

March 26, 2026



Kara Runsten, MVP Director
Hillary King, MVP Central Regional Coordinator
Commonwealth of Massachusetts, EOEEA
Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program

Dear Ms. Runsten:

On behalf of the Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC), it is my pleasure to submit the “*Cooling Devens Corridors - Enhancing Access to Shade, Nature, and Active and Passive Recreation*” grant application for your consideration. The Devens Enterprise Commission, Devens Department of Public Works, and Devens Operations have all coordinated to develop and approve cooling corridor planting plans for multiple locations in Devens, including sidewalk and roadside shade trees, as well as more trees around active recreation fields and parking areas. In addition to almost 10,000 employees that come to Devens everyday, Devens has redeveloped former army training grounds into regional recreation fields that attract over 300,000 visitors to Devens every year. The coordinated efforts with these planting plans will ensure we avoid all utility conflicts, maximize urban heat island reduction, while also providing more areas for refuge for residents, businesses and visitors to Devens in the summer months as we experience more extreme heat as a result of climate change.

This project will help Devens further advance our [Green Infrastructure Guidelines](#) by facilitating more natural connectivity between important natural resource areas, including Willow Brook and the Nashua River. The selection of diverse native plantings will help reduce manicured lawn areas, avoid monocultures, support biodiversity, and reduce invasive species. In addition to the environmental benefits (reduced stormwater runoff, improved air quality and wildlife habitat), traffic calming, and pedestrian safety measures, these plantings will also provide residents and visitors with more visual access to nature – which will also help improve people’s health and well-being - as our [biometric research](#) demonstrates visual access/ exposure to nature has mental and physical health benefits as well.

At their March 24, 2026 Executive Committee public meeting, the DEC unanimously supported the submission of this grant proposal as it is directly in-line with the sustainable redevelopment goals of Devens and will help further advance our award-winning Nature-based Solutions and Low-Impact Development work. As a result, the DEC has budgeted \$15,000 to further supplement street tree planting in Devens and this grant.

Working in collaboration with our partners at Devens Department of Public Works and Devens Operations, our Project Manager for this grant and the associated plantings is Beth Suedmeyer, Environmental Planner with the DEC. While the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone (Devens) is not an official town or city, it is considered so for grant purposes under Section 11.5.(o) of Chapter 498 of the Acts of 1993. The DEC is the Unified Permitting Agency for Devens, acting in the capacity of the Planning Board, Zoning Board, Historic District Commission, and Board of Health for Devens. This Cooling Corridors grant will impact the unified work of the DEC.

We look forward to utilizing these funds to facilitate more green infrastructure connections, reduce urban heat-island impacts in Devens, help meet our [Devens Forward Climate Action Plan](#) and [Green and Complete Streets](#) goals, continue to lead by example, and share our experiences and lessons learned with more municipalities, developers, and landowners and make Devens an even happier, healthier, and resilient place to live, work, learn, and play. Feel free to reach out with any questions of if you need any more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil Angus", written over a white background.

Neil Angus, FAICP CEP, LEED AP
Director/Land Use Administrator

cc: Devens Enterprise Commission
Michael Sweeney, EVP Devens Operations
Shane Melone, Devens Department of Public Works



DEVENS ENTERPRISE COMMISSION
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