

# In Boston, a Development’s Approach to a Changing Coastline Is to Embrace It

Among the resilient features of Clippership Wharf is a “living shoreline” of marsh and native fauna.



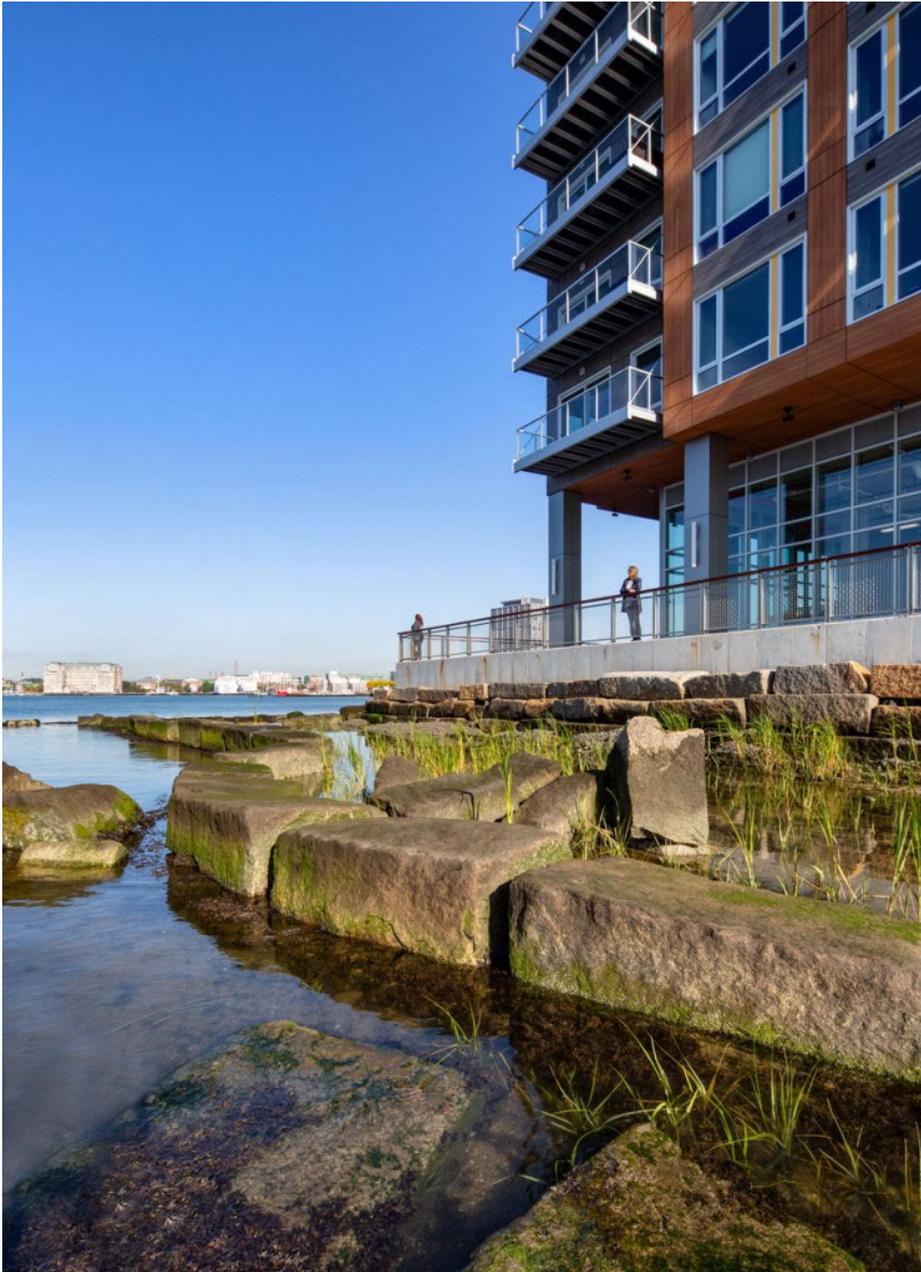
The mixed-use Clippership Wharf in Boston encompasses 7 acres of residential, recreational, and hospitality spaces. **Courtesy Ed Wonsek/TAT**

Along the formerly gritty, industrial waterfront of East Boston, high-end residential developments have been popping up over the past decade, taking advantage of the stunning views of Boston Harbor and downtown that the district offers. Among the most prominent of these projects, the 478-unit [Clippership Wharf](#) was conceived as four buildings, two of which reach out into the harbor to create a tranquil central cove for the property.

But this is no ordinary condo/rental venture. Clippership Wharf was designed and built in accordance with the guidelines of [Climate Ready Boston](#), a city initiative to [adapt to the effects of climate change](#) along its sprawling waterfronts. Some studies predict as much as a 40-inch rise in the level of Boston harbor by 2070—a great concern for a city with billions of dollars in waterfront development, and more on the way.

“We can withstand a 40-inch rise because the residential units are 14 feet above the mean tide right now,” says Nick Iselin, general manager of development at [Lendlease](#), a Sydney, Australia-based real estate company that is developing Clippership. In addition to lifting the ground plane of the site,

Iselin says the complex includes series of retractable flood planks that can wall off the ground floor in case of flooding.



The development is elevated above sea level, predicting future storm surges and sea level rise, and a selection of plantings and fauna blur the line between land and sea. **Courtesy Ed Wonsek/TAT**

“Clippership Wharf was the first shovel in the ground on harbor resiliency,” says Robert Adams, principal of [Halvorson Design](#), the project’s landscape architect. “In fact, it was a little bit ahead of the curve,” he adds, noting that work was being done there before the city’s various climate mitigation initiatives went into effect.

Adams is especially proud of one unique aspect of the design of the waterfront site: the so-called Living Shoreline, a marsh at water's edge that reintroduces native species of flora and fauna and blurs the progression of land to sea.

"You've got mussels, barnacles, crustaceans, and birds of all types," Adams says. "It's an amazing natural machine where the tides are."



The waterfront, which is required by law to be open to the public, offers uninterrupted views of downtown Boston. **Courtesy Ed Wonsek/TAT**

As mandated by Massachusetts law, the entire waterfront is open to the public. Other amenities at Clippership, which is expected to be fully completed eight months after the COVID-19 construction ban is lifted, include kayak rental, multiple spaces for picnics, a waterfront restaurant/café, and docks for a water taxis that will deliver residents to downtown Boston, which from the site seems close enough to touch.

"Right and left, the streets take you waterward to a place washed by waves and cooled by breezes," wrote Herman Melville of the city of Manhattoes, a playful take on Manhattan in *Moby Dick*. And so it is with Clippership Wharf.

[Michael Liu](#), vice president and principal at local firm [The Architectural Team](#), the project architect, says that the placement of the buildings was key to creating visual impact.

"The configuration was conceived to set up a pedestrian sequence to frame views of downtown and tell a story as one walks toward the water," Liu says.

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