobedience (CD).

The proposed strategy is summarized in the following diagram:



First, we'd like to affirm the integrity of our long-term strategic vision: radically restructuring humans' response to the climate crisis through non-violent direct action (NVDA). Secondly, we'd like to affirm our strategic demands as an organization, summarized as follows:

1. **Tell the Truth:** win declarations of climate emergency at local and state levels
2. **Act Now:** realistic plans that will move the state toward net zero by 2025
3. **Citizens' Assembly:** form a citizens' assembly to enable systemic changes

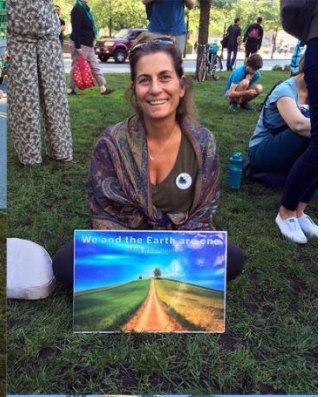
4. **Just Transition:** ensure climate justice for Black, Indigenous, People of Color and low-income communities who will continue to bear the brunt of climate catastrophe

We realize that, in order to achieve the critical mass and influence required to achieve our goals, we must build and diversify our membership. We believe we can achieve this while making progress towards realizing our demands through actions that are inherently joyful and thereby inclusive as well as through partnerships that grow and diversify our membership directly through outreach and media and indirectly through a network of climate and beyond-climate partners. To assess the impact and effectiveness of this approach, we recognize that it is important for us to develop and measure associated metrics, such as feedback on how “joyful” our actions are, the racial diversity of our organization, and how much reach we have through partner organizations. This document will further describe each of the components of this strategy and then discuss how each of our WGs can use this plan to help structure their own ongoing activities and plans. We hope that each WG will build upon this framework to customize this plan and make it more effective.

II. Joyous Disruption

The climate crisis – and humanity’s overall non-responsiveness to it – presents an emotional challenge for many people, particularly since climate science is so clear about the trajectory that we are collectively on. This emotional challenge inhibits many people from talking about the crisis, which is compounded by what many view as a social stigma against acknowledging the crisis, which results in a negative feedback loop that reinforces unresponsiveness. XR helps people overcome this emotional challenge and social stigma by celebrating the marvelousness of humanity and ecology without being restricted by rules designed to repress our creativity. E.B. White said, “I arise in the morning torn between a desire to save the world and a desire to savor the world.” Savoring the world can remind us through direct experience why this world is worth saving and thereby give us the motivation to overcome emotional and social barriers we face.

Based on this reasoning, we propose *joyous disruption* as the essential theme for our work. Through joyous disruption, we entertain and awaken the public to the emergency that we collectively face. Through joyous disruption, we differentiate ourselves from other climate activist groups and resonate with the creative spirit of all human beings. By cultivating joy in our actions and throughout our organization, we will build and diversify our membership because we will attract people at an emotional level – who does not seek joy? For 2021, we propose two broad campaigns for joyous disruption: expanding the existing Emergency Everywhere campaign and initiating a new campaign focused on actions in vulnerable communities. We can convey joyous disruption through our media and public relations work and especially our art. Outreach can integrate joyous disruption into our welcoming presentations and communications for new XR members. Joyous disruption can perhaps be more clearly defined in photos and videos than it can be in text (see next page):



JOYOUS  DISRUPTION



II(a). Emergency Everywhere

The Emergency Everywhere campaign seeks to grow XR's presence in communities outside the Boston area. A new chapter's first goal is to pass a 'Climate Emergency' declaration through their local government. While this represents a small step toward our demands and is largely symbolic, it should be achievable, and it will serve as a precedent for further actions. This program allows us to recruit from areas we otherwise rarely engage with and further expands our ability to take action and grow the organization.

The Emergency Everywhere strategy involves organizing chapters around events or themes that can be engaged with locally in parallel across municipalities. This method of coordinated, distributed actions will need to be employed at scale for XR's overall strategy to be successful. They're also an effective way to organize people locally while showing them they're also part of a larger movement.

Actions should be accessible to those new to the movement and should often represent incremental, achievable goals that further our agenda. While our agenda is anything but incremental, it's important for chapter growth and cohesion to set and accomplish short-term goals. As discussed, joyous activities will increase solidarity within groups and give potential members something to get excited about. Among these goals is to increase support for more radical policy decisions by state and local governments.

II(b). Actions in Vulnerable Communities

Those most at risk for near-term effects of climate change often have the fewest resources available to prepare for or mitigate those risks. By working with communities already under threat by fossil fuel infrastructure, industrial pollutants, and related ecological destruction, we can demonstrate the potential of civil disobedience. We will need to work closely with leaders in these communities to find synergy between our organization's methods and goals and their own. In this process we will follow the leadership of local activists and organizations from affected communities.

The first step is to identify communities presently facing new risks, such as those from the planned electrical substation in East Boston. Next, plug into any existing groups organizing against the threat and identify common interests and methods. In order to build trust, we'll need to show up regularly and in reasonable numbers to support the actions of these other groups. XR members primarily involve themselves in civil disobedience and/or bold, artistic actions that symbolize the threats to life on Earth. While it's unlikely that other groups share our exact tactics or goals, our actions can support the work of other groups and some members of other groups are likely to join XR given its work on issues that are local, relevant, and pressing for them.

II(c). Additional Actions

In the past year we have taken dozens of actions, many of which do not readily fit into the two categories above. We expect to continue these, such as possible actions on Earth Day. We will see opportunities to link the two main campaigns, but XR Boston should increase its visibility and build membership through many kinds of actions, particularly those that make people smile, such as our Valentine's Day march in the Back Bay.

III. Partnering with Climate/Ecology Groups

In 2020 we engaged The Climate Mobilization to develop [guidelines for XR partnerships](#) with representation from most WGs. Based on those guidelines, we collaborated with several climate-related organizations including Mothers Out Front and Sunrise while deepening partnerships with others, including GreenRoots and Stop the Money Pipeline. With each partner we have points of unity and aspects of difference. All want rapid change away from fossil fuels. None have consistently prioritized NVDA/CD, though certain individuals in the groups clearly support us on NVDA. In general, there is some actual and potentially increased complementarity as they engage mainly in more traditional forms of activism within the political arena while we build NVDA/CD outside of the arena – including in towns where we are building Emergency Everywhere. Many members of other groups are likely to be willing to support our actions as we emerge from Covid-19.

Our climate group partnership goals for 2021 include:

1. Developing partner groups that actively support CD;
2. Getting their members to participate in XR CD;
3. Persuading groups to act with greater urgency by sharing climate science that clearly shows our window for avoiding mass catastrophe is closing soon;
4. Responding to specific corporate/state developments with local partners and strong XR engagement, e.g. the Weymouth compressor station and the East Boston Eversource substation (also in vulnerable communities)

The path forward to items 1, 2, and 3 will be through regular discussions with groups, perhaps convenings of multiple groups, to address these and related issues. This partnership work will continue to be done primarily online during Covid-19. During such meetings we will also listen to their priorities and concerns and determine where our support for them makes sense in light of our long-term goals. This will include responses to the wider ecological concerns shared by many organizations, such as the Sixth Mass Extinction, the oceans, the Amazon, Indigenous rights, etc. These we support in general, via our Demand 4, which includes not only ecological and social justice, but also “establishes legal rights for ecosystems to thrive and regenerate in perpetuity.”

IV. Partnering with Beyond-Climate Groups

In order to achieve XR's demands, we need a group of people that is so large, diverse, and disruptive that government officials cannot ignore it and are forced to not only declare a climate emergency and make irreversible commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero ASAP through a just transition, but also to immediately implement drastic changes and form a citizens' assembly. It isn't clear that XR Boston can achieve this size of a group on its own in the waning time frame that we have to prevent the extinction of humanity and many other species.

XR isn't the only organization that thinks that our political system is broken and fails to address a crisis affecting humanity. There are many groups that are demanding the government to take immediate action on various issues – be it racism, gender inequality, child trafficking, poverty, or animal cruelty. A root cause for many of these problems is that our society is organized by an economic system that values perpetual capital expansion over ethics and the integrity of living systems. Social and environmental justice groups can unite based on a shared understanding of root causes such as this, and many of these groups have missions that include addressing climate change but aren't limited to it. To improve our chances of success, we can learn how to collaborate with these kinds of groups to the extent that they are demanding systemic change in a way that is not in conflict with our demands or with our commitment to NVDA.

While beyond-climate partnerships represent a large opportunity, XR lacks experience in partnering with these kinds of groups and it may be challenging to initiate. Without some overarching organization or coalition representing a state-wide rebellion based on a variety of issues, XR will have to develop ways to engage with other groups directly to identify and take advantage of opportunities to support each other. One approach would be to collaborate with beyond-climate groups on a case-by-case basis, e.g., a campaign with Black Lives Matter focused on the vulnerabilities of black communities to climate change, and through these collaborations gradually build linkages among complimentary groups to develop mass actions and campaigns that cut across several issues.

As part of our 2021 broader strategy to grow and diversify XR Boston's membership, we will explore this opportunity to collaborate with non-climate groups. It may be worthwhile to re-engage The Climate Mobilization to convene a roundtable with representation from the most impacted communities to develop some guidelines for this exercise as we did for XR partnerships in 2020.

One by one, the government can keep activist groups at bay with promises for incremental change. To the extent that we form a united front with other groups, we will collectively have the leverage needed to effect broad and immediate systemic changes.

V. Working Group Integration

While this 2021 strategic plan is intended to provide a unifying direction for WGs, we also recognize that it isn't reasonable to expect everyone in XR Boston to agree to this proposal. We welcome feedback on how

this strategy can be improved, reminders of important things we may have overlooked, and ideas for ways to expand upon it. We see this as a dynamic document that will evolve through its adaptation by the WGs while also providing a vision and supporting framework for consideration and reference. Below are some initial suggestions for each WG:

1. Action

- a. Intentionally incorporate an element into each action that will inspire someone to tell a friend about it.
- b. Intentionally incorporate an element into each action that encourages and inspires passerby to join in.
- c. Develop actions at different levels of risk so people can plug in at their comfort level to facilitate increased confidence with CD (e.g. adding actions that are disruptive without planning arrest like spray chalking or invading private buildings).
- d. Incorporate joy and regeneration in speeches.
- e. Work with Strategy WG's partnerships team to identify opportunities to incorporate partners in actions or ways to support partners in their actions.
- f. Invite Art WG liaison into action brainstorming sessions.
- g. Collect data after each action via qualitative and quantitative surveying, e.g. "Was this action joyous for you?"

2. Art

- a. Collaborate with Action WG brainstorming to find ways to incorporate joyful creative expression in actions.
- b. Design art activities for public engagement at actions (e.g. prompt for passersby to draw on a communal mural).
- c. Develop campaigns for individuals to create their own XR flags and signs themed around joy and rebellion.

3. Media & Messaging

- a. Expand social media reach.
- b. Invite diverse perspectives and partnership perspectives on social media channels (e.g. one day 'takeovers' of social media pages).
- c. Proudly promote endorsements and partnerships.
- d. Incorporate humor and memes.
- e. Use the XR visual elements across platforms - both original content and reposts of other XR chapters.
- f. Endorsements

- g. Establish relationship with the Strategy WG's partnerships team.
 - h. Expand contacts and discussions with mainstream media.
4. Outreach
- a. Imbue joy, fun, and power building in HFE and orientation content and presentation style.
 - b. Continue to make space for regenerative and connective time during community meetings.
 - c. Consider creating a recurring outreach-focused street canvas action that facilitates one-on-one conversations and calls to action (e.g., "Cube of Truth").
 - d. Collect feedback after HFE and orientation via surveying of participants.
5. Regen
- a. Relaunch NVDA trainings.
 - b. Work with Strategy WG's partnerships team to create collaborative regen activities (e.g. working with yoga studios, dance groups, meditation circles).
 - c. Encourage working groups to schedule non-work time together, including renewed in-person gatherings as conditions permit, especially outdoors.
6. Strategy
- a. Establish partnership connections with Media WG for endorsements and Regen WG for joint actions.
 - b. Refresh the partnership priority list to incorporate the 2021 strategy framework.
 - c. Develop strategies to increase XR support of other movements.